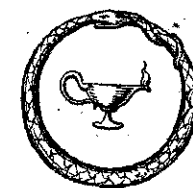


I S A  
A P I L G R I M A G E

BY  
CAROLINE CHESEBRO'

"'Tis but a dream!"  
"IT IS A THOUGHT."



REDFIELD  
CLINTON HALL, NEW YORK  
1852

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STEREOTYPED BY C. C. SAVAGE,  
13 Chambers Street, N. Y.

Alfred

TO  
Grace Greenwood and Alice Carey.

WHEN this book was finished, I had it in my thought to write for it a prefatory letter, which should convey to you, my friends, an explanation and an idea. I could think of none, in all the world, to whom I might so fitly, and with such proud affection, dedicate this PILGRIMAGE of a striving mind and a great heart, as to you, who are, as Isa was, workers true and noble, diligent seekers of a "better country" that lies even in this toiling world, a country where the Spiritual and Ideal reign and conquer, putting all worldliness and *mere* ambition under their feet.... But at this moment when such letter

must be written, if at all, my heart is leaping toward you with a very different form of expression than that I should be compelled to adopt in such a document, and all I can find to say is, a Blessing on your Pilgrimage! which is said with a loving and reverent admiration for the power that has so triumphantly brought you into the harvest-field of the elect of Genius.

CAROLINE CHESEBRO'.

CANANDAIGUA, 1852.

ISA;

A PILGRIMAGE.

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"I CAN NOT date the time when love for Weare Dugganne became the passion of my soul. The love has been of gradual growth, and, therefore, is as strong as life. It may have begun in some state of pre-existence; but was first roused, a consciousness, I think, though far from an entire consciousness, on the day when he found me in the den of filth and confusion where my early years were spent. No angel appearing visibly before me, I believe not Gabriel himself could so affect, so astonish me, as did his coming into that place, with his look of purity, and comfort, and confidence. I was startled at the very sight of him out of a miserable existence—set free from an incubus, let loose from it into a clear, bright, and before that to me unimagined, world. Wherefore, then, should I not consider that very

first day of my beholding him as the dawning-time of my love?

"Properly speaking, I had not thus far lived; for what is the life of childhood, if it be not joy and gladness; and where had I known anything of the light heart, the gay thoughts, the fancyings and dreamings, peculiar to the young? I had existed—dwelt among miserable specimens of humanity, among people whom my soul loathed, if it did not hate them, among the idiots, the crazed, the poor besotted wretches the world had 'cast out of love and reverence,' justified in so doing. I, too, had, in some way, found myself thrown into that last decent resort of the miserable—a bit of weed, of nothingness, conscious only of misery, and a child's fear, undefined and foolish (for what more than I knew was there to fear? was not absolute horror around me? was I not in constant solitude, though among so many?); and there I lived, neglected, abused, fearing all things, hoping nothing, enjoying nothing, not even the thought that there was anything *to be* enjoyed—disgusted with all around me, yet ignorant of aught beyond—consciously degraded, wholly forlorn. And still, with all this overflowing of the child-life (and not so much child-life as spirit-life) within me, with all this capacity for suffering,

this wondering and dread, this wakeful soul, this thoughtfulness, this desire, *THIS LIFE*—a mere non-entity in the world!

"He came there with his mother. She brought him to satisfy his curiosity; he had never been in a poorhouse, and, desire once pointing that way, he would not rest till she went with him, that he might see the strange human beings living there, of whom he had heard so much. I remember I sat away from the children who were playing in the ill-kept, disorderly yard. I was so miserable; everything had gone wrong with me that day; I was tired and sick, for I had been at work, and they had scolded me for my laziness; and now, when my task was done, I felt too weary, too full of bitterness, to join in the sports of more careless, and, for the time certainly, happier children. I watched the boys and girls while they played and quarrelled, but it was with indifference. I felt no interest in their games, and could not for the life of me laugh with them; but had they wept, any of them, I could have joined heartily in the 'exercise.' I do not exaggerate; I know how utterly wretched I was. My misery was not of the understanding, but of the heart.

"While I sat there, a beautiful Newfoundland dog dashed into the yard. For a moment,



he joined the boisterous young ones in their sport, and then came up to me, and stood beside me, and afterward he stretched himself at my feet. There was nothing extraordinary in all this, but I had never seen anything in dog-shape before, except those dirty, yelping, half-starved curs belonging to the house, and this splendid creature was like a new evangel to me. I could have told what Love meant then, or, if I could not have told, I should have known. Had any one asked me, I might not have answered in words, but would not a reply meet and sufficient have been given by the way I patted the animal's head, when his great pitying eyes fixed on me, and by the strange confidence with which (being not repulsed), I slipped from my bench into the unshaded sunshine, to fling my arms around the noble creature? I could have wept, but did not, yet how my desolate heart grew with a sudden affectionate interest and impulse toward the animal which could only, yet how fully thus, return my confiding affection in his glances.

"A few minutes, then the owner of the dog came whistling to the door of the house. The creature started up (he knew his master coming, but did not move toward him), and showed his recognition merely by the quick wagging of his tail, and a majestic movement of the head. So

the boy came from the door, and crossed the dusty, sun-cracked, unsodded yard, to the place where I stood. He came up close to me, and I could not resist saying:—

"‘Is this your dog?’

"‘Yes,’ he replied, and so kindly! I had never heard a voice like that. ‘Do you like dogs?’

"‘I love this dog.’

"‘Don’t you keep them here?’ he asked, looking around.

"I might have said properly ‘not of this sort.’ But I did not know then, that there were any other kind than brute dogs, and so I answered, ‘No.’

"Then, I distinctly remember, he asked me what we children did there; about our living in the poorhouse, and a multitude of questions such as children only can think of. At last, he said quite solemnly, and looking fixedly at me, ‘Are you a happy little girl?’

"I do not remember that I had ever heard the word before, but I knew what it meant. There are many expressions which need no translation, even for the most ignorant; they are so thoroughly imbued with their idea—and if that idea chance to have been the haunting one of our life, we need not ask, ‘What mean you?’ when

another gives it shape. I could not answer him, could only look upon him, wondering why he should have asked me. Then I felt the tears gathering in my eyes—the human, thinking, questioning child affected me more deeply than the glorious beast could. I turned away, for I did not like that well-dressed, handsome boy to see me weep; was that a manifestation of mere foolish pride, my soul?

“I did not speak to him again, nor he to me, only once to say, ‘Good-by, little girl, I wish you could go home with me.’ He said this as he went to meet his mother, who stood on the doorstep calling him. I heard his sweet, kind voice pleading with her a moment, then the hall-door was shut; the silence following that sound encouraged me to look up again, and the strangers were gone. A little while after, I heard carriage-wheels rattling out of the yard, and I knew then, more thoroughly than ever before, what desolation and desolateness mean.

“I doubt if any mortal could ever be, under any circumstances, certainly I never since have been, so utterly wretched, as I was, when I felt myself alone, that day after Weare had gone. I wept until both tears and strength were exhausted, then a deep, bitter, and dreadful feeling entered into, and took full possession of my soul. Some might

perhaps call it envy or covetousness. I do not think it was properly either, yet I could only wonder and wonder, and thereof groan inwardly, that I should be so wretched, so wholly miserable, while others, of which to my mind that boy was the type, should look, and seem, and surely be so happy. I felt that he was very happy.

“It was his coming, his looks, his garments, his words, which gave me the first insight into that other world of life which I had never entered. I could not reason about it, I could not in any sensible way understand anything of it—excepting that there must be a sort of life altogether different from that I was leading—a state infinitely better, happier, more beautiful. He, that noble boy, had come really whence? Where was he going to? Had I indeed in any degree guessed at the truth respecting his home? It would not have seemed an incredible thing to me, had any one told me that he was an angel, and that he came straight from heaven. Readily could I have been made to believe this, when the week after that visit, he came again, with the lady who was his mother; but their coming explained all to me, and from that day I began to see things in their true light.

"A woman had died in the house; and her funeral was to take place that day. Before her last illness, or rather before its increase unto death, and during all its continuance, till the very night of her death, I had slept in her room, in a state of hushed and terrified, but then to me, unexplainable awe; I lived with her, and helped to attend her during her last days. She had long existed a mere miserable wreck of humanity, hideous to look upon. But she had always been kind to me, and I entertained such a sort of regard, and respect, and feeling for her, as made it very dreadful for me to witness her increased sufferings.

"What death really meant I could not clearly understand. They came out from her room that last night, and said, 'She is gone?' they said it in such a way as made me shudder. DEAD! I kept thinking the word over and over. GONE—where? She was lying there on the bed, I saw that through a crack in the door to which I crept, when none were by. She certainly was there; what had gone? She was 'dead.' Could anything awaken her—could she hear—could she speak still? It was a mystery. I heard some of the other old women talking together—they seemed glad, for some reason, that she was DEAD; that she would never

want for anything again, that her sufferings were over, they said. The silence about the house oppressed me; I could hardly breathe in it; it frightened me; and I went off, to get rid of my thoughts, with the other children, to a playhouse in a corner of the yard. But, before noon, I got tired of them; I could think of nothing but the DEAD old woman. It seemed wrong in me to think of anything else. She used to call me child, and dear, sometimes, and I loved her for that, if for no other reason. They were at dinner; I did not want to eat, so I went and hung around the door of the chamber where she still was sleeping. Wondering yet, and continually, what Death meant, and if she were happy, and if I should ever be happy, and, if so, would I be happy before I died, and if people could die whenever they wished to. Suddenly an uncontrollable desire seized me. I would find it all out at once. I would ask mammy! she could tell me what I wanted to know; she was dead—she must know all about it!

"I went softly into the room, and shut the door after me. Then I paused a moment, in doubt, for she was not lying on that bed in the corner of the room, where she had lain ever since I could recollect, but near the bed there was a high table, and a board upon it, and that was

covered with a cloth. Something told me she must be there; I had often seen her sleeping with the bed-clothes drawn over her head. I went up to the table carrying a chair with me, for I was bent on knowing all about it now. I placed the chair close beside the table, and then stood upon it, and uncovered her face. The sight that met my eyes took away my breath for a moment; I had never seen anything like it before, and her appearance startled me beyond measure. It was a horrid spectacle. The recollection makes me tremble to this day. If I had never seen another corpse that remembrance would tempt me to say, how horrible, as well as how wonderful, is death! Her face was always pale, but not of that hue—and it was always wrinkled, and had an ugly look, yet she was not ugly; there was now a fixedness, a rigidity, in the wrinkles and the colorless face, that made it awful beyond imagination. It struck such a chill, such a horror through me, that for many minutes, in my astonishment and terror, I forgot to ask what I intended to. Then again I recollected the object with which I went there, and said:—

“‘Mammy, are you happy? Do you sleep good?’

“No answer. I would have one. I had

broken the awful silence, and was not to be quieted again. That silence, at least, could not chill me to quiet, it the rather hurried me on in my questioning. They would be coming back, and I must hear from her lips what I longed to know.

“‘Mammy,’ I said, ‘do you have hateful dreams? Do you know what’s going on here? Can you tell me what they’re going to do with you? Mammy! wont you look at me? Are you sorry they moved you from the other bed? Oh, do say something!’

“I stooped over her; I had at first spoken in a whisper, but the last query was made in a loud voice. I bent further down—my face touched hers! God! what an embrace was that! The chair on which I stood, slipped, in my impetuous movement; I fell, and —fainted!

“When my consciousness returned, did I not see an angel standing there before me? Had I been dreaming ever since that day when we first met? These were my first thoughts when I saw the lady and the boy again. The corpse had been removed, but the broken board, and overturned chair, and table, told me what a sight must have been presented to the people when they came into that room.

“I have reason to remember a day of such

deliverance as that proved. It ended my life in the poorhouse; it dated the beginning of another existence. The mother and her son had come there with the express purpose of finding and removing me. Weare had entreated for me, and his entreaties were prevailing; his mother consented to receive me. What mattered it, at that moment, whether I went as servant or as child? I thought not, I knew not of such distinctions. The joy of a life was centred in the blissful emotions roused when she said: 'Isa, child, you may come with me now. I am going to take you home to live with me. Will you be a good girl?' I had never, never, heard a voice like that. Why should any one speak so to me? It seemed to me, that my own mother, had she addressed me, could alone speak in that manner. Even his voice, though very like his mother's, had not the pitying tenderness that hers had. She knew what sorrow was; she spoke to one who knew what sorrow was; and, though I did not know it then, I know it now, it was for that very reason that the way in which she spoke, as much, yes, more than what she said, affected me. As once before, when Weare addressed me so kindly, I found myself voiceless, wordless; but my looks must have said enough for me; she seemed satisfied.

"How can I hope to find words for my vivid recollections of the thoughts I had in that great hour?

"She led me away from the room of death, from the house of terrors; she placed me in the comfortable little one-horse carriage that stood in waiting, and Weare drove us to Richmond, while the magnificent dog (my first friend after my own heart) followed us. That is all there really was in the going. A child was taken by a charitable lady from the poorhouse. It was the mere fact, but what did it involve? Did it indeed involve as much as I imagine?

"It was like an unexpected, un hoped-for, but joyous, oh, how joyous, going through the gates of heaven! It was moving from the shadows of death to the glory and gladness—the fresh glory, the bewildering gladness, of life. It was the escape of the slave—it was a baptism into newness of being!

"When the horse was checked before one of the neatest and prettiest houses, in a quiet street of this bustling town, Weare, who had talked almost incessantly by the way, exclaimed: 'Here, see! this is our place, little girl. I like to call you Isa. Isn't it a pretty name, mamma?' he added; and, leaping from the carriage, he said, 'Come, Isa,' and he helped me out. How handsome

and bright he looked, as he stood so, holding the reins with one hand, and the other outstretched toward me, while his eyes fixed with such a gay expression on my face!

"While we were alighting, a servant-man came from the yard where he was busied trimming some shrubs, and, taking the reins, he drove away, while we went into the house together. As I look upon it now, with a critic's eyes, I can but smile, thinking of the place as it is, and as it seemed to me. Small and unpretending as the cottage is (and sweet and lovely is it, that can not be denied), what a different appearance it wears, contrasted with that it presented to my childish eyes and imagination! It seemed such a grand, such a splendid place; but all the grandeur, it must be confessed, lies now, as it did then, in the exceeding neatness and cheerfulness which first impressed me, being so far opposed to all I had heretofore seen or heard of. The rooms are small, the ceilings low, the furniture neither showy nor costly, but remarkable, certainly, for an air of taste, freshness, and neatness. There was, there is, nothing here that, did I not know about it from experience, would seem calculated to strike even a beggar-girl, like myself, dumb with amazement; but I know I was struck dumb, though there was no show, no

splendor, in the place. It was all so orderly, so charmingly simple, so pretty, and so quiet—so quiet, that it seemed indeed like fairy-land.

"I remember, at that time, the entry-parlor and the small room beyond it were all carpeted alike, with a gay, small-figured cloth, the walls were hung with white paper, and the dark paint of the wood-work made such a beautiful contrast with it! There were a few pictures in the parlor, two of them were portraits. The piano stood there, too, and the tables were adorned with some books and prints. In the little room leading from that there was plainer furniture, some blossoming plants, and a large birdcage, the home of a family of singing-birds. These were all the luxuries of which the house could boast, but there was an indescribable sunshine of comfort over all, and penetrating all, which amazed and confounded me. Ah, me! I looked around in this Paradise in vain for the malformed, frightful human beings, the gibbering idiots, the foully-diseased, the decrepit old women, the wild, ungovernable, filthy children! Had I indeed not gone into heaven by some miracle? Was I still on earth? Was it not my duty, as it was my joy, to think of Weare Dugganne as my guardian-angel?

"Weare was a schoolboy; but for a few days

after my going home with him, he was allowed a vacation, as he himself told me, because his kind mother feared I might be lonely or homesick in a strange place, I was so young. I homesick, and there! He seemed glad to have a play-mate, at least one of his own years, in the house.

"I often wonder what the result would have proved, had I been thrown among gayer and livelier children, in such a place as this, my adopted home. Would they have roused another life in me than that which has awakened? Or, do we, indeed, come from the land of souls with an individual, and, as regards the most important part, an unimpressible nature? Is personal influence, after all, so far-reaching, so real, as many imagine? Are not childhood, youth, and womanhood, stages of life independent to a degree far beyond what is conceded? We are free agents—how can we be free agents if constituted to be passively acted upon? and acted upon to an indefinite extent? I can not answer myself. Had I, in earlier years, been closely associated with the gay, it might possibly have been still better with me than it has been. Yet, after all, spirit-life is the real life we lead, surely. And must not the cause of the spiritual warrior, of necessity, be

far nobler than that of the spiritual sluggard? Is not real suffering to be preferred to senseless excitement, to superficial enjoyment? My soul, preserve thyself for ever from inanity! it were better to be a beast of the field, than a thoughtless mortal.—It must be so, to the fullest extent, the fullest fullness of the saying, that knowledge is suffering; the two things are identified.—Welcome, then, to every kind of suffering, if wisdom comes with it, and is it.

"Yes; had other circumstances of life attended me, I might have it to record, that my childhood in this place was gay, light-hearted, full of fun and frolic, the merriest of the merry; it is possible, but I can not really believe it would have been so; it is not my nature, it never was in my nature, to enjoy as the young enjoy; and had it ever been, capacity to find delight thus would surely have soon worn itself out. I am glad to believe I had not the capacity; for those thus endowed, surely this is true, know the most of revulsion, weariness, heart-sickness, disappointment. I am convinced that, even as far as childhood is concerned, the merriest creature could never have enjoyed more, if as much as I did, when, in those blessed days, I walked about with Weare, helping him work in his little garden, looking over his books, or waiting on Mrs.



Dugganne, and doing, with all my heart, too, such service for her as I could.

"Ah, my God! was not my heart thankful and grateful, then? Was there not acceptable service rendered to Thee, when 'according to knowledge' I made it my glad duty to be good, and obedient, and respectful to my deliverers? Was I not, even before I had dreamed of the existence of the unseen master-spirit, and in my ignorance of myself, even thus rendering homage and service acceptable to Thee?"

"I had never been taught anything but how to work, and I had often labored far beyond my strength, though in a slovenly, unskilful way. My services had been extorted, and rendered because there was no way of evading the extortion; but now in what a different spirit I did what was required of me! Love makes a pastime of labor, indeed.

"We are and I never played as I think other children do. Certainly, certainly not as those miserable little ones did in the place from which I came. They quarrelled, became angry with one another, and in their very sports seemed to be not happy, as I understood happiness; they did not know what it was to love. Mine was a 'solitary soul' among them, I had never until this entrance on a new stage of life enjoyed; my

soul was fashioned and destined to partake of pleasures of which as yet it knew nothing whatever.

"I could not read; I knew not a letter or a printed word. How thoroughly ignorant I was! We are promised that he would teach me how to read; and day after day he produced his books with that good intention, but it was so much easier for us to talk, and walk about, that we made small headway in this work; and it was his mother, his adorable mother, who taught me finally, and she it was who taught me everything worth knowing, even by her example, that highest lesson I have yet acquired, love for her son. And that lesson, can I attribute it to her, as of her teaching? Who would ever have asked, or thought of asking me to love him? Wherefore, then, since it is an homage rendered, unsought, unasked even, do I write of it here so calmly, without misgiving, dread, or shame? I have not even thought to wonder if he loves me. In giving to his character, as I have more especially of late, my keenest and intensest study, I have found matter for rejoicing, and the purest satisfaction has attended this rendering of homage, because I know he is worthy to receive all the homage I can render. My love seems the last thing I should be ashamed to confess to my-



self; it is a beautiful, pure, and holy offering, just because it has never been spoken, and never can, nor shall be. It can not, it will not be spoken, for I have perceived of late that he has been making me as much a study as I have made him; and at the conclusion of this investigation, he has not said to his soul, I love her. And—no, I would not have him say it. I would not have him think, or feel it; for the moment it asks for return, love becomes a mere selfish passion, becomes the very commonest thing—transforms itself into that image which has been so often polluted, degraded, and outraged, a low brute passion that consumes itself. I must never know such love. Ah, Weare! you would, I am convinced, for the first time understand me, could you read these words.

"I thought, when I went into, and took up my abode in my new home, that happiness itself dwelt there. I could not conceive a more beautiful dream of what life might be than met my eyes when they wandered about the well-kept, lovely cottage. I could think of no better fortune than belonged to Mrs. Dugganne and her son. It was the judgment, the imagining of a child—a foolish, uninitiated child. If there be a place on this earth where happiness dwells, save as a maimed, imperfect thing, a deformity,

beautiful, but also painful to look upon, I know not even yet. It surely was not to be found where I imagined.

"I had supposed, besides, that my two friends, with the servants, were all the members of the household; but about a month after my going there, the father of Weare, Mr. Dugganne, came home. He had been, it appeared, on a long journey, and returned unexpectedly, as I thought, for I had heard nothing of him, nor of his probable coming. His appearance brought no apparent joy to his wife or child. They seemed too much afraid of him to be glad when he was with them; or, I thought so, for they moved about, and spoke, and looked, as I knew I had done when I had been unhappy, or in terror; and more than once in the first week of his return I saw tears in the eyes of Weare, and that was an evidence of grief and disquietude I had never seen him give before.

"I remember I almost hated this man at first sight, before he had either spoken to, or taken the least notice of me. And it could have been but for this reason only, which I have learned to explain to myself since seeing more of the world; the emotion was undefinable when first experienced, but even to my childish heart he was evidently one of those human beings calculated

to, and who indeed seem to live only to, make the misery of others; to be the cross of the meek, patient, and long-suffering, who might otherwise—but for them—find this life too bright and beautiful. Evidently life had not been given Mr. Dugganne for any fixed individual purpose, for he accomplished no destiny—he wrought no work.

“Mr. Dugganne was a large person, and really magnificent (as my memory and his portrait testify), as far as the animal nature went. But his face had a peculiar expression, a haggard look, and his voice an untranslatable, but felt tone, which always affected me in the strangest magnetic manner. I never heard it, even when he was in the merriest moods, but melancholy pervaded my soul, and tears gathered in my eyes. Not because he appealed in any way to my sympathies; I do not know the reason. Yet it made me pity him, child as I was, servant as I was, doubtless, to his thinking. It must have been because of my impression, which deepened in after-days to a conviction that he himself was so thoroughly wretched.

“Very long it was before I knew anything of the real cause of the silence, oppressiveness, and heaviness, that reigned in the house, from the day of his coming home. But I learned it, at

last, in sad and awful scenes. Mr. Dugganne was a DRUNKARD. I use the horrid word with all the loathing and disgust which another person might, and surely would feel, in reading it. Our language has not another such word—I could attach no other to it—powerful to express the utter, unconquerable aversion, sorrow, shame, and scorn, that fills my soul even now when I recall it. They have, indeed, sought out many and hellish devices! To the mother and son, I verily believe, there was no other name known among men so dreadful as this, of drunkenness. In learning it Mrs. Dugganne's face had grown pale, and her life weary. And by its outward bearing, its living force, how clouded were the early days of Weare.

“But it was upon her that the bitterness of the anguish, and disappointment, and shame, fell. It was upon her pure and holy nature, which shrunk from, and yet bore the association; it was upon her sanctified and consecrated nature, that the sorrow and the trial were chiefly laid. In vain had she striven with, and prayed for him—there was none mighty and willing to save. How horrible it was! As I ponder upon it now, and understand it all, I do wonder, more and more. To think of the gentle nature, the yearning, loving heart, the noble mind, kept

for years in a state of slavish bondage to the base passions of that man! To think of the weariness she overcame—the disgrace she endured—the bitter thoughts she subdued—the victory she obtained! How glorious, yet how terrible for her! How selfish, beastly, and abominable in him—nay, how extreme, beyond thought, his condemnation!

“How is it the idea has gained ground, that for crime such as this (is it not crime for a mortal to bring down his capacities from their high place to a grade below that of the brute?) how is it that society has learned to think only with a sigh of regret, or wonder, of the condition of the inebriate’s wife? I can easily conceive the righteous indignation that would be roused against the woman, who should, by this manner of excess, work the wo and disgrace of her household. Is there a man in creation who would patiently and lovingly continue to make his abode with her who stooped willingly and wittingly to this degradation? Would he think, even if he could endure her for a companion, that she was a fit, an allowable guide, pattern, mother, for his children? Would he endure such a desecration of household gods? Would he bear till death had ended her shameful career? And is a man, and if so, why? any

more fit, under such circumstances, pursued by, overcome by such lust, to guide and direct his offspring?—to be called a father, a husband? How can it be said or thought, that all marriage vows are not virtually broken by such vicious indulgence? How can any mortal be even justified in enduring a show of union, when the marriage covenant is virtually annulled? Is it less than a crime to suffer such union?

“I knew no real return of the extreme, grievous sorrow which had once been my only portion and apparent heritage, from the time of my first entering that home till one day when I found Weare bitterly weeping.

“There was a loud noise, as of angry, quarrelling voices in the house. Such sounds I had heard before, but never there; and I stole away into the garden afraid; I knew not what to do with myself. There I found Weare; I was so glad to find him there, that, without thinking of what I did, I ran up to him, saying, ‘Oh, I’ve been so frightened! I’m so glad to see you here!’ He seemed to know of what I was afraid, at least, he did not ask me, he only wept, and I with him. How or why I dared do it I know not, if it was not perhaps with the mere confidence of a child who also has suffered much, but

I laid my arms about him, as though he had been my brother, saying as I did so, 'Weare, are n't you happy?' He did not seem inclined to refuse reply, as I did once, when he asked me that same question. He looked up; he was about to answer, but a sudden cry startled us; it came apparently from the cottage. 'Hush! mother!' he exclaimed, and, with one impulse, we ran toward the house. There was no one killed or hurt, as we at first, in childish terror, imagined there might be. No one injured, no one in danger, save a poor wretched mortal who was in danger of eternal condemnation. I was so frightened, so beside myself with the scene before me, that I would have escaped to the neighbors for help, but Weare anticipated my design, and, without a word, stopped me as I was hastening from the house. Pale as death, his eyes glowing like fire, he motioned me into another room, but go I would not, and he made no move to go himself. He could do nothing, nor could I, but stand and gaze upon his father, as he lay writhing upon the floor in a drunken fit. I never saw such a look of inexpressible sorrow and misery, as his face wore, while he stood there watching his parents, too weak to help them, but fully capacitated to feel and know the horror of the scene before him. Neither of the

servants was in the house at the time; and so, with her own hands Mrs. Dugganne raised her husband. The strength of a giant seemed in her, and sorely such was needed; it came from a giant heart. She lifted, half carried, half drew him to a couch that stood in the room, and laid him on it, looking upon him all the while, not as an outraged, oppressed, abused woman might have been pardoned for doing, but forgivingly, and even tenderly! Could she have loved while she trembled for him, while she feared him? Is it possible, that while in the heart of man disgust and aversion must inevitably follow the infliction of such wrong on him, it is in the nature of woman to love, TO LOVE, even in such extremity? Oh, what are we? Where has Mrs. Dugganne, MOTHER, here will I call her so, where has she found the source of all her strength? Is it, indeed, in what she calls God? Or, is it the imagination called Faith, which gives, as I sometimes think, all power to the understanding? Is it more than imagining on her part? Has it ever in any case, been more than the determined will that upholds mortals?

It was a sight for a painter! The mental, spiritual agony working in her pale face, and the physical pain manifested in his. A drunkard, and his patient and forgiving wife. Happy,

most happy and favored, the mortal who must from imagination, draw the coloring for this picture!

"I did not then know how it had all happened, nor what it all meant. I thought Mr. Duganne was naturally ill, and they did not enlighten me; but I learned only too soon, when I went in after-days to school, and other children became associated with me, and confided in me, and sought my confidence in turn, as children will and do. From them I learned sufficient to understand exactly what my dear honored guardian had proved life to be; but I needed not to ask them how she had borne the trials of her life. I could never, after receiving this sort of enlightenment, think of Mr. Duganne without indignation, nor without contempt. I was a child, and a child is no fool, but oftentimes wise in judgment, and even in predilection. He was kind to me, as kind as he knew how to be; but I had preferred to be maltreated by him. Who wants to receive kindness or favor from one bearing a source of such injustice as welled within his heart? I had stood in awe of him at first, his stature was so great, and he looked so magnificent, in comparison with all men I had ever seen; but when I became aware of his loathsome sin, and that to act upon it, in and through it, was become the

purpose of his life, I, even I, felt above him. I knew how to feel ashamed of and sorry for him.

"I have never asked, nor do I know the story of their first married years. I know nothing definite respecting their history previous to the time of my coming here. But of this I feel assured, it was on account of Mr. Duganne's misdoing in the last part of his life, that his wife lived in such a plain and strictly retired way; for she was fitted by birth, and education, and bearing, to fill any place that she had chosen in the Richmond society.

"In those days my place in the family was no matter for wonder or comment among the friends of Mrs. Duganne. I never thought nor cared to know what my real position in the house was. I am sure, however, that I have never seemed to Weare less than a sister, and all that he has done for and to me has been worthy of a brother. . . . When we were younger I went, part of the time, to one of the district schools with him; he has played, studied, and conversed with me as he would hardly have been allowed to do with a menial, whose duty was only to work, and receive her wages. It may be that some thought of me as of a servant, but certain am I that no upper servant even, was ever treated as I. When I had grown old and stronger, and might with

justice have been pushed back into that sole relation, to be taught there of a new place, and new duties, it was not done to me. Already the kind thought and appreciation of Mrs. Duganne had laid out another course for me. And she thinks, perhaps, that now all is finished—is all finished with me, for me? I am certainly to her now, and always have been, to some extent, a daughter. The service demanded of me is only such as might be asked of a daughter, less than is required of many a child, and I am well aware that many a daughter has never felt the love, the filial gratitude, which the love and friendship of Mrs. Duganne has inspired in me. I must, in some sense, have taken the place of a child in her heart, or she could never have done for me all she has. I do not well understand how this relationship existing between us now, was brought about. Did she, on the day of my great rescue from that first remembered home, design this high place for me, or rather me for it? I know, or, at least, it is in my power to conceive, how, once entered into, this relation maintains itself. But what good angel inspired her at first (before she knew me for what I am) with the belief that I was worthy of exaltation into her love and favor? Weare Duganne, could you not answer me? Has the mother, in

her maternal fondness, looked through your eyes? Has she reposed confidence in one whom she believes her son trusts to the utmost? Can it be so?—

“We were always much together, Weare and I. She never obstructed our intercourse. It early grew to be as free as that existing between brother and sister; yet it was not such—no, for we have made a study of each other's nature and character as brothers and sisters never do, in a wholly critical mood. They, I imagine, are content to love with the heart—they do not call in the aid of the understanding. After all, we were never as brother and sister.

“Weare has the very soul of an artist. His thoughts are full of that poetry which vents itself in sound, in music. After Mr. Duganne's death, eight years ago (happy, yet dreadful event! alas, that the death of any human being should be proved a happy event from the sense of relief it brings to survivors!—and yet who shall say this does not often prove a verity?) while the education of Weare was being conducted in Richmond, his attention was much directed to the cultivation of his musical talent, and in this he could have no better, or more judicious teacher, than his own dear mother.

He has inherited his taste and talent in this particular, as in many others from her. Their voices chord in song delightfully—would that I could join them!—but, for the gift of hearing, and loving music, God be thanked! it brings with it a pure and sweet satisfaction, and where the expression of it has been denied, the reception of it is surely the next most joyous thing!

“I think no human heart ever conceived a love that equalled, or in any way resembled, the love I have for Weare. Can I analyze this love? It is not like that my friend who married yesterday has for her husband, nor anything like it, I am sure. I am far from adoring him blindly. Yet his countenance shone before me, when I first beheld it, like the face of an angel; and it has never lost that angelic, glorious look to me. His reverential regard for his mother is the most complete offering of filial affection I have ever beheld. It is the deepest, sincerest, purest. He is himself beautiful, and pure, and good, and he is strong, too, in a way. He gives far nobler proof of manliness than my friend can possibly find in the man she so passionately adores. Yet could I never worship Weare. I can conceive of, though I have never seen such, a less perfect, though really stronger,

grander manhood. I can conceive, too, of a love more absorbing, and more satisfactory, perhaps, but not of a love more beautiful, than I have for him. I have not given him the affection called fraternal—or not that merely: I never have found myself voiceless, will-less, trembling before him, as though I had in him a master—as it is said women often find to be true of the men they love. I believe, indeed, that when we were younger, I could understand him much more readily and intimately than now; for since my own knowledge of self, and this new ambition has roused to life within me, and my nature has begun to unfold itself from the very Heart of Life, I have found myself at times looking with wonder on him. It almost seems as though I had passed beyond him—as though I were standing in a new light—as though, in looking backward and forward, I were looking through a new medium, and not with my old understanding. An impending something—and what, what is it?—has grown up within me. I do not see, as once, with his eyes. There seems to be a necessity laid upon us, compelling us to differ. We certainly are not one.

“At my dear mother-friend’s suggestion, which she gave, I know, because she perceived my earnest inclination, I have begun to read more



closely, to study more intensely, and there has been, in consequence, an entire change in the current of my thoughts. Is it because they rest less often on him, the real, and turn more frequently to the imaginative and the abstract? Are my thoughts, then, becoming alienated from him? Nay! Could ambition destroy love? that certainly would not be possible. But is it, can it be true, that I am turning, or that it would be possible for me to turn with pride, or with unwomanly self-reliance, from him? That can not be. Self-reliance, yes, self-reliance, is a very grand thing; but the grandeur of all its possibilities would be lost to me, if it permitted me to live in peace away from him for ever.

"How shall I ever, in the least degree, repay my mother for her kindness of the past? Or, how be sufficiently grateful for this new-suggested force in, and inclination for, study? It seems as though I were indebted for all to her. Yet—did she give me this mind to cultivate? No! she has not given me the power, but the opportunity. She might have kept me in ignorance of the great world of hidden knowledge, and still have done her duty by me in the way that a thousand others, in similar circumstances, would and do perform it. But that has not been her way. She has seen in me one of God's creatures, or a

creature endowed with intellect as well as life, with capacity for a higher range of enjoyment, that has little to do with the mere animal nature. She has felt bound, apparently, the blessed, glorious woman! to heap blessing on blessing; and no one was ever bound by a stronger tie of love to another than I to her. Even as her son is, she has permitted me to be a student and a thinker—a busy student, a close and energetic thinker.

"And studying so much together, we have learned in the most favorable way. We have done much toward unfolding each other's mind. Thus we have been united in a really closer and more intimate bond of fellowship than we could otherwise have been. We have gone over a vast field of thought together; and I can not help perceiving, neither can he, how diverse our natures are proved by this process. We have not seen truth with the same degree of vision, nor always in the same light. Our ambition, I am convinced, became first aroused in these multitudinous discussions—my ambition rather. I am not certain that he has what is called ambition; but there has certainly been with both of us an earnest and an honest desire to improve ourselves. An unbounded desire to learn all things has marked my way as a student thus far, and so it



has marked his. The attainments we made, of themselves, served to excite us mutually.

"We have had extraordinary discussions; and some of them of such a nature that they must with us be endless. Our restlessness has done for each other that which time usually accomplishes for the student. We have developed each other's intellects, have forced each other on to conclusions we might otherwise have been years in reaching; and now, here I have fallen on this word, this strange word, LOVE . . . !

"Baffled and awed by its mystic sound, my heart, soul, and mind, repeat it, hour by hour. I can not make out the meaning of the word when it points toward him. Why have I not, or rather, why can I not, why should I not, go to him, and argue, as in other matters, about its nature? Why is it, that we have never once by chance, touched on this word love, LOVE?"

## II.

From these disconnected papers, these fragments of an autobiography, let us turn to other fragments, evidently portions of a journal, written at intervals, the whole of them bearing later date than Isa's manuscript.

"Strange mortals are we! Here I find myself surveying and criticising my own thoughts, much in the way that an uninterested observer would, in a pure amazement. For, whenever I feel inclined to congratulate myself that it is I who have rescued Isa Lee from poverty, dependence, and low station, another sort of pride, a glorying that I can but indulge in as a human being, relating to her genius, constrains me to acknowledge that she must have come out from the million, peculiar, extraordinarily beautiful, and wonderfully gifted as she is. I think my mother hardly understands this girl. She much more than baffles me, and I have made her a study. The more I think of it, the more it actually seems that she is never more than half herself before us. And if that is the case, what a mental life must she lead! It seems to me as though she were continually thinking how she

is to get the better of, or rise above her felt obligation. Would that, if really true, add to, or detract from the nobility of her nature? Why should she trouble herself with the thought, when all human life is a state of dependence? I would that she might altogether forget the obligation, or else that she might think of it only as she ought, and so let it bind us, as it surely would, in a tie of friendship so powerful that nothing could break it."

"What surprises me, of all things, is Isa's entire consciousness of ability. This does not reveal itself, as ordinarily in boys and girls, by an obtrusive self-confidence, but in a never-failing readiness to attempt all things. There is no shrinking back. Yet it is not boldness in any common presentment. The working of this girl's spirit is a phenomenon."

"I begin to think her ambition exceeds all I have ever observed in my contemplations of human nature. It is not of the usual nature of ambition, but of a spirit that strikes me as almost unpardonable in a woman. I am convinced, however, that her aim is not simply to exceed others; or, at least, it is not so much that, as an endeavor to educate every power and ca-

capacity of her mind. To strengthen it to the utmost possible degree, is her endeavor. Every day proves it; by incessant vigilance she is learning to master herself; is she doing this that she may in turn master others? Mother would smile at the apparent absurdity of such a question relative to a girl of eighteen years; but is it an irrelevant or idle question when connected with Isa? She surprises every one by her diligence, and the celerity with which she masters the principles of whatever comes under her notice. I am well convinced that few things or ideas within the grasp of mortal mind are too deep for her. It would seem a happy thing for her, had she less of talent, or less of beauty; but it could not be the wish of any wise person to repress the unfoldings of her genius, or to repel her to a lower grade of society again; indeed, she could not be repelled, save by miracle. It is in her to rise, and all the laws and customs of the world must be set aside for her. But should she go into the world, what will become of her? In what way is her mind really unfolding?—to what purpose?—to what end? It makes me shudder, this thought—if chance should send her among evil influences?—but, peace, soul! chance will not send her; it was Providence that directed, impelled me toward her at first,

and Providence will not throw her, fearfully endowed with genius and beauty as she is, helpless upon the world."

"What could she have meant this morning, when, looking from her book, she said, in that strange, decided way, so peculiarly hers, which I know troubles my mother so much: 'Will, human will, is next to, it leans up close against God—God first—yes, he is first of all powers, and mortal will next.' She said it in a way that implied a more than half doubt on her part, as to whether God really were first; or, if he were indeed anything more than the will with which man might be identified. It is a matter for grief and regret, that she thinks so much of such things. Religion has so many stumbling-blocks to the mere understanding! And she—is she one to kneel and adore where she can not comprehend and fathom? If she realizes the true nature of faith at all, is matter for doubt. I wish that she might, of all things, attain to a state of unquestioning submission, for she is too much a skeptic; she reasons and questions more than can be well, for her, at least.—But what an intellect she has! How far she can soar without weariness! She looks at truth with eagle eyes. I always think of lightning repel-

ling lightning, when I see her in earnest conversation; there is such a flashing of conscious power from those eyes—such an eloquent glowing of light in them! It would be a dangerous thing for one to attempt ruling her, as a weak woman might be ruled. I can never speak of her, nor think of her, as of an ordinary woman—and it annoys me to feel that she is more than half conscious of the advantage she has over me in the use of words. What an argument was that she held this very day.

"We were conversing of the government of God (and it is singular that she should so persist in discussing such a point); in the excitement of our conversation she called me puritanic, and asked me why it was that I suffered myself to be bound by 'such exceedingly narrow, timid views,' as I always advanced—why I did not at once give myself liberty of unlimited range of vision, and, without fear, study and search into all things. I knew very well what she meant, and exclaimed solemnly, 'What! the deep things of God? There is a bar across that path. We must not go beyond it. We have no right to attempt to penetrate the Holy of Holies. We must not seek to pierce that veil which in mercy to our weakness, screens the presence and the power of Jehovah.'

"‘It is a cowardly argument at best,’ she replied with emphasis. ‘There is no limit given but that which our own will regulates. No other voice than man’s own mental capacity, ever said, *thus far, no farther*. I can readily imagine how one with sufficient perseverance, energy, and courage, might pierce and solve all mystery, and stand, yes, even in the flesh, stand face to face with spirit.’

"‘Hush!’ I exclaimed, throwing into my voice all the mental and physical authority of which I was at the time master; ‘I say to you thus far, no farther! Go on at this rate and you will halt ere long but scarcely this side of ruin. You will be lost beyond redemption.’

"She looked on me much as the spirit of a tempest might look on a reed that it had absolute mastery over, and then said in an untransferable, sarcastic tone, ‘Are you indeed so ignorant as not to know the limitless power of thought? What do you mean? I have been accustomed to look upon you as a master, not, understand me, as an ordinary servant would—I have never been treated as a servant here. But by reason of your education, and great social advantages, and,’ she added, with a gravity which seemed full of mockery, ‘because you are of the sex that claims mastership as a natural

right. Be careful; you will deprive yourself of my allegiance by voluntarily placing limitations on power. Are you willing to acknowledge that I, a woman, have outstripped you in will, in thought, in imagination?

"‘In imagination? yes! In thought? in will? You have not proved it, and it is not my way, you know, Isa, to confess faith in a mere imagining that has only words for arguments,’ answered I.

"‘Look you!’ she said, commandingly, ‘I am eighteen years old—you are not so young. I came from a poorhouse [what a lofty scorn she betrayed in the manner of that admission], and I can not date beyond that—I don’t know how I came there. I am a mere girl—you are a man. I have been taught, faithfully and kindly taught, by your dear mother and yourself. Your advantages outwardly, as some might estimate them, have been greater than mine. I am handsome, at least I have been told so a thousand times, and it would be sheerest vanity in me to pretend to ignorance of the fact. I could have all the admiration of the class below you, nay, perhaps, of your class, if I chose, but I scorn and loathe it. I will have none of it. Now, tell me, if I went out this day with you into the world, dependent on my own energies, and you on

yours, do you not think I should be able to hold an equal race with you? Do you not think I would reach as noble and as honorable a goal? And what on earth could help me to such triumph? My own will, Weare, and not another power! It is that which has educated me; nothing but that could have made me aught but a menial. It is that which has made me spurn the mere admiration, the debasing, contemptible admiration, men would give me. . . I have out-talked—I have convinced you, perhaps? Have I not? Is there any limit to the possible, with a determined will?"—

"Yes, there is a limit!"

"What is it, then?" she asked, impatiently.

"A higher will."

"And that?"

"The will of our creator, God."

"It is as far as you will ever go," she said in a vexed and disappointed tone.

"I trust in Him it is," I answered. "What have you been reading, Isa? Where and when did you learn to cherish such ideas? You are passing through such constant transformations that I quite lose you."

"I have thought; I think, in the solitude of my own mind. And I do not wish you to imagine I consider my intellect any extraordi-

nary power, either. I am truly sorry if it is going to prove itself a keener power than yours. I have no idea that it will, however. You are only less brave than I, to speak the simple truth. You are less brave, but you are no coward, Weare. I know there is difference in the power or capacity of mental growth and grasp in individuals, just as you see men with different powers of vision. Some to whom the broadest rainbow is not an apparent inch in width; others who are endowed with perfect organs of sight.

"Yes," I answered deliberately, "that is all fact sufficiently well established. But there are wild fancyings in the world, dreamers, and some gifted, to their own apprehension, with second sight. Because their visions are sometimes grand and splendid, shall we yield ourselves to them, distrusting our own capacity? shall we have faith in the dreamers, and repose with confidence in the visions of the seers?"

"She looked fixedly upon me for a moment, as though to read my inmost thoughts; then, as having come to some conclusion about them, she arose, gathered up her books, and said: 'When you agree to argue with me as you must yet argue, if we speak on such subjects at all, I will agree to listen. But I promise you, Weare, you

shall be astonished when I show you what thought and will can do for a person.'

"'Are you a seer?' I asked.

"'Not at all.'

"'Are you a prophet?'

"'No.'

"'You are a fairy, at all events,' I exclaimed, and, gazing upon her, I could not conceal my admiration. I took her hand, but she quietly withdrew it, and said, 'I am no fairy, as you very well know. Are you not ashamed to think such foolishness; at least, to speak it? Nor am I a spirit: if I were,' and she laid marked stress on the words, 'if I were, I would raise such a perfect tempest of thought within you as your imagination has never conceived; and I would force you, by your own will, through that mental commotion. You should find a climax somewhere.'

"'As you have?' I could but say.

"'As I have,' she echoed, escaping from the room.

"Her words have been ringing in my mind all this day. I can but think she is some foreign spirit; nor am I at all sure that she has not raised a tempest of thought within me. But whither would such a will lead, if I would be guided by it?"

"I am confounded! What end shall we—what end must we, arrive at? Is it possible that mortal man ever held such conversation with woman as I have held with Isa to-day? We had been reading a book of poems together, when, turning from them suddenly, she said with a voice that revealed a tone of thought very different to that one would suppose naturally suggested by such a volume, and in a way that convinced me she had given very little attention to the verses of the poet:—

"'I am not sure, after all, that the point at which we tried to meet and agree, the other day, is a real one. There is one thing I can not understand. My mind continually asks it: Why is not will God?"

"'It is in one sense,' I answered, 'as you well know. The first, the great will, is God; and, properly speaking, there is no will beside his.'

"'But I don't wish to hear any of those sweeping and general assertions. They are very imposing and grand to all who dare not approach them. I strangely mistake if it is not to fancy and superstition that they owe their great power. You and I can reason of such things in another way than that of the crowd. We are not bound to believe all we hear. You speak of God in

man; is not man's will, his capacity, meant by that? Why is not our own will the God in us? It seems passing strange that the ideas, or rather, idea, should ever have been so maimed, dissociated. Certainly, Weare Dugganne, in so far as we will to do, or to create, and just so far as we will, we can, we are unfolding the God within us. There is, there can be, no revelation, but that we make for ourselves. Man's soul is the only revelator.'

"'Unfolding the God within us!' I repeated impetuously; for I grew desperate, looking upon her and hearing such words escaping her lips. 'Say the devil within us! Look around you, Isa. You have seen something of the world—not much, but enough to enable you to form a correct judgment, if you only will. Tell me, where do you see the man, where did you ever see the man, whose deeds do, or can, speak of the active, possessed, and possessing God within him—his God?'

"'Where do you not see him, Weare? if you would but use your own gift of mental sight! What! do you not know that mere terms are nothing? What is the devil but an extreme God—extreme to wickedness—the inclination in man, the will, and the power consequently, to do evil continually? And yet, do you not know,

also, that the veriest vagabond in creation can become a saint? You do infinite injustice, cruel wrong, to your own human nature, in setting limitation to the power of human will.'

"'Is it possible that I understand you? How, then, do you account for the ability of the sinner to become the saint? From what source do you say it is drawn!'

"'You know as well as I; but I will repeat, it is from the all-mighty, omniscient, omnipresent, human will. I might lay myriad proofs before you. We have studied together. The world of the past has been more fully opened to your research than to mine. But you need to turn the leaves of history over again. Or, look merely into our present, what do you find? a blank, if not all around you tokens and evidences of the workings of the human will.'

"'In the natural world—yes, I admit that—and in the intellectual world, too. Man *is*, in one sense, the master of matter. But, reflect a moment.' She smiled as I said this: as if to say, You need not ask me to reflect. 'Has he ever, can he royally control matter? Does he not for ever, turn which way he will, meet with a limit? Can he create a world? Can he occasion an earthquake? Can he even command or see the wind? or cause the unfolding of a flower?



Ah, you perceive you are condemned out of your own mouth. Confess: you have received an absurd idea. And as regards the unfolding of the higher life—oh, Isa, how much less is it true there! In the life of the soul, will has its work, its ability to do: its presence, indeed, is necessary so long as the soul is chained to earth. But it is not the chief, the grand, effectual power, is it?

“‘Yes! to my mind. Why did the heart of man ever suggest to him the words, “Be ye perfect?” How came one ever to think such words, even? What meaning have they? Why is the dying prayer of your Christian, after a lifetime of worship, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner?” Whence did any mortal derive the idea of making such command? According to your way of arguing, it can be reconciled with no principle of justice or law of common sense.’

“‘Our Savior, the Lord Jesus, who was infinitely wise to teach us, and infinitely able to help us in keeping his commandments, meant simply that we must make it our constant aim and endeavor to be perfect.’

“‘But, striving does not always, does never through itself, accomplish, you would say. Why should that teacher, the man Christ Jesus, have ordained us to, or rather enjoined upon

us the performance of what is said to be an impossible duty?—said by the very prayers and confessions of some we are wont to look to (whether wisely or not is questionable), as knowing experimentally all about the matter. If such a confession is a mere mockery, I know not. It seems to me you are in a fair way for proving that.’

“‘And have you gone so far as to question God? Will he be inquired of by creatures such as we? Isa, this human life will not see the termination of our grand duty of striving to enter in at the strait gate. It may not be till eternal ages have rolled on, that we shall in any degree accomplish that command, ‘Be ye perfect.’

“‘You assume one thing, and not another!—time, and not power! How ridiculous! how unjust! What right have you to assume one and not the other?’

“‘A very clear right, Isa—that of reason.’

“‘Well, what is reason?’

“‘The light given us.’

“‘What gives the light? who gives it? where does it come from?’

“‘God.’

“She seemed not to hear my answer, but went on speaking with increased vehemence.

“‘Are you then a mere passive agent—a sort



of wooden image—a thing to receive light, without ability to win it, to create it for yourself? Is man, indeed, a mere machine, and nothing more whatever? No, Weare! you shall not have it so. You argue in this way merely because you will; because others called wise men have argued so; because you dread this going and seeking, or creating light for yourself; because you fear being called an innovator in the fields of thought. Let me tell you, none but cowards will think to call you so. Ah, I pity you! for you see things in this way only because you will. You go thus far and will not go farther, when no manner of bar impedes you, but your own unwillingness to go on!

“‘Shall you go on?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Whither?’

“‘To the limits of thought.’

“‘When will you reach them?’

“‘NEVER!’

“I began to speak again; the first word I uttered was, death, she interrupted me, saying:—

“‘I want to hear nothing about that from you. Don’t take up any such old, wornout argument. I shall not die until I arrive at the point in mental life when such a change will be necessary.’

“I could not answer her—we were both si-

lent—we had spoken with excitement, and for myself I was exhausted by the subjects we had striven to speak about. I reviewed my words, and presently said:—

“‘I must confess I do not like to hear you speak about these things. Isa, what has become of your old faith? What can have induced this most extraordinary change in you? Is it, can it be that you have merely willed to be uncommon? I beseech you remember too much reverence and godly fear cannot exist in the human heart. Man can not stand in too much awe of his Maker. I declare, I get almost afraid of you. It seems just as though I were about to hear you deny the existence of any other power than human will. Nay, have you not denied it? As though you were about to say, God is will—will is man’s power—is MAN—doing thus away with all you most need to lean upon in the emergencies, and even in the performance of the every-day duties of this changeful life. Dear friend, let us at least wait till we are older, and wiser, before we speak of such things. We can not help thinking of them. Well, then, in Heaven’s name, let it be prayerfully, humbly, with full trust in him. We are nothing in his hands.’”

"We had been occupied with our music to-night, mother and I. Isa was a silent listener. But not a composed and charmed listener, as she usually is; for, while we sang, she paced the room, in great evident unrest. Mother was called away just as we were finishing a new song, and Isa and I were left alone. This had no sooner happened than her disquietude seemed to vanish; seating herself upon an ottoman (and an enthroned queen could not have looked more regally proud and noble), she said:—

"I crave an audience."

"I immediately signified a desire to listen; and she expressed herself thus: 'I saw in this morning's paper a full account of the execution of Peter Grange. He denied his guilt, as you are aware, till the last day of his life, and then acknowledged it. His words on the scaffold seemed to have made a sensation. The editors, sapient moralists! draw from them a grand lesson, whereby to edify the mothers of the land. Do you know the language to which he gave utterance? He was neglected in his childhood. His mother never attended to the education of his soul; his sabbaths, through her neglect, proved abused privileges; his childhood was left to harden in the hot sunlight of sin. And so it was that he brought his mother before the

minds of that people, and of all people who will read about it, an object for pious horror and condemnation; and, by the aid of the short-sighted, credulous editorial corps, she is convicted in the court of public opinion. Nay, do not speak! I knew that boy's mother, Margaret Grange. I knew the boy, too. They lived the greater part of one winter at the poorhouse, while I was there. I recollect them very well; and there is no reason for believing, Weare, that you or I will ever prove so patient, humble, and hopeful, as that woman was. Peter went from the world with the most horrible lie on his soul; it was the crowning of all the guilt of his short life. I am glad his mother is in her grave; she went there broken-hearted. Now I have told you the living truth of the matter. What possessed that boy to make a fiend of himself? what, if not just the will to do it? He willed to be an infamous coward; to throw the burden of his life's sin on another? He willed to win, and succeeded in winning, the commiseration of that people. But I am going to set this matter in a right light at once. The public shall know about it. I will not suffer such a defamation to gain credence."

"Very well; you are quite right in that. But think of this thing in another light for a moment. The mother willed to save her child;

that is, she endeavored to educate him in the knowledge of godliness, and she failed.'

"'He willed to sin, and he was strongest! His God was mightier than hers. You would never need to hear that could you have seen the two. Forgive me for breaking that sweet song-sound which was in your soul but now. My disturbing words are all said.'

"'You need, perhaps, to ask forgiveness, but not of me, believe me—rather of your own spirit, Isa. I wish you would make an experiment: try that will of yours; for six months, or three, or even one, rid yourself of every distracting thought; seek peace; calm your mind.'

"'Calm myself? How can I?"

"'I use your own, your one grand argument: will to do so: magnetize your ambition, your aspiration, or this restless thought, whatever it may be; put it to sleep; let it have rest.'

"'Weare, I have willed otherwise. I do not desire rest, or peace, or quiet, or tranquillity, if that is only to be gained by cessation of thought. Much would I prefer fighting my way out into a clearer light. Much would I prefer battling always. I love freedom far too well to be satisfied with a quiet, easy bondage. Fetters of any sort fret and weary me. I must be free!"

"'And a free thinker, consequently?"

"'Yes, in the broad sense of that noble name. Weare, I am perfectly astonished when I think of the weakness which people who might be giants, suffer in themselves. What a mighty deal of cowardice there is in this world!"

"She said this, as though thinking aloud, to herself, without a listener—as though she had quite forgotten I was near. Is she not forgetting me altogether, save as a warring, opponent intellect, by which she may prove herself through a constant collision? Oh, I can not endure to think of her losing the friendly, sisterly consciousness and confidence she once had for me. As I looked upon her, and those beautiful, dreaming eyes fixed upon me, I knew her thoughts were far off—she was forgetful of me. She had spoken strange and daring words; but on her face was a bewildering smile, that was no common smile, but an expression, not of mere pleasure, but of ecstatic joy. And I knew she was congratulating her soul that she was not of the cowards she so much despised.

"I went to the piano, and, accompanying myself with it, sung a part of the '*Miserere*.' But the melancholy music seemed to affect her painfully. She exclaimed, 'Not that! do not sing that to-night, but rather JUBILATE. It is the weak, the forlorn, the wretched, because weak,

who can best cry, and who should cry for mercy, whether there be any to hear their cry or not.'

"I obeyed her request, she by her looks and movements joining in the glad song: and I could but think to myself, 'If she would only ask me—she from whom such request might most fitly and beautifully come—to sing for her "I know that my Redeemer liveth!"'

"I grow more and more profoundly conscious of the fact that a spirit, such as has not of late time been given to the flesh, is dwelling under this roof. I would that I dared to become her pupil in turn; but I feel that all I can teach her has been said. She has soared to a height far above me. God in mercy grant that she soars not to make her final home in clouds of darkness! But she has turned—she turns constantly, as though compelled by some natural attraction, to me, bidding me follow where she leads; and it is a wonder with her that I hesitate in obeying. She knows her power—she does teach me—she has taught me—far, far too much—what would she teach? . . . oh, great Heaven! what is this new consciousness that is coming, coming with lava light, and heat, and force, upon me? By all the gods of earth, I love her! Isa! Isa Lee, I love you!

"But has she known what she was doing in this teaching? has she all along been aware of what I did not know nor guess? Nay, nay, I wrong her even by the question. The lesson has been taught, has been learned without suggestion. It has enforced itself. In wooing her, what would become of me? Should I be wooing the whirlwind or the comet? Should I, indeed, go up to heaven, or down to the abyss of darkness, if I took her for my guide? Whither, in the name of all things wonderful, does her strange, ay, her grand intellect direct? What manner of spirit is that which is hurrying her on? Is she alone? Is she angel or devil? I degrade myself by the question, by even a momentary doubt as to whether religion is in her heart. Though her pride of intellect—no, it is not that, I know; it is only the consciousness of intellectual power; it is because she is struggling in darkness that the universe seems such an unfixed thing to her. Does she pray for light? O God, help us!"

## III.

LET us leave the manuscript, and the journal, and look for ourselves on Isa Lee and Weare Dugganne.

She who had been the subject of his fervent mental discussion, was one morning pacing to and fro through a small apartment which she called her library. A book was in her hand—her eyes were fixed on its pages, she was evidently committing its ideas to memory. The room was plainly furnished, without one decorative ornament—nothing calculated to distract thought was admitted there, but a great deal to suggest it lay on the book-crowded table, before which she sat many hours of every day. But the student needed not even these outward suggestives, for there was a world within her mind which she trode in constant bewilderment; and the chaos through which she worked her way was crowded with ideas, and themes, and arguments for her.

As our journalist had it in his thought to say, she was more than lovely, she was almost magnificent; time would be sure to make her so. It seemed as though her dark eyes,

“Brightly expressive as the twins of Lœda,”

had an enchantive power peculiarly their own to awaken affection and sympathy. Her face glowed with the health and activity of physical and spiritual life; and her fine, graceful form, which looked equally at home in stately or in meek mood, was what nature had stamped peculiarly aristocratic. The dignified manner was not assumed, it was the unavoidable expression of an inner being; hence it never excited curious speculation, as to how far it was connected with, or occasioned by vanity, or pride, as such.

In any circle she would not merely have attracted attention, but won homage and admiration by that peculiar and commanding beauty.

A slight tap at the door interrupted Isa's studies, and in accordance with her word, Weare Dugganne, much to her surprise, entered the room. He was a young, fine-looking man, scarcely taller than Isa—more firmly and stoutly built—but far less princely in his bearing. You would never have styled him majestic. Besides, in him genius was not so prominent a possession as in her; but he at once struck the discerning observer as being just what he was—a well-educated, right-minded, refined, good man: benevolent, religious, and forbearing. There was an unusual thoughtfulness, resting almost like a shadow on his fine

face this morning, giving to it a solemn expression. The look was borne out by the tone of his voice as he presented himself before Isa, saying,

"I have returned, you see. Have you no greeting for me? or do I annoy you by this sudden re-appearance?"

"Annoy me? no! But what has brought you back, Weare?" was her quiet inquiry.

"I came solely to see you again," he said, speaking very rapidly, as if thus to assure himself, "to say what I wanted courage to say this morning, when I left you. You will indeed think me a coward. . . Perhaps with reason. . ." He paused abruptly, then said as abruptly—"I love you, Isa."

An expression of disappointment, or of grief, and it was difficult for him who was watching her so narrowly to say which, passed over Isa's countenance. As they stood thus together, a thousand emotions were warring in her heart, and in his heart, and Isa's face revealed, by its changeful flush, how deeply she was affected by his sudden declaration. Her tall figure seemed suddenly disrobed of its proud bearing, and the expression her face wore was humbler than any he had ever seen there before. Her eyes drooped beneath his steadfast, inquiring gaze; her will

seemed to have deserted her, and Weare Duganne believed that she had at last found her master—in Love!

But to his surprise, she looked up an instant after, and calmly and steadfastly gazing on him, said:—

"I am sorry you returned—it was—a great mistake, dear Weare."

"A mistake, then, whose consequences are sufficiently important to affect my whole life," he answered, with earnestness and energy.

"Do not say so," she said sorrowfully, and in some excitement. "If the relations we held when I first came into this house have changed, it is only in this (and recollect, by your courtesy)—that we are now as brother and sister. It was an altogether uncommon appreciation of realities on your part which established this precious relationship. Anything different from it can not be. You are, we are, we must be content with this."

"You are saying that from an impulse of your heart?" he asked, looking on her with intense gaze.

She did not answer.

"Have I done wrong in speaking thus? Do I offend you?"

She turned away; no words she could com-

mand would express her mind, as she was determined it should be expressed, if at all. "Shall I leave you?" he asked, in doubt, between his alarm and displeasure, as to what he should do.

"Yes! for Heaven's sake, go!"

"For Heaven's sake, Isa?" he repeated, yet turning as if to obey her.

"For my sake—for your own sake!" she replied, with wild vehemence, changing her position, and looking full upon him. "Yes, in the name, and for the sake of both, go, my brother Weare, and forget what you have said!"

"As you will—you have always conquered me," he answered, almost bitterly. Her face was again hastily averted. He turned toward her as he moved away—she was weeping. He would have led her to a seat, when he saw this emotion, but she stood back with dignity, and nothing but the death-like pallor of her face, and a bright red glow on either cheek, and the tears which she seemed to defy as she met his glance, these traces of her self-conquest alone told her emotion at that moment.

Weare had never seen her so moved before, and he repented his coming heartily as Isa could have wished. He began to speak, to entreat her forgiveness for having so much disturbed her; but he could say nothing to the purpose; and

she interrupted him proudly, as if she would deny herself:—

"You have not disturbed me."

"May I not, then, implore you?"

"Implore nothing of any mortal, Weare," she replied impatiently. "You said that you had returned to speak with me. You spoke, and I gave my answer."

"Oh, Isa!" he exclaimed. There was reproach in his look; there was unbelief, as well as inexpressible tenderness, in his words. She understood his brief ejaculation, and, as if relenting, asked:—

"What would you say, Weare?"

"I have said, what has been the burden of my highest thoughts and hopes for years, Isa—that I love you. And when I asked you to hear of it with patience at least—you—you mocked me!"

"Mocked you! mocked you, Weare? never! never! I—only mock myself. Believe me, believe me, it is not you!"

His face became radiant as she acknowledged so much. How very much it was for her to acknowledge! But he feared to break the silence that followed her words.

"Weare," she said suddenly, "was it this that really brought you back?"

"This alone, Isa."



"Why, why had you not the strength to go?"

"Because all my strength lies in you, as it has for many, many months, Isa."

"You should not have allowed yourself to believe it for a moment."

"The fact was too evident. In short," he said desperately, "you are indifferent to me. If the past has not proved to you that all I have confessed is the truest truth that concerns my life, I despair of proving it now."

"You need not try," she said, so quietly that he again approached her, and she did not turn away.

"We are, if I never saw or knew it before, I do both see and know it now. I know that you love me; that I—" she hesitated, "that I love you." He would have spoken as she, with a very perceptible pride, acknowledged this much. But she waved him back, and then, as if led on by an utterly resistless impulse, she hurriedly approached him, clasped her arms about his neck, and kissed his forehead repeatedly. "Yes, yes, I love you!" she said, frankly; "I have proved it; it is the love of a sister."

"Isa," he exclaimed, bewildered, and half-indignant, "it is not as a brother loves, that I love you;"—"Nor as a sister loves do you love me," he would have added, but he saw how

thoroughly she was aware of this, and he forbore.

"You would say farther," she replied, "but you must not. We are brother and sister, remember that. Now go—my brother! Such words as these must never pass between us again." She spoke seriously, solemnly; but her voice had neither haughty nor harsh sound.

"Have you led me to the heights of hope, to dash me from them with your foot, Isa?" Why will you persist in bidding me 'go!' in calling me 'brother'? You speak coldly; your look freezes me; while I—I feel as though I could never go from you."

"Yet we must never be more one than now," she said.

"We shall, we will, we must!" he answered, slowly and deliberately, with a deep, even tone, which told of an invulnerable purpose formed.

"We must!" she repeated, evidently surprised at his daring.

"We must; for Providence brought us together. And your life has thus been made a necessity to me."

"And yours a necessity to me," he read in her glance.

"I had foreseen a change," she said, speaking with nervous rapidity, "because, my brother,



we have taught and affected each other to the utmost in our power—”

“And that is for all time,” he interrupted.

“It may be; I shall not dispute that. But, you are going from here; and soon you and I will, doubtless, have formed new relations. We must always number the years we have spent together as among the most important of our lives. Still, all in this life will soon be utterly changed for us. Our friends, our impressions, will undergo strange changes. Had you continued your journey, to-day, Weare, without the unfortunate return, you would have found this true, without my telling it.”

She seemed to understand and to share the anguish visible in his face, for her eyes fell before his gaze. She grew pale, and her voice sounded strangely, as she continued: “We shall tread in separate paths of life, Weare, but we shall always preserve an affectionate recollection, a generous recollection of each other, shall we not?”

He was silent, and she seemed to not regret this, but grew courageous again, and her voice strengthened; though it still was, to his ear, fraught with inexpressible sadness, and he knew all that she was trying to hide then in her heart, even from herself. “Yes,” she resumed, we

shall tread in very different paths. You are to be a minister of the gospel, I believe? I have sometimes hoped that you would; I scarcely know why. But if you ever do become such a teacher, be sure that what you unfold to your hearers is the truth. Be sure, be sure! for some will look to you, as I have looked to others—let them not be disappointed, as I have been. When you find yourself among those who are dying in want of the bread of life, do not offer them for nourishment the miserable technicals of theology. I have been led to broken cisterns, when my soul was fainting with thirst. Do you believe I have found anything to revive or sustain me there? I have had to grope my own way, in darkness, to a fountain. It is not that you have drawn from; yet I do believe it is filled with living water. If ever you appear before the people as a guide, remember what it is you bind yourself to do. Let us part now, my brother.”

“And thus?” was all he could say, as he stood lost in amazement before her.

“And thus,” she repeated, lifting his hands, and pressing them to her lips with a passionate fervor that no longer evidenced itself in her words; they were pronounced in a tone entirely calm and cold. “We shall both be laborers;

your harvest will be richer than mine. You will at least be never misunderstood, Weare, be thankful for that! Nature has not written a part of your character in hieroglyphs, which the many in case they can not understand, will be sure to condemn. Let us part."

"You speak as with reproach. Oh, Isa, do you know that what I have understood of your high and royal character, has made me just idolize you?"

She would not answer, but stood as if waiting for, and expecting him to go; but he summoned all his resolution to speak again—he would not depart so.

"In some respects you are surely deceiving yourself," he said. "If, indeed, you have a peculiar mission—and I as firmly believe you have as you do—why can not that mission be performed, when—when—you do not stand as now, alone?"

"Because I must be unfettered, since you will guess and discover, and since you will have this answer from me. And because I shall never, never involve another in my doings."

They were standing together by the table. Isa spoke decisively, as though the interview were now at an end—she looked her expectation that Weare would depart, but irresolute,

feeling it impossible for him to go thus, he unconsciously opened the book she had laid aside when he interrupted her studies that morning. The current of Dugganne's thoughts changed the moment his eyes rested on the contents of the volume; as he hastily and impetuously turned the pages, looked at the pencilled passages, and read some of them, he seemed to forget his disappointment and sorrow, to be even unconscious of her presence and nearness, in a new and absorbing emotion. Then the thought of her returned with tenfold influence—the book fell from his hands—she was watching him—his eyes met hers—she smiled—they forget the past hour's emotion, in another quite as engrossing.

"I understand, I see it all," he said, with a heavy sigh.

"I rejoice to know it," she replied, carelessly.

"Isa—it is unworthy a person of your nature and powers to even touch a work like this. It is pollution."

"Weare, you betray, and you have betrayed in every word addressed to me this day, a most unmanly fear. I have read much, as you know, and I say I regard this work as the most sublime revelation of human intellect I have ever met."

"It pleases you?"

"It delights and amazes me!"

"You are fascinated by its sophisms—you are led away by them?"

"I am enlightened—I am encouraged—I am directed and guided, THAT IS ALL!"

"It were better for one like you to take poison than read such a work. Fool! fool, that I was to not understand—"

"Sir, you do yourself injustice. . . Do not call yourself such harsh names. You are at liberty to study what you will—at perfect liberty; do not, I pray, call me a fool because I do not chance to know every volume that you read; do not blame me that I decline dictating your studies!"

"Isa! Isa! you mock me. I tell you, I swear to you, I would have died sooner than place a work like this in your hands. It is full of blasphemy, immorality, falsehood, sophistry—!"

"Say on."

"God help you!"

"Now—depart," she said, in a tone of supreme command. "I have suffered you to say what no other man shall ever presume to say in my presence."

He was not to be awed into silence thus—he felt there was far too much at stake, and so re-

plied resolutely. "By God's grace, Isa, I will not go. You are laboring under such delusions, that I must try and remove them. Dear Isa, we can work and will together—say it shall, that it may be so."

"She paused but a moment longer—her eyes fixed with sad, strange earnestness on his—he thought she would give way, but it was her farewell look; without another word, she turned, and since he would not go from her, she went from him.

#### IV.

Weeks after, Weare Dugganne wrote in his journal, on a page to which he had not turned since that day of his bitter disappointment, "God's will be done;"—and he left the prayerful expression there alone, without a word of comment, for he could not endure to hold audible commune respecting it with his heart.

And long, long after that interview, Isa Lee traced, with such tears and heart-struggling, as wholly disproved the thoughts to which she gave form, in a manuscript, which was however no journal, such words as these:—

"Desolation! there is a mournful melody even in the syllabellie prolongation of that word. Yet

how few among those with whom it is merely a word, know of the divine beauty that may spring from it. A root very hideous is it to the eye of sense—but it can, nevertheless, be made, by culture, to bear the loveliest of flowers. A fountain threatening a deluge, bursts up in the desert of life, impelled by its own power, but the fountain nourishes seedlings which the simoom swept there, and palm-trees and grass are born into life. One might be justified in suspecting a sorrow which could readily express itself in words, and thus make itself intelligible to others; but the sort of sympathy awakened by what is sometimes called the ‘eloquence of wo,’ would be effectual in destroying such sorrow. A wo is conceivable which is chosen in a terror of the soul, yet in a spirit of moral courage, that would shrink from confession as from shame. But this wo makes such utter desolation, that the heart must die, and the intellectual life receive strength from its grave. From the mind of one so tried a prayer of resignation might go forth; but from the dead heart prayer could rise never more—never more! . . . Desolation! it is a dreadful word, but it must not be baptized in the tears of him who would triumph over it. Let calm eyes look upon it—let sealed lips pass it by without a breath of recognition. Let a

firm will brave its terrors—and—the mind shall conquer it!”

Isa's words were not the jottings of an overflowing sentimentalism. They were written with consciousness, and to meet the eyes of others, to encourage others, if that might be; but they were also written, in spite of their brave show of intellectual strength, with a crushing sense of sorrow and need, and without the religious resignation with which Weare Dugganne, in his disappointment, said: “The will of God be done.” For Isa felt that, in this movement she had taken the first outward important step of her lifetime; she had renounced a sincere affection, for what could hardly be told intelligibly—for dreaming, one might have said, without great apparent injustice. But it was not for dreaming. With such an imagination as was hers, she could not, before the rebirth of thought, avoid indulgence in, or rather, could not avoid living in, day-dreams and visions; and, if she had been gifted with imagination alone, or predominantly, she could never have made of her heart either a slave or a sacrifice. But, besides this highest endowment of mind, the girl had a strong will, great aspirations, and keen intellectual power. Had she been a dreamer only, would she have resigned a love, which, since

she became aware of its nature and extent, had been the pride and joy of her life—the love of one who had proved her greatest benefactor, who was, as she declared, her ideal of perfection, from childhood?

One book (this book, against which, and against whose author, Weare Dugganne seemed ready to pronounce the heaviest anathema) had served to arouse her mental energy and inert ambition to the very fullest extent. In a day the world was created anew for her. She was another creature. Life was a different thing, changed from all it had been. A new end to study, a new force to thought, a new bent to imagination, a new birth to desire, came upon her as a flash of light—a light, however, that broke, as Weare had declared, from no cloud of truth, but from a few forceful sophisms, vain in all but their effect, their influence. And now, what was mere human love to Isa, compared to that new desire? Not everything, as she once thought it. How easily she could crush and control her heart's best affection! Was she a giant? Could she, without a giant's strength, have mastered such a love?

Before this date of the new light and life, Isa's time was given almost entirely to study. But afterward, her thoughts turned from a constant rambling among the authors, in upon her own

soul. She studied and searched truth there, and from that ark of life she sent thought in after-days, but not, as aforetime, to the writers; but into the "wide, wide world;" through its chaos and surging waters her mind wandered and struggled, coming back oftentimes to her soul, wearied and half-blinded, but never with the olive-branch. This was done till she became convinced there was no resting-place and no peace in the world, no manner of stability, no abating of the waters. And then it was, that, holding high communion with her solitary imaginings, Isa turned to her pen, seeking to give through that expression to her soul. And all her soul, and all her heart, she wrote out clearly, with a force and readiness that surprised herself, and thus she learned her powers. She made her imaginings, impulses, desires, hopes, and aspirations, all appear before her as they were, and an exceeding great reward attended this work. She never experienced weariness in it, as in the performance of other tasks. The work seemed, as she pursued it so intelligently, her natural, her destined work. She was like a God in this; she could create.

When Dugganne's confession of love was made, the charm of her labor was broken. It had been

all "a dream within a dream;" love knew of its own existence; but it encircled ambition, and was not strong enough to master that; for when it became a matter of choice with her as to which she would resign (for the one or the other must be resigned), she saw that it was best for her to stand alone. Isa was startled by his confession into another state of existence, and to live in it was at first only agony. A struggle, fierce as a grappling for life, went on in her in that hour when she saw the sweet dream of years facing the unmasked, stern, ambitious purpose of a day; and the reason that she wept when the dream vanished was, that, as she saw it fading, she felt it was a vision too sweet and beautiful to appear more than once before the heart or fancy of any human being. Did she repent, in after-days, over that decision made? Nay, Isa was not the woman to retract at her heart's suggestion, after her intellect had decided. Young though she was, and, in the life of the outer, every-day world, inexperienced, when she felt that the romance of her life was finished, she would not suffer her affections to revoke her soul's decision. With her resolute will, the heart was crushed, and a deaf ear turned to its cry!

For many years it had been Dugganne's design to prepare for the ministry. And it was with the intention of at once commencing his studies in theology that he had left Richmond. When he returned so suddenly, it was, as he said, solely to secure the love-blessing of Isa, and receiving her most unexpected answer, he departed at once, his great purpose still fixed.

But, he bore with him a remembrance of words which would not suffer him to pursue that peaceful avocation without further and most solemn consideration. Dugganne's mind was not easily affected by the opinions of others, especially when these were expressed in moments of passion. He had calmly and coolly formed his decision—but now Isa's words on the day of their final parting were ringing in his ear—they set him to pondering day after day, and with ever-increasing self distrust upon the matter—and, finally, another, but unwished-for victory was hers. He decided anew, and then wrote to his mother.

Isa surprised her one morning reading that letter with tearful eyes, and saddest look. When she saw Mrs. Dugganne in such evident distress, she apologized, and would have retired, but her friend said:—

"I was about to go in search of you, so do not leave me — I wanted your counsel."

Thus bidden, Isa sat down by Mrs. Dugganne, who continued speaking, thus:—

"I was foolish to give way to my feelings in this style. I do not set you a very good example, but I have met with such a disappointment. Weare has after all abandoned the intention of studying for the ministry!"

"And is it this which troubles you so much?"

"Yes. I had set my heart on it—he would have made such a noble preacher! His heart and sympathies are large—they are open to the whole world of sinners; he is free from sectarianism, and that party-spirit so intolerable in religious matters. I have thought since his childhood, Isa, that this was of course to be his vocation."

"But, surely, he has a reason that must be weighty, if you will only receive it, to reconcile you to this disappointment. Weare has always acted from principle."

"Thank God! yes!" was the mother's fervent exclamation. "But I can not clearly understand this thing. He seems to have been looking at the matter in some new light. Something, or some one, has suggested a notion or doubt respecting his peculiar fitness, I think."

"It may be that he imagines himself unworthy. Or he may feel that he has not sufficient intellectual or spiritual strength for the work. I know he has the most exalted ideas of the office. And you know that only the very lightest mind, the most thoughtless creature, could possibly enter such a profession without much fear and trembling. If a man has once thoroughly conceived of, and is strong to maintain the faith of the Christian, I should think it would be one of the most difficult things in the world for him, without he was a person of extraordinary courage, to become a minister."

"And a person of such courage you think Weare is not."

"I do not say that. I don't know if it be true of him. He has been contemplating this disposition of himself a long time; I can but wonder that the new determination should have been formed so suddenly as it seems to have been."

"You can not wonder more than I. It is hard for me to give up the thought of his serving God in body and soul, by entire consecration—I can not give it up."

The silence which followed Isa ventured to break, by saying—

"It may have become a matter of conscience



with Weare. If he views it in that light, no one, I suppose, would wish, or have any right to decide for him."

"Of course. But how could it have become so suddenly an affair of conscience? He has thought of it as his future employment for years, as you know. He is thoroughly 'built up and furnished' in our most holy faith. He is earnest and pure-hearted—he has good powers as a speaker, too. This letter contains not a hint even, that faith is less actual, less cherished by him, now than it has always been. A deep consciousness of unworthiness or inability seems all at once to have oppressed him. I can see in the whole thing nothing but a wile of the adversary—a temptation of Satan. He would drive Weare away from the service of God—the noblest work a man can engage in."

Isa trembled when she heard Weare's change of purpose attributed to such a power. Must she look upon herself as his tempter? The idea was insupportable; she could not check the cry that burst involuntarily from her lips—

"Oh, do not say that!" then she added more calmly—"May he not serve God among the people, without being of them? I do not think the most admirable moralists conceivable are to be found in the pulpit. If Weare has the least

idea that his heart, soul, mind, are not devoted to that calling, I think an infinite wrong would be done by the person who persuaded him to enter the ministry."

"Child, I know he has nothing of the kind to fear. He may have become convinced, in some way, that he is not sufficiently gifted to be an efficient preacher. But he is, and has been for years, a devoted Christian—has he not shown his faith by his works? God never leaves his servants in such doubt as to whether faithful and constant service is acceptable to him."

"May he not really have been longer than you imagine in arriving at this conclusion? He should certainly not be blamed if he has even less disposition for such labors than he had once, or than he imagined he had."

"I can not believe a word of it. Such is not the case."

"Nay—he may even have come to see that he can employ himself more beneficially for others, and himself too, than by being in the pulpit."

"Isa—impossible! it is entirely impossible!"

"Why? do you not clearly see that such a thing might be? Are you always of one mind?"

"But this, Isa, is so unaccountable, so strange a decision. Without being obstinately set in his

own ways, Weare has an uncommon degree of firmness, and stability of character."

"And for that very reason, it strikes me, that when he does express a change in his resolutions he is entitled to all respect. He is no child. We should have faith that for some good reason he has resolved anew."

"Has my son said anything to you about this?"

With strict truth Isa could, and did answer, "No, he has not." But she remembered the words she had spoken to him THAT DAY, and she was compelled to attribute the change, in a measure to those words. How gladly, in view of their effect, would she have retracted them, now when she saw how much of hope his mother had centred in the supposed choice of his heart. Such sorrow as Mrs. Dugganne's words and looks betrayed, was more than Isa cared, either to see, or to attribute to herself.

"My dear child, *you* may have influence with him," said the mother, suddenly inspired with a new hope, "you can argue more eloquently than I. You remember the first years that we lived together. You remember my husband. Isa — you know something of the life he led, the example he set. It has been my constant prayer to God that Weare might annul, as much as any

human being may, the effects of that example: that, by devoting his strength to God's service, he might lead some to repentance. He could do it while filling the ministerial office, possessed as he is of such a sacrificing, earnest nature, a thousand times more beneficially than by merely giving an example as a Christian, moral man. It was, because I believed this, that I felt so thankful, when I saw my dear boy growing up kind-hearted, humble, pure, and religious. This it is which made me entertain so great a hope for him, and for others through him. You can not enter into my feelings. I do not expect it, but, you can understand them. Tell me truly, is it wrong in me to give way to grief in this disappointment? Shall I do wrong if I urge him to retract this last decision?"

"I do not think so. You are quite right, perhaps, in making the endeavor. It may be, that some obstacle, seeming to him insurmountable, but really not so, has presented itself. For your sake, I trust you will prevail."

"But you will add your entreaties to mine? I have noticed that sometimes, in cases important to him, he has acted by your counsel. You can influence him, and he trusts you; he respects you. *Will* you aid me?"

"I can not," murmured Isa.

"Why? why?"

In the silence that followed this repeated question, and in Isa's loss of self-control, a sudden illumination broke over Mrs. Duganne's mind; a painful approach to discovery, which was not soothed by the appearance of any definite fact that accounted for, or was, the revealed mystery. She felt that there was something concealed from her; and for a moment her heart recoiled from the thought of attempting to fathom the secret. Summoning her resolution, however, she finally asked, in a constrained tone:—

"Does any motive, reasonable but unmentionable, prevent?"

"Do not ask me, Mrs. Duganne; ask him," was the reply, unsatisfactory, but suggestive enough.

"My child, answer me!" exclaimed the mother, anxiously and authoritatively, for now, one grievous fear haunted her mind; "he has not given his soul to another than God? Another impulse than faith in our Savior has not fired his ambition?"

"I can not reply; I do not know."

"You do not know! I conjure you tell me: do you suspect any motive for this sudden change? has he made a confidant of you? Say: is his belief unsettled? is he less faithful than he was?"

has any cause, that you know of, or can imagine, turned him from the fountain of living water?"

"You insist upon an answer. You compel me to speak when I have really nothing to say that can satisfy you. In a conversation that Weare and I had, a few weeks ago, I was led to speak of the ministerial office. I expressed a hope then, as I had before, that he would live to fill it, and I conjured him to adorn it. I may have been somewhat excited when I spoke, probably was. I had in my mind at the moment some who have infamously degraded their calling, and I know I said what I thought, of the duty devolving on clergymen, and the incapacity and faithlessness which often are their disgrace. I may have expressed myself too freely; perhaps I erred in revealing to Weare my scorn for the ordinary supporters of the gospel; those unworthy men who prove themselves so unfitted by nature, heart, and education, for the office of the ministry. But this I know: I spoke not one word with the intention of dissuading him. You do not blame me for saying what I thought? I had not an idea that my words would have this effect. Oh, say you do not blame me!"

"Certainly, I do not blame you. Still, were those words and cautions you made use of such as he needed to hear? Did he not rather need

encouragement? He is so humble, so meek, so conscientious?"

"What I said could not have sounded so much amiss, after all, to one contemplating the sacred profession." Isa would have added, "If he is so weak as not to be able to bear even this warning, what sort of striver would he prove?" but her heart condemned her for the thought, and his mother's sorrow condemned her.

"But will you not now encourage him for my sake, and for his sake, too? You can paint the character and office of the true Christian minister, in colors irresistibly attractive."

"It is impossible! Ask anything else of me. I can not speak of this to him!"

"I could not ask another thing so near my heart. This is my life's one intense desire, Isa!"

"Oh, spare — forgive me."

"You are eloquent — why will you not speak? I know, I feel that you could not entreat Weare without effect."

"It would be the veriest mockery; respect me at least for saying what is true — I can not stoop to it."

"Ah, I see. You are more ambitious for Weare in a worldly way. You think this office not noble — not grand enough for your brother!"

A deep crimson flush overspread Isa's face — her eyes drooped — she said scarcely above a whisper, "Success in any vocation he may choose, he will meet, I trust. But let me assure you, he does not need my counsel."

"And at all events he shall not have it, you would say. You will not write to him? Are you angry? I have but this one question to ask — have you a reason for not writing?"

"I have," said Isa, resolutely.

"And you will not tell me it? You refuse to give me your confidence? I have endeavored to study, to learn my children, to know what manner of spirit they are of, but, I confess, you baffle me, both of you. I do not read you clearly, as I did. Ought I not to be able to do it, living with you and for you, and loving both you as I do?"

"Don't talk so! There is nothing to read. You crush me by the doubt, by the thought that I would not freely, and always gladly, make my whole nature, so far as I know it myself, plain before you. There is no mystery. I love you, and honor you, above all women on earth. And, besides, I reverence and — and I love Weare, whom you have permitted me to regard as a brother. There is nothing I would neglect to do, if I could aid him. But he has not asked

my counsel—he has not asked any. He has expressed his determination. It is your place to reason with him about this perhaps, but not mine—it is not mine.”

“Isa, you weep—are you unhappy?”

“Yes—if I live under your displeasure—or if you doubt me.”

“I am not displeased—I do not doubt you.”

“Do not urge me then in this. I can not counsel you. I am neither fit nor competent. You are wise. You alone should argue with him, or advise him.”—

Mrs. Dugganne wrote to Weare. By every consideration that a Christian mother could suggest, she urged her son to recall his decision, or to at least acquaint her with his motive for adopting it. She prayed him to return, to come and speak with her. To her appeal came a reply fraught with filial love, but with decision also.

Weare's letter was written with deepest sorrow—but it expressed a firm reiteration of his purpose. He could not even return home at the present, he said, but he gave no satisfactory reason why. It was now his settled purpose, he affirmed, to study medicine, and in the practice of that noble profession, it was still his hope and determination to serve his brethren and his Master.

This resolve was expressed in the humblest and sincerest spirit—and great as her disappointment and perplexity was, the mother learned with joy that nothing of the nature of that skeptical spirit she had many times seen predominant in Isa, had urged him to this course. He had not forsaken the God of his fathers.

## V.

The question then returned to her with redoubled force, had not Isa voluntarily, or involuntarily, been the real cause of this change in the future course of her son's life? As she asked herself this question, which was suggested in varied ways, the fond mother felt that there was indeed cause for her disquietude. She could give to herself no answer, when her imagining at last took shape and form, and she wondered if it was love that wrought the perceptible change in Isa—if it was love that made her so increasingly quiet, and thoughtful, and sad. And, was it love for Weare? Why would he not, why could he not, for he affirmed he could not, come back? Were her children no longer friends? were they enemies? were they lovers? So often did she ask herself these questions—

so anxious became she to know the truth of the matter, that Mrs. Duganne earnestly set about a closer and more thorough examination of Isa's character than she had yet attempted.

When we speak of Isa's protectress applying herself to the study of the young girl's character, we would not have one suppose that Mrs. Duganne had ever neglected any duty in her guardianship. She was as well informed as was possible for any person to be, of the nature and capacities of Isa; she admired her energy and perseverance, and self-reliance—but an interest greater than common appreciation, that reached farther than ordinary admiration, was now aroused; let us look for the result of its searchings.

"How beautiful this book is," said Isa, turning the leaves of the hitherto neglected volume which Duganne had sent his mother at the same time with his most unwelcome letter which announced the change he was about to make in his professional studies.

The book was the first collected edition of the writings of Isa's favorite poet; and in purchasing it he had thought full as much of the gratification she would derive from the perusal, as he had of his mother.

Mrs. Duganne made some response to her

exclamation, and Isa commenced reading aloud; and during the whole morning the exercise was continued, interrupted only by occasional appreciative criticisms made by Weare's mother, who was always a pleased listener, and an interested listener of Isa's readings. When she closed the book at last, Mrs. Duganne said:—

"I hear that a brother of the poetess is in town. He is an artist, and has her portrait with other paintings in his studio. Shall we take a look at them?"

"Oh, yes, 'of all things!'" said Isa, eagerly; "what do you imagine she is like?"

"I am not good at drawing fancy-sketches. Have you chanced to see an engraving? Is there one in the book?"

"I trust not; no; I am glad to see there's not a portrait given. I do not believe her face is what people call pretty, or even handsome. There must be a soul-look in her face that attracts you. I know, if I saw her, I should not notice a feature; I should be lost in admiration of expression. And that is the only proper beauty for a poet such as she. I hope it is all that will strike us. I think she is the only person on earth I am guilty of envying."

"Do you envy her, Isa? why?"

"Because—because she is a poet!"

"But there are a thousand poets."

"*A thousand poets!*" no, indeed! say, two or three; and of those two or three, I envy her the most."

"I can't understand this; what makes you (so liberal in all your notions and opinions) limit a class counted by the hundred to less than a half-dozen! There is a vast amount of poetical feeling afloat, dear child; it is not limited."

"*Poetical feeling!*" that may be, or poets would have no listeners; but poetic passion—the divine afflatus—that is quite another thing."

"Why, think of the magnificent prose-poets the world has seen! You are selfish! You draw the line of distinction where it should not be placed. Poetic inspiration! You will not deny it to the glorious old bards, who probably never thought of rhyming?"

"There are diversities of gifts. Pray let there be some recognition of the fact. Do not call a fine prose-writer a poet. And so let me envy my poet. She is all that mortal can be—man or woman, none can stand on higher ground than she occupies. Just observe how she looks into the very heart of things! she, indeed, has received the gift of sight; but she is not a mere analyst! Her gifts are all perfect. What she sees, that she has full knowledge of, and to what

use she puts that knowledge! for whoever reads may know this grand result in her, through all masks of gorgeous description, all the pomp of learning, delineations of passion, through every exhibition of power, how distinctly you hear the beatings of the dear, warm, woman-heart! You feel all she feels, and see all she describes; for she talks to the world as to a bosom-friend! Ah, what a purpose the poet—and, more than all, *this* poet—fulfils!"

"I am glad to hear you say that! Yes, they are ordained, these poets, to fulfil mightily their vocation; we will be upon them if they make light of it!"

"They, that is, these two or three, are the revelators—interpreters of the mysteries around them."

"Yes," said Mrs. Duganne; "and they stand themselves in such a strong light that none but infidels could help seeing that they are of an order higher in creation than creatures such as I. They are the beings but little lower than the angels, who on earth stand between God and men, the ordained teachers, seers, prophets."

"Did you ever know a poet, that is, personally, Mrs. Duganne?"

"Yes, Isa, once."

"A woman?"



"Yes, she was a woman."

"And young and very gifted, like our poet? do tell me her name? why did you never tell me before?"

"No—I can not name her to you. You have probably never read her name among those of famous people. I do not know her destiny. You would not acknowledge her, perhaps, for a poet, because she does not chance to be known by published works. But she had the true poet's imagination, heart, and will."

"And is she living now," Isa asked, in a tone peculiarly deferential.

"Yes, dear child; and there is another besides myself, and whether there are more I know not, who is watching her career as it appears, her nature as it develops, with an interest to be felt, not explained."

As Mrs. Duganne said this, she expressed her desire to change the subject, by taking up the morning's paper and unfolding it. As she did so, her eye caught a brief announcement in one of the leading columns, and she exclaimed:—

"Why, Isa! our poet is dead!"

"You do not mean ———," cried Isa, in a beseeching tone, as if imploring other than an affirmative answer, as she named her whose works they had been reading that morning.

"Yes—it is she! our dear, darling singer—what shall we do without her? Oh, Isa, we have lost a friend indeed,"—and Mrs. Duganne burst into tears.

The young girl did not weep, but neither did her emotion pass away so easily as that of her friend; through the remainder of the day she was silent and wordless, and the sorrow that was in her heart proclaimed itself in her every look and motion. But at night, just before she retired, Isa forced herself to say to Mrs. Duganne, who had begun to look upon her charge with somewhat of anxiety and alarm:—

"I have only just now forced myself to take in that awful thought. Oh, dear Mrs. Duganne, you can not guess how much light I have seen go out of the world to-day, with the knowledge that our poet is gone. It was one of my highest hopes that I should know her."

"You have known her, Isa—and perhaps even more thoroughly than those who were associated with her in daily life. A singer like our singer lays her best thoughts before the world; and to the appreciative, the leaven of the world, scattered everywhere, if she have true genius, she must be known more clearly than to those whom accident has made her friends. Accident furnishes the friends of private life; Prov-

idence draws the nobly loving from among strangers. You need not tell it, Isa, I know you are greatly bereaved. For you, too, have a poetic soul."

"Mother," said Isa, half whispering, as though awed by her own words, "I am not a poet—I never shall be. But I have loved this woman with a love that at times passes even my own understanding. Love seemed to be the sole desire of her heart. She longed for it more ardently than she longed for fame. Must she not have been conscious of the existence of some she could not see, who loved her passionately as I do? . . . Do you not believe she must have known, that when the great burden of her heart's hope was, 'Love me,' many won by her voice, answered, '*Beloved*'?"

"Yes, Isa, it was doubtless so," and at one glance Mrs. Dugganne looked further into the depths of the young heart now broadly opened before her, than she had ever looked before; and, as she looked, if there was anxiety in the thoughts that sped toward her son, associating his name with that of Isa, there was certainly no longer fear; for Isa's was a living, glowing, human heart, and not as the mother had sometimes feared, like marble, in its inflexible coldness.

"Then she must have been satisfied, she must

have been happy! Oh, how glad—how glad I am," cried Isa, and for the first time, since becoming aware of her soul's bereavement, she wept.

"Shall we go in the morning to see the portrait?"

"Yes!—and you say it is her brother who is the artist? He will tell us of her. Perhaps he is like her!"

"I wonder if her individual history was a happy one?"

"Her experience? I can tell you. It was, without doubt, more full of life, than that of common women. It must have been. Without seeing through exaggerating light, as some people suppose he does, I think the poet must see more clearly, I mean the true poet. Joy and sorrow must each have to them a deeper significance than to others."

"You could not appreciate this in any other way than by sympathy, Isa. Yet you say you are no poet."

"Are there no dumb men in the world?" she answered bitterly; "believe me, their misfortune is not comparable with that of the voiceless poet."

"But the dumb can express their thoughts and wants—nay, even their affections and aspirations."

"Their infirmity is physical — it is trivial in comparison with — with mine."

"You are no voiceless poet," said Mrs. Duganne, with such earnest conviction of the truth of what she was saying, as in the reflection of after-days seemed to her the impulse of inspiration. "Whether you are aware of it or not, I can assure you that such mental aspirations as you have, never existed in persons of your energy, without corresponding capacity of expression."

"Do you know—do you believe, what you say?"

"I believe more than I say."

"I may ask you to repeat this some day when you will be compelled to confess yourself at fault."

"You may have a capacity that you never develop. A poem may lie *perdu* in your soul during all your stay this side of eternity—so, my dear child, I am prepared to cleave to the opinion expressed."

"Let me tell you," said Isa approaching Mrs. Duganne so closely, that the latter embraced her involuntarily, "you have made me happy in spite of my exceeding sorrow. You are indeed a mother to me. I believe you know me better than I know myself."

And she said this, whose nature Mrs. Duganne was endeavoring so diligently to study and fathom! The good woman's heart reproached her, as though she had done some criminal thing. She arose, for Isa had turned to leave the room; and there was more than usual tenderness in her voice as she said: "God bless you, my darling child!" and, as Isa moved away, she repeated to herself: "she is indeed my child; she has a right to the name."

"You called me a poet, and promised not to retract your words. You did not think how soon I should prove you," said Isa, the next morning, as she went into the breakfast-room, where Mrs. Duganne sat, awaiting her. As she spoke, she laid a little MS. upon the table, adding: "I do not say, these are my first verses, but they are my last. I have not slept at all since I left you. Had I been keeping watch beside *her*, I could not have been more wakeful. You will go with me this morning, to see the portrait?"

Mrs. Duganne bowed her reply. She was already engrossed in reading Isa's lines.

"Such a poem is not to be criticised," said Mrs. Duganne, returning the verses to Isa, after she had twice perused them. "Your talent, I

should say, must not be measured by common rules. I do not judge so from these lines, though perhaps some critics would say I have no right to judge from what I have not seen. I should like to see other of your poems. These lines, to speak plainly, are very faulty in mechanical execution; but their thoughts, and the earnest feeling breathing from every verse, give them worth."

"That may be, but I shall never attempt poetry again, for this reason; I have no musical ear—no 'musical cultivation.' Poetry is an art. It should be pursued by those alone who have the inner conviction that they are artists. I have not that conviction. You will not dispute my ability nor my estimate of that ability. You know I have energy in me; I would not abandon a hope that has in its day been a great hope, if I did not see its utter vanity. Shall we go now to the studio?"

"Yes; but let me tell you first, that the true poet is he who can make his verses answer some definite and high purpose that he has in his mind. You have proved ability to do this. For my part, I like varieties in music; and I prefer a rough, thoughtful poem, at any time, to a quantity of idealess, jingling rhymes."

"We will not dispute. The true poet is born

with a perfect sense of tune. His verses will never be halt and lame, as mine are. There are, besides, prose-poets in the world; I am willing to admit it this morning."

They were disappointed in their visit to the artist. He had closed his studio, and left Richmond, taking his works with him, on hearing of his sister's sudden death. All his landlady could tell was, that he had gone away, half-distracted, the morning before, and that he had not spoken of returning.

Shortly after this discovery, which Mrs. Duganne thought she had made, of Isa's crowning or distinguishing gift, capacity, talent, the mother wrote, announcing the fact to her son, at the same time beseeching his return home. In this letter she hardly alluded to the change he had made in his studies; but she was far from abandoning the hope that he would yet view the matter in another light. She anticipated much from her influence in conversation with him on the subject; and, besides, would not give up the idea, that Isa, whose reserve had of late entirely given way to confidence and manifest love toward her mistress-mother, would aid her in the endeavor.

Weare's answer was not entirely unanticipated. It contained an honest and full narration of the nature of his parting interview with Isa; of his pure and abiding love for her; and a confession, that it was in consequence of her words that he had reflected again on the subject, and finally thus decided. He acknowledged his disappointment was overwhelming, and declared, that while he cherished his present feeling toward her he should be wronging himself, as well as her, in resuming life under the same roof with Isa. He made a confidant of his mother, and he knew that she would return his confidence with sympathy.

He made a confidant of his mother—he told her of his grief—but made no mention of his joy. He did not tell her how, as he read of her "discovery" of Isa's gift, he had exclaimed in a sudden transport of grateful joy, "I can bear all things now! I thank thee, God, for this mercy!" He did not tell her how his fears for Isa vanished away like the faint remembrance of a dream; nor how his own personal hopes revived when he reflected that it was none other than the Almighty who had conferred on her this gift. God had made her a poet? And wherefore?—to what end? Ah, she was surely safe! This gift would be a preservative.

Nor did he tell his mother how the greatest cause of his sorrow was, by the announcements of her letter, removed; how the keenness of his disappointment was lost in the conviction that Isa was already beyond danger—had she not admitted, confessed, nay asserted, by acknowledging she had not "sense of tune" to make her rhymes harmonious—that there *was* a limit to the operations and the influences of human will? Could she deny it—why then did she not at once, when she so longed for it, assume the power, or cultivate it in herself? Duganne was happy now, for he could hope for her.

On the receipt of her son's reply Mrs. Duganne returned to her unsuspected investigation of Isa's nature and intellect—and it was not a hard task that she had now to accomplish; she met with no formidable barrier of suspicion, or reserve, in her endeavor to learn wholly the character, temper, and intellect of the girl. She made astonishing discoveries—and some indeed that passed her comprehension. The idea that, with love in her heart, Isa had refused to enter into engagement with Weare, amazed her. She imagined at first that it might be womanly pride which restrained Isa from forming an alliance with one the world would call of higher station than herself, and for Weare's sake Mrs.

Dugganne would have sacrificed whatever feeling she had on the subject.

The study of Isa's character was carried on with a new light, and fresh power of penetration — and it was conducted with surprise, admiration, and deepest pain also; for the mother was heartily earnest in her desire to find nothing but pride opposing her son's hope in the woman he loved. And now she saw and understood that there was very much besides pride in the way — obstacles which she feared, and with good reason, might never be removed. She saw that the work of education, so far as she had to do with it, was finished, for her charge. Who was there that could teach that strong-willed, yet gentle and loving girl, anything new of faith, its nature, and its influences? And yet she had no faith! Who could induce obedience in that generous soul, which was ever so thoughtful for the happiness of others, obedience that should continue unquestioning in its offering of worship to the Almighty? Toward her guardian Isa was ever humble, respectful, and affectionate as a child — but how conscious, how wakeful, how watchful, how untiringly ambitious she was!

For the life of her Mrs. Dugganne could not have told whether she felt most joy or sorrow that her son was unsuccessful in his suit.

## VI.

How was it in reality with Isa? She had not in the few months, previous to Weare's declaration of love, lived so much alone with her own thoughts, had not been so solitary a student, as was imagined. Another mind than any around her were at the time aware of, had been silently, strangely, and powerfully working in hers. The very mind whose thoughts had poured into and fashioned the book, Weare discovered in her hands that day, and which he had exclaimed against with such righteous indignation.

It was a volume that Weare had himself removed from his father's library, not because he dreamed that Isa would ever make of it a study if it were left there — but because he considered it a disgraceful blot on any man's shelf, a pollution in any man's memory. It was a volume of miscellanies, that at first attracted Isa's attention by its singular title. Curiosity led her beyond the "Table of Contents," and she soon found that the subjects therein treated, were of a class altogether unapproachable with any degree of effect, by the great mass of mind, either in the capacity of author or reader. Those pages were to Isa the first intelligible "open

sesame" to life. Her own thoughts had heretofore ranged free; and far more freely than any, herself included, had suspected. Her mind was unsettled—she had no faith whatever, excepting in the faithlessness of all things. These writings lifted her from such a state of darkness—she stood again as in childhood on a firm foundation—but it was far other than the word of God.

These essays, suggestions, texts, had great apparent, great real depth. They canvassed without mercy, without reverence, even mock-reverence (by far the most prevalent kind), the belief of Christians, the laws of society, the standard of morality, the principles of duty. They treated wholly, or principally, of the internal life. Startling, and to the apprehension of many, necessarily, appalling thoughts, shone from every page. Loose sentiments were presented, but evidently by no sensualist, in a novel guise of stern simplicity; and the impossible was assumed as coolly as common and established fact.

Isa's mind, when it launched on the sea of this author's intellect, was in the very state to be acted on by its tempests of thought. She was ready for all uncommon impressions; for all novelty supported by reasonable show of truth, for all ADVANCE. Her proud intellect was satis-

fied with the soaring to which it was compelled by this unknown author. She rejoiced to escape with him beyond the commonplaces which are sufficient to absorb the common mind. By degrees this pride of intellect, this cultivation of intellect, became with her all-absorbing, became God, time, space, life, love, EVERYTHING. She made it her aim to cultivate all things and to develop her intellect—she learned to despise all things that did not tend to the promotion of its development. And then and thus it was that she learned a new name which answered to the name of God, and upon the altar of that name, for it was little more than a sound, she laid her child's faith—there she sacrificed the teachings with which, for many years, her friend had striven to imbue her mind, and there she now laid the love of her heart of hearts.

Alas, for the hope Weare cherished from her holding the poet's power and influence in her soul! She stifled the voice of song—and by misdirection perverted its influences—and had he argued with her, and brought up her own words against her belief in the supremacy of human will—she had grown learned in sophisms—she would have left him triumphing in her wisdom—left him bewildered, and conquered by his bewilderment.



Nearly a twelvemonth after Dugganne left Richmond had quietly passed away, when there was a further development of Isa's mental and individual history. It drew the following letter from the mother to her son:—

"I am fairly driven to seek your counsel, dearest Weare. I would that you were with me. We might then consult together more freely. I confess I am at a loss to know how I shall proceed. This morning Isa brought me a roll of manuscripts and laid them before me, begging that I would, if I had time, examine them. She had also a letter with her, but this she did not offer me, till I had glanced over some of her papers. These I found to consist mostly of essays—some of them were the most extraordinary, high-wrought, imaginative tales I have ever read—but there was no poetry. Guess my amazement when she produced a number of papers, newspapers containing these MSS., in printed form! For though we have been led of late to suppose that she might, at a future day, employ her time in some field of literature (an ordinary life being to her an impossibility), yet I had no idea that she would so early, and thus compel an audience.

"She sat down with me, and at my request spent the morning in reading many of these

articles aloud; and I felt proud of her, Weare, when I listened to the utterance of such thoughts from her lips as these to which she has given form and expression by her pen. I repeatedly expressed my surprise and gratification, and then she gave the letter to me, the substance of which is as follows: The editor of *The Guardian*, in which paper her articles appeared, is on the point of going abroad for a year, and he offers her, with an extravagant salary, the general editorial management of the paper during his absence! Her home, in case she has no relative in J— city, he states, can be made with his own wife. The established character of this gentleman, his abilities, the general tone of his letter, the great advantages which might accrue to Isa if she takes this one step, and the inclination which I am confident she feels decidedly, have almost constrained me to give my consent, though with how light a heart you can imagine, for you know, Weare, what she is to me. I can not see my duty clearly. I fear that I may not decide as I should, were Isa my own child, though I have always endeavored to secure her best interests. She has made literature her profession, and that being the case, this would seem a wonderful opportunity for making herself known to the public. She has great powers,

far greater than I had suspected, and these she seems to hold in perfect subjection to her will. But she can never distinguish herself as a poet, and simply because she will not! She is very young—yet I can but smile when I hear myself making that objection. Youth as youth has so little to do with her, or if it has, I know not what her womanhood will be. She seems to me a magnificent woman now.

“I dare not suffer myself to think of my own loneliness, in case she goes from here. But we are bound now to forget ourselves, to think only of her best good. Let us do it prayerfully, dear son. Let us think of her now only as a worker, and then decide for her, as far as we are called on to decide.”

To this letter Weare thus replied:—

“Respecting our Isa, I have but this to say:—To me it would seem well if she could remain with you quietly for a year longer, at the least. I fear she will be taxed too far—that too much will be expected and required of her if she once takes the editorial chair. But, mother, we must not settle the matter for her. As you say, our authoress is no common woman; for the world I would not appear before her as attempting to direct or guide her future. She has forbidden it; she

would be independent of me; do I wrong her, in saying, of us? I certainly have no right to even counsel her. She has doubtless decided on the point, ere now; and it would be the part of wisdom, at least of justice, in us, to let her act her own will respecting it. Should she decide on going to J—, you would, of course, accompany her. Does not this seem the better way, in order that you may know all the circumstances of her new position, as she will discover them to be? By making, with Isa, the acquaintance of the editor, previous to accepting or rejecting his proposal, a mutual understanding can be more easily arrived at. I say this much, dear mother, in the conviction that it will be better for us and her to let her decide; we could not answer for the result should we appear before her as restraining powers.”

It was Isa's immediately-formed determination to accept the editorship offered her. The moment she read Mr. Warren's letter, her whole future seemed to rise before her, a tangible thing. The lines of her thought had heretofore been cast in many pleasant places, but now they were brought all to one point; and, as her past labors had not, feeble as they were, been in vain, so should her striving\* of the time to come, as

it would be more direct, receive the reward of success in more abundant measure.

Well was it that her wishes had been specially consulted in this case by her truest friends; that they, to whom she apparently looked for counsel, suffered her to act according to her own will and judgment in this crisis. Thus was she saved the apparent ingratitude of selfishly taking fate into her own hands, and of wilfully following out that thought-dictate of hers—saved from a show of too bold self-reliance, and of open rebellion to her benefactress.

Yet it was not without regret and much secret misgiving, that Isa resolved to take this further and most responsible step into the arena where she must stand unveiled, and in a clearer light before the people. Heretofore, no effort had been extorted from her. Progress was made to gratify herself alone. She had sought in this labor an escape from herself, and, once well-engaged in it, she saw directly how impossible it was for her to make play of her self-set task. She was of too earnest a nature, was too energetic physically, to be able to trifle in a field where Titans were all around her at work. Still, no master was set over her, and she had, as yet, made herself no slave, not even to ambition. Whenever she wearied of these unacknowledged

tasks, she knew how and with whom to find rest. A kind heart was for ever open to her, and where she had found protection, there she had always found sympathy, also. How would it be when she went to stand alone by herself, and for others, in the world?

These questions constantly recurred to her during the last few days of her abiding in her happy home. In a solemn and strange mood prepared she for that departure. She never once felt that the time for return to it would come again; it seemed to her a departing for ever—a removing of herself, moreover, as a barrier which had unhappily severed a mother and son; and for this reason she pondered with heaviness and regret, most poignant because unspoken, on the ways and duties of the untried tomorrow of her life.

Weare Dugganne was closely associated with all these reflections. Did he really look with favor—did he look with any kind of interest on this event of her pilgrimage? Or, could it have been mere indifference that made him say, as his mother affirmed he did, that she could herself best decide the great question? More than once it came into her mind to crave of him a fuller and more distinct expression of his real opinion concerning a matter which he must know would

affect her for a lifetime. She wondered that he would let her go, and especially in such a way, without more apparent regard, or anxiety, or care, than if a straw were blown by the wind before him. It seemed at first as though she could not go while his voice kept such dead silence. How much she needed him then, and how greatly she felt that need, as this step was about to be taken! Encouragement, at least; he might have vouchsafed; and, even to her strong nature how deplorably was it needed, as she was about to step before him into the struggling crowd! She thought of him as having conquered his affection and interest far too easily. It did not occur to her, that the cold advice he gave so coldly was extorted by principle, from a heart that loved her as it loved none other; or, that Dugganne had struggled desperately with himself, before he could so speak. She never thought of that, and therefore could but wonder and grow cold toward him, as she fancied to herself the easy grace with which his heart said to himself: "I have no need of thee!" But before this came to pass, Isa more than once essayed to write to Weare, to beseech him, in the name of their sacrificed love, to guide her. No words that she could put together, however, would express the longing of her heart, as she would fain have it expressed;

and she finally went with Mrs. Dugganne from Richmond, without having uttered to any human being a word concerning the struggle through which she had passed. It was the last struggle of her heart for reliance on, or confidence in, him. She would not suffer it to know another such combat: an eternal separation was now ordained between them. She had no more need of him.

## VII.

FAR beyond the limits of J—, the house of Mr. Warren was noted for the hospitalities there dispensed. It was one of the acknowledged points for the union of the artistic and intellectual force of the city; and the influential position held by Mr. Warren, as a man of genius, wealth, and refinement, and genuine philanthropy, was strengthened by his able conduct of one of the most important of the literary papers of the day. The censure and the praise awarded to its columns by readers and writers, in all parts of the land, proclaimed it an organ of undisputed power. Novelty of idea and form of expression, and the mistakeless evidences of genius and thought, given by contributors, made the paper a shining light among the lights of periodical literature. Mr. Warren was himself an earnest worker, and

he gave such substantial encouragement to earnest laborers that all who knew him, even his most cordial intellectual opponents, could but admire the man with all their hearts.

His clear perception of Isa Lee's genius, and a generous desire that she should enter into active life, increased by a knowledge of some of the circumstances of her career, confidence in her great ability, and a knowledge that her writings were received with enthusiasm among readers generally, were, he considered, reasons sufficient for offering her the editorship of his paper, during his proposed absence.

It was therefore into no obscure circle that Isa Lee was introduced. So far as external relations were concerned, Mrs. Dugganne could not possibly have placed her charge in a more desirably prominent or agreeable position. Mrs. Warren, to whose companionship and care she, after a few days, left Isa, was a highly agreeable, well-informed, amiable woman—rather worldly than intellectual—but the most ardent worshipper of her husband's abilities, and of himself, too. In manner she was altogether charming and fascinating. Though much older than Isa, she was hardly so in appearance—the exemption from all extraordinary, and indeed from most common trials, and vexations, during

the whole of her career, had kept her heart young—at heart she was more youthful far than Isa.

A better friend the new editress could not readily have found, after removing from the immediate sphere of Mrs. Dugganne's influence. And had it not been that she was exposed to other than these favorable influences of social life, this would indeed have proved the best move possible for Isa. Life in her old home had never proved to her a dull, heavy affair, for light and peace were in that dwelling. But much of sorrow had been experienced by each member of the little household, and sorrow had subdued them. Weare had inherited his mother's contemplative, quiet spirit. Isa was naturally grave and thoughtful—and so her whole sentient experience of life seemed to have conduced toward the expulsion of a light heart and gay spirits from her for ever.

Here she was exposed to, not happier, perhaps, but certainly to brighter, and more enlivening influences. The uniform cheerfulness of Mrs. Warren, her sound, good sense, and full capacity for enjoyment, the gayety of her nature, which was sunny and beautiful as a June day that is crowned with bird-songs and flowers, made such an association in the new, and bright, and gay range of life, as could but operate bene-

ficially on the unstable thought, and unwise, unjust "inner life" of Isa.

The mansion of the Warrens was very beautiful, though neither in nor about it were made any pretensions to splendor. In its construction, as well as adornments, there were ample evidences of refined, elevated taste, and of perfect ideas of comfort. The house differed very much in all respects from the plain and unadorned cottage, which once had looked a palace to Isa. Well might she be charmed with all the outer and inner surroundings of this new life to which she had risen; and well might her heart greatly revive and strengthen, so cordial and respectful was the reception extended to her by her future hostess. And Mrs. Duganne was certainly justified in leaving Isa with a confident and happy assurance that it was the kindness of Providence which had introduced her child into these new scenes.

The appearance of a person so dignified and handsome, and withal so young, in the "Literary World" of J—, and her acknowledged position as an editor, attracted, at first, considerable attention toward the new-comer. And in entering this arena of men and women, Isa found that a much greater change than she could have anti-

cipated, was made in mere personal, individual life: a greater move, indeed, than even in her intellectual habits, as they were for the first time brought into active contact with the habits of other minds. Up to this time she had lived in loneliness to a much greater degree than even she had supposed — alone, in the absolute sense of lonesomeness, notwithstanding the nature of her connection with Duganne. Such a life could no longer be permitted; thus her thoughts, even for herself, were brought to light as they had never been before, when she found herself mingling among some of the most daring skeptics, reasoners, and thinkers of the day. Her powers of penetration, self-defence, and self-possession, were all called forth in larger measure, in greater force. As the years had passed on while she silently engaged in intellectual pursuits, she had sometimes dared to dream of a day like this which was now come, and through the suggestions of imagination she had exulted in the idea of communing with the great minds which she revered. When she actually stood upon the stage, among these, to act her part in the "Drama of Life," she felt like one who had been blind — she "saw men as trees walking," all was chaos to her senses. But strong she was, and therefore able to come off triumphant

in such conflicts as she was here compelled to pass through during her noviciate.

As it chanced, into no sphere of active life could Isa have entered where her own best interests would be set to battling so fiercely with circumstances, as in that very field of editorial labor. Had it been a *strictly* literary paper of which she assumed the charge, it must have proved far otherwise, but the columns were open to the discussion of great moral questions, those questions which affect society through its length and breadth, and some of the most powerful minds which were justly called "agitators," in that paper proclaimed opinions destined to convulse the world of social life — and strong as her mind might be, Isa was far too young to war with, and triumph over, the eloquent and inglorious sophisms of men and women, some of whom had grown gray in their service in the temple of knowledge. And because her very situation and office prevented her lips from opening, to carry on an individual or editorial war of words, when her ardent nature, ignorant of, or despising the arts of expediency, would have led her to do so, she was driven, through the necessity of silence, to a deeper searching of something, proclaimed as Truth. Often as these contributors, with engaging whose services she

had nothing to do, laid the suggestions of their thought or imagination before her, did she pause, and doubt, and wrestle with herself, and from such wrestling she was driven to prayer. She sought in supplication for light from on high, for relief from the wild imaginings of others, and from her own convulsed convictions — but then the light did not come when it was sought, or if it did it glimmered so faintly that she, having no faith, and not compelled to see it, having none of the patience and perseverance that would have led her to a continued search, was left even more completely than before she prayed, in darkness. All hope of human aid, such hope as it was, vanished entirely. Infinitely well had it been for her to have heeded the entreaty of her best friend, the friend she loved once above all others, and in a quiet frame of mind sought for the peace of God. But here she was placed in an active and exciting sphere, where both her vanity and her pride would be fostered, and her wilful spirit not only granted, but incited to, full license and encouragement. The rich and varied fruits of gifted minds were not only freely offered, they were forced on her acceptance. She was bidden to a princely banquet, and compelled to partake. Wise and great men praised her, and attributing her reserve to self-distrust, and want



of self-appreciation: they, who in all tenderness would have cautioned and warned her, had they known how it was with her, in their mistaken kindness encouraged and led her on. Early training, retirement, habits of earnest thinking, remembrance of her benefactors, these influences may have, they did, stand in the place of conscience to her; they may have (ay, they did!) whisper their warnings to her; but, alas! they came as the recollected warning of her Creator must have come to Eve; and the evil counsel of her tempting will was given with dulcet tones, with confidence, and with power!

### VIII.

But we have been anticipating: let us return.

A few mornings after Isa's arrival in J—, she was conducted by Mr. Warren to the office of *The Guardian*. He wished, he said, to make her acquainted before his departure with his, now her, co-editor, a man, he told her, whom she would never chance to meet in society, and whose acquaintance, if she wished it to extend beyond a mere business correspondence, she would herself have to seek as a more perfect misanthrope never existed.

Isa went forward with her guide calmly enough,

while he made this explanation; but, as the conversation went on, Mr. Warren mentioned that his editor was an author; though neither a popular nor even acknowledged one; that his views were too "transcendental," too peculiar, demanded too much of a reader's thought and investigation, to ever become current among men and women. He spoke of the man as an author, sadly, with feeling—as of a most powerful spiritual light, that, from some fatal disposition of its own nature, a certain weakness or perversity, combined with extraordinary strength, was fully as ineffectual, to all appearance, as though it had been hid under a bushel.

Isa asked his name. It was Alanthus Stuart. She had never heard it before; but she distinctly remembered his newspaper writings, when told his newspaper name. She asked of his book or books; and among these one was mentioned which caused as much astonishment in her as though she had actually heard of a resurrection from the dead; and she felt as though she were herself going now to witness some such miracle of reviving. For it was that book which Weare had banished from the library at home, that very book which had proved the parent of her own spirit's peculiar life! She remembered how and when the great ideas of that

volume had been grafted into her mind, and it seemed strange, most strange, that she might now think of the writer of those words as of a living man. She had listened to his voice, as to the voice of one who, being dead, yet spoke, and lo! she was now seeking him, almost unawares, a living corpse in his sepulchre! Resurrection, indeed! for months she had thought upon him, day and night, with wondering as to his fate, and with commiseration for his fate, which she felt, by reason of his words, must have been a sorrowful one! And he was alive! He was alive while she thought upon him; living, while she strove to hold communion with his spirit, as with the spirit of one departed, invoking his presence and his aid! She was soon, in a moment, to stand with him face to face! She was, after that, to work with him, to think with him! What a wild, joyous feeling ran through her heart, as she remembered that she had, at last, found a teacher and a guide!

It was what she needed of all things—a teacher, a guide! She needed a mind more powerful for good than either Mrs. Dugganne's or Weare's, or, if not more powerful, more energetic. She needed to break away from, or, to have broken away from her, by some resistless hand, all the ideal supports she had drawn

around her, as aids, in climbing a lonely mountain-height; and now, she met with one who, instead of tearing these away, and forcing her back to her childhood's reliance on the one mighty, compelling her to see her helplessness, would aid her in quite another way.

Alanthus Stuart was known only by reputation among the literary circles of J—, and not at all among the citizens of the fashionable world. He was a man eccentric to the last extreme; proof against all advances of friendship, which some were induced, by reason of admiration for his genius, to make; apparently cold-hearted and silent, and repulsive as the grave. His whole time was devoted to ambitious, and to as truly necessitated, labor; and, as to himself, he was nearly unfitted, by a life of seclusion, for all social intercourse.

A more repelling exterior than his could not readily be imagined. In person he was short, and clumsily made; dwarfed in animal, but a giant in spiritual development. His head was splendidly shaped—it looked sufficiently capacious to hold all knowledge. The expression of his mouth was only redeemed, not annulled, by that of his eyes; *they* were full of kindness, but his firm, set lips, seemed prison-doors from

which no genial thought or word would ever be suffered to escape. One would have sworn that those lips never smiled, for the sarcastic imitation of a smile they sometimes wore, never seemed anything but a derisive sneer at the smiles of others; but one could not have safely sworn that those eyes never wept—though no man ever saw them even moistened with tears. His forehead was immense, and around it his white and curling hair fell in constant disorder. White as snow was the hair, yet at this time he could not have reached his fortieth year. His voice was hard, but it had a sort of music in it, stirring as that of a war-trump. Calm, clear, and bold, was his intellect—calmness, indeed, spoke through his every motion—beamed from his eyes, shone from his forehead, revealed itself in his voice—yet that man had a soul of fire!

Stuart stood alone in the world. He had neither father, nor mother, nor wife, nor child, nor brother, nor sister. He had always stood alone, and always felt himself alone. He had never maintained any sort of domestic relation—he knew nothing about companionship, as other men know. That he was poor, was self-evident—that he was gifted, equally so. But friendless as he seemed, Stuart was a man on whom one might rely with the most entire con-

fidence. Mr. Warren had been the first, perhaps the only man, to discover this—he was certainly his best appreciator. Stuart's integrity was unimpeachable—so was his morality—so indeed was his life thus far. With the disdain of a rigid philosopher he looked upon the vices and follies of those about him—he had apparently no pity for, no sympathy with, the weaknesses of humanity, because he could not see in them a necessity. He felt through his reason; he was never therefore guilty of emotion—and only so far as he found himself authorized, or compelled to feel by reason, could he sympathize. Stuart was an atheist—but—there are Christians who fall much further short of the morality of Christianity than he did.

It was the originality, daring, and power of this man's intellect, which Isa had revered—worshipped. And when, led on by Mr. Warren, she discovered him in existence, surrounded by the circumstances of poverty, neglect, and labor, dwarfed and solitary, almost altogether an unrecognised genius, she found her homage and reverence only increased.

She had never pictured him to herself as having been in the day, when she fancied he might have flourished, a model of beauty and grace—a theme for common praise, for common minds'

appreciation, but had rather fancied that he might have lived his time on earth, neglected and poor—in bodily presence contemptible. She had never imagined him one she could love as a mere man; but as a glorious guide she had thought upon him, a coveted companion, an aspirant like herself, only greater: and now, when she saw him, *she rejoiced to find him as he was.*

Her dream of his surpassing mental grandeur would have broken instantly, had he stood before her in the dignity of mere physical manhood—handsome, conscious of beauty, flattered, a trifler, a talker among talkers. She looked upon him . . . he was one the multitude would be sure to pass by without thought, without observation—she studied him for a moment, she saw the full tide of life and energy that was flowing through his veins, and Isa resolved.

But what impression made Isa on him? No obvious impression, but, nevertheless, a most strange one. Was it a pleasant one? I hardly need say. It is certain, that when he for the first time looked upon her, he was for the moment almost abashed by her beauty. It was not of an order to intoxicate any mortal, least of all him. Certainly, he had never seen beauty to compare with it; but Alan thus was a novice in such kind of criticism. That

Isa was gifted he well knew; and the knowledge added to his reverence of her beauty; that she was a diligent student he perceived at a glance; that she would study of him he felt inclined to prophesy. And why? He had read all she had written, with something of curiosity at first to learn how a young female writer would treat such subjects as she daringly touched upon; and from these he learned that she was already a student of his, after his own heart; and he resolved.

When Mr. Warren announced that she was to be associated with him in the management of *The Guardian*, during his own absence, Stuart had felt an almost irresistible desire to present himself to his co-worker at once, he longed to see her (he could have said as much in reference to no other woman, living or dead), he longed to speak with her, to hear her speak. He had waited, and behold, she crossed his threshold. She had come to him; and from that moment of her coming, he felt that he should never have to go to her. And the thought brought joy to him. And, moreover (which was a stranger result of so brief an interview), the solitary felt a deeper reverence, a new impulse of reverence, for woman, as such, when, after a brief interview, Isa departed with Mr. Warren. He would not have been happy had he thought he should never see that girl again.

## IX.

Even Isa's *début* in social life, as a thinker, was not entirely after the common way. Early in the first winter of her residence in J—, occurred the first re-union of the season. A brilliant company assembled in the parlors of Mrs. Warren. Heretofore, when Isa appeared in public, which was very rarely, she had been little more than a looker-on, seldom entering into general conversation, and impelled to silence by an increasing timidity, which almost effectually sealed her lips.

On this evening she was standing apart from the company, the brilliant women and distinguished men, hardly interested in the human show, even as a looker-on, when Mrs. Warren approached, leaning on the arm of an elderly gentleman, with whom she was speaking in gayest mood.

As they came near Isa, she caught these words, pronounced by the escort of the hostess, with great emphasis:—

"A woman's-rights convention! Bless my soul! Mrs. Warren, what is the world coming to? Have you taken up the gauntlet in behalf of your sex, madam?"

It was General S—, the redoubtable leader of armies, who, disabled from service on his last battle-field, was compelled to betake himself to social strife for amusement. He was a distant relative of his hostess, and nothing pleased him half as well as to enter into warlike engagement with her, though it was seldom that he retired from such service with "colors flying."

As he spoke, he threw aside the newspaper they had glanced over together. "What an age of humbugs this is! Tell me, good cousin Clara, what are we coming to?" he asked, with assumed petulance.

"For one thing, quite the most important to *you* just now, we are coming straight up to Isa Lee," said Mrs. Warren, in a peculiar undertone, then she added lightly, "the world at large, general, would be in a very small degree affected by my particular opinion as to what is coming to pass; as you would tell me yourself if I were not determined to find my triumph to-night in refusing to quarrel with you. I'm not going to commit myself by speaking at all on these agitated points, until I can do so with perfect safety. So—look for no manner of enlightenment from me."

"Enlightenment? that is rather more than I anticipated—then your zeal is at last really ac-

according to discretion? Oh, marvel! you, a woman, declining to express an opinion!"

"Even I; but compose your mind. I will secure for you an able combatant. I advise you as a friend to prepare for a struggle—Miss Lee, General S—. The lady is not so great a coward as I, sir. Moreover you will find her quite opinionated as to the right and the wrong of all the wonderful questions agitating this most wonderful time."

"Is it so? Miss Lee, your servant, madam. Will you indeed vouchsafe to enlighten us on some of these knotty points? Can you tell what all this means, this high-flown, transcendental talk about woman's rights and wrongs?"

"Wait—wait—general! You annihilate with such generalities! Why, it would take one a twelvemonth at least to even prepare a preface to opinion. Let me question you both. Collect your thoughts, please; this shall be no windy argument. You, sir, tell me what conclusions are you forced to draw from the fact that such questions *are* so agitated?"

"Just this, my wise one. The old world is getting to be a very wrong-headed, obstinate, foolish world. Or, it is in its dotage—I'm sometimes inclined to commiserate myself as the only sane person in it. We should not go far

wrong if we called it a huge lunatic asylum. All this talk, this agitation, this unhealthful excitement, goes to show only this—the idle have far too much time on their hands. We all need something to do to be kept out of mischief. The workers are not the talkers usually."

"Out of your own mouth are you condemned. What, pray, produces unhealthful excitement? Isa—Miss Lee, your aid! We must be slaves, or else put down as mischief-makers, must we! Why, looking upon it only in one light, what a breach of gallantry is such a statement as that!"

Isa would fain have replied in the same gay strain these friendly combatants had used, but she felt it to be impossible. To this very subject her attention had in divers ways been directed, her soul had been wholly and earnestly roused by it. And, notwithstanding, she had heard it discussed and supported by ignorant fanatics, though she had seen such agitators exposing themselves to just and scorching ridicule, her eyes had nevertheless been keen of sight to pierce through all masqueradings; she had seen what woman's wrongs were, and knew how they were borne, and so she felt herself compelled to say, gravely:—

"When such a subject is brought up for discussion, I never can speak excepting with ear-

nestness. I must honestly say what I think. Pardon me, Mrs. Warren, for being so miserable a champion—but you know I have but recently come into the field—and I would be prudent—I had rather not commit myself.”

“In short, you won’t combat!” exclaimed Mrs. Warren.

“What we *want*, is your honest opinion, young lady,” said the old soldier, with bland dignity, and gallant kindness.

“Do speak, Isa,” said Mrs. Warren; but just at that moment she was called away. An awkward silence ensued, during which her opponent was evidently expecting an answer. Isa struggled with herself as she noticed this, and finally managed to say:—

“It only seems to me, sir, that such a question as this of woman’s rights, could never have been so fiercely agitated, so widely, and with such earnest force, if woman’s wrongs had not in the first place suggested it.”

“With all deference, madam, has not a little ambition among a few restless mortals set the ball rolling? Would you not find this to be the exact state of the case, if you looked thoroughly into it? It strikes me that this same ambition to get up excitement, and to keep it up, has kept this question in agitation so long—

much in the way you know that our words affect the sea of air around us; as the naturalists say they do.”

“A cause that is not supported by, or founded in a living truth, must die.”

“Precisely; and may not that ‘living truth’ be just this: AMBITION? sheerest vanity? I confess to but little sympathy with fanatics myself. I believe there is no God, but God—but I’m not disposed to say that every new leader, party, or sect, produced, is his prophet.”

“As any one may plainly see,” pronounced the musical voice of Mrs. Roderick Irving, who just then joined them; “I see, moreover, that you have not the better part of this argument, General S—, which I am very glad to see. Can you not valiantly beat a retreat? If I am not mistaken, your opinions are fast getting to be mutinous? Are all your sympathies against the struggling, the poor, blind, struggling?”

“Yes, assuredly. What business have the blind to struggle? they must be led. And, moreover, Mrs. Irving, I never yet learned how to ‘beat a retreat;’ and you will agree with me I am quite too old to learn now. Continue the argument, Miss Lee,” he said, with a tone and look, which had unconsciously become extremely commanding.



Isa had conquered the agitation which she felt at first, and she had taken a bold resolve to teach her listeners a lesson, if that, indeed, were possible.

"Was there ever a cause of vital importance," she asked, glancing from Mrs. Irving to the general, with a sincere and trustful look, "agitated among men and women, when some of its supporters did not carry their prejudices in favor of it to a fanatical extreme, or when some among its opponents did not carry their prejudices against it to as great an extreme? Notwithstanding all you say of ambition being the support of this cause, I must hold to the belief that you will never find an unimportant, weak, and causeless cause making such commotion among people, high and low, wise and ignorant, weak and clear headed reasoners. I do not think, sir, that it will be either in your power or your wisdom to affirm long, that this question springs from a trivial point. For my part, I am proud to confess to practical faith in the poet's assertion, that

"Woman's best is unbegun;  
Her advent, yet to come!"

Isa's listeners had heard her with a courteous gravity and interest. The general, a great admirer of beauty wherever he found it, was think-

ing, while she spoke with such subdued yet evident enthusiasm, how very lovely she was, and Mrs. Irving listened with an emotion that almost betrayed itself in tears.

"Well said, Miss Lee! Now, general!" exclaimed Mrs. Warren, joining them at that moment.

"Your arguments are forceful, I admit it," said the old man, thus appealed to. "But, pardon me; what would your convictions in regard to this subject lead you *to do*, Miss Lee?"

"That I know not, as yet. My duty, I trust, as it should appear to me."

"Good! Your zeal is really according to knowledge. You will become no public lecturer; no ridiculous, ranting—"

"You forget. She has not promised as much. Besides, she does not need to be a lecturer. Miss Lee wields a pen! Now, what is your zeal according to, most gracious cousin? It is knowledge that has led you to handle this bone of contention so often! Oh, you are a thorough warrior! You have the spirit of a conqueror! But I think, Miss Lee, you deserve congratulation. So much as your opponent has now conceded was never before conceded by him. He is the most uncompromising hater of all reforms and reformers."

"I am conquered, am I? By bright eyes, then; nothing less, I assure you! To tell the truth (take what advantage you will of the confession), Cousin Clara, I hardly know what these striving Amazons are about. If, indeed, they have endured, and have still to endure, so much, are they not aware that the soul's sublimest faculty is just this power to endure, strength to bear and to be patient?"

"Perhaps so; but, you know, not every one that is oppressed is 'ambitious' of becoming a martyr."

"Yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Warren, energetically. "Thank you for that hint, Isa. I should like to know, General S—, how a warrior ever came to think such a thought, or at least to utter it, when it sounds not a mockery from a saint's lips alone. Would you consider that people most glorious and noble which bore the yoke of disgraceful and binding oppression, till all spirit, life, and energy, were driven out, destroyed from among them? or, a race that spurned the slavish bonds, that would not be crushed—that rose, though through the bloodiest battle-fields, to freedom? You are a soldier: answer me!"

"Now are you caught in your own toils, general! how can you answer such eloquence?" exclaimed Mrs. Irving.

"Only in one way, perhaps. By very quickly forgetting it."

"But you shall have no chance of forgetting it."

"Hear me out, please. By forgetting it, I say, in the more important conviction, that comparing the condition of women in this age with that of an enslaved people, is not only an extremely unjust procedure, it is ridiculous in you; you speak in jest—you have too much common sense about you, Clara, to be in earnest when you talk in that high-flown, heroic style. I should imagine that my fair listeners had, each and all, worn the yoke and the chain of the oppressor, MAN—but happily their looks do not carry out their arguments. You prove thus every one of you, that you have talked of what you really know nothing about."

"On you wretched, sophisticated worldling!" cried Mrs. Warren, half laughing, and half annoyed by his speech. "There is a leper at your gate. Your servant tells you that the leper wants help—that he demands it, but you say, *I* am not leprous, none of my kin are—I have never seen a leper—it's a falsehood! get away with such a tale! Silence, I tell you! you want to accomplish some selfish purpose of your own!"

The conversation was here interrupted by the

approach of Roderick Irving, who came seeking his wife, music having been solicited. And the debaters, laughing and jesting, moved to the music-room, glad, every one of them, to discontinue a subject on which only two of them felt any interest beyond that aroused by a love of disputation, and the fruitfulness of the theme in the way of argument.

## X.

In the wide circle of acquaintance which Isa formed during her first winter in J—, were some of both sexes, with whom she held no professional relations. And among these, well content, and indeed seeking to be taught, rather than to teach, was Mrs. Irving, toward whom she felt drawn by that resistless force of attraction which is not always justified in its results. The affectionate impulse that inspired Isa sprung immediately from the remembrance of a love that pointed in another direction than the busy city in which she lived, away to the quiet home in Richmond, to the simple study in which she fancied dwelt the spirit of Duganne. And because affection, or perhaps reverence for him, and for his mother, made as yet by far the greater part of the life of her affections, she felt irre-

sistibly drawn toward one who had of herself suggested thoughts of them, and more especially of him. And how many such thoughts which Isa could readily pardon as she received them, *because the influence acted upon her from without*—did Mary Irving suggest!

This lady was apparently about Isa's own age, and her marriage was the most unfortunate fact connected with her life, as it would seem. Isa needed not to be told of it—to her the story of an unhappy heart, an unhappy life resulting from an unequal, an ungenial marriage relation, had in past years been written out before her in the experience of her dear friend. She knew the traces which an unhappy matrimonial relation leaves. Of the domestic relations of Roderick and Mary Irving, she knew nothing; Isa arrived at her conclusions respecting them through the appearance of the husband, and her knowledge of the record of mental and physical suffering which Mrs. Duganne's trials had left in voice, on feature, and in expression. And, in pure sympathy, had she dared, she would at once have clasped the fair young stranger in her arms, and said:—

“We are young—we have sorrowed—let us love one another.”

One possessing eyes of the understanding,

could certainly have seen clearly, looking on this husband and wife, that there was not a jot of intelligent sympathy between them. This conclusion was arrived at by Isa on observing their great contrast in mere personal appearance. They seemed the very embodiment of two distinct lives — of flesh and of spirit. He, with that tyrannous nature which spoke so plainly in his voice — with his sensual looks, his purple pride, and astounding educated-ignorance — she, frail, timid, exquisitely lovely, having a soul of music, with far more of death than life in her face, how came they together?

It was a question that Isa repeatedly asked herself; and, since she knew that love was out of the question; that love could not have united them—at least her to him, and scarcely him to her, since she saw that the union could not possibly have been brought about by sympathy, since no apparent chord bound them, even in marriage, excepting that of custom, what could in the first place, have brought them together? Surely, she thought to herself, it must be that he had bought her. Mary Irving was a slave-wife!

Seeking distinct information of Mrs. Warren, Isa found that this was really the fact, though it was presented by her in another and more worldly form than Isa chose to regard it.

"It was a union of expedience," she said. "Mary had only a little beauty, and an extraordinary degree of musical talent, as you are aware. Roderick Irving, on the contrary, was a very rich man, and bore, as he does still, an eminently respectable name. His connections in life were most flattering, and he adored her. She was never very strong, and so was unable to work with much efficiency in her profession, as I have been told. And really, it seemed very fortunate that a man should have fallen 'dead in love with her,' as the saying is, who had the ability to make her independent of others."

"Yes, that may be true, perhaps. But, how wholly dependent on him she is made. Heaven defend the poor girl! how wretchedly she must be disappointed!"

"Disappointed! why?"

"Why? can you imagine that they love each other?"

"Certainly! why should they not? They have sworn to do it. They seem a very comfortable couple to me."

"Now, do you honestly think that love can be a free gift from either of them to the other? And, if love's not a free gift, what under heaven is it?"

"You judge from appearances, it seems. They

have deceived you. Irving is rough, abrupt, oftentimes, in his way of speaking. She is a very quiet woman, with a saintly look of sweet submission. They are just the two to be together; every married man and woman will tell you so. A fiery-tempered, stirring wife would not half so well suit him. And if Mary had a 'meek Moses' for a husband, she would n't know whether she was in the body or out of it, a year from now. Mary is one of your quiet mortals, very fond of solitude. She doesn't go much into society; and, if I made other people's business my own, I should blame her for it, because she owes something to the world, and has the power to entertain magnificently. She is very diffident, but I should never call her unhappy. How came you to think of such a thing? I always make it a point that she shall attend my *soirées*. She can be amused and interested if she will, and can, besides, give pleasure to others."

"And do you really think she is happy? As happy as before her marriage?" asked Isa, wondering. "Dependence on a husband, it strikes me, is a very shocking thing—that is, if a wife has only dependence to boast of, and not sincerest love besides. It seems to me Mrs. Irving is just of my mind about this."

"Ah, I can see your difficulty. You think

love is the grand and only idea of married life! From much that I have seen, if I did not know better, I should judge love to be only a necessary accompaniment for courtship, and the honeymoon. Few people find marriage to be what I am thankful to say I have proved it. My dear girl, a woman, and a man, too, I must say, having a regard for justice and equity, makes the most extraordinary venture in entering wedlock. Nine tenths of the people are not fit to marry—I mean, of course, judging from the appearance of results. If you ever make such venture, I shall pray Heaven that your experience may prove as beautiful and blessed as mine has."

"Indeed, I can not conceive of any human relation more beautiful than this. And a woman should certainly have an entire dependence on her husband, as she will have, if she loves truly, no matter what circumstances distinguish her outward life. Such confidence and union, you know, figure all lovely sorts of union. But do you not think a woman like Mrs. Irving especially requires thorough sympathy, in order that she may have perfect happiness in this life, or indeed any degree of happiness? I do verily believe that she would have been happier, contented she may perhaps be, if she had roused

herself more earnestly when energy would have availed, and depended on herself alone."

"It may be, yet hardly either; for she is neither a strong, nor a spirited creature — so it is impossible to reason about it."

"What opinion have you of Mr. Irving, then? I believe we shall agree about him."

"Oh, he is rather an animal, as one may plainly see; but a good one. He has not the most spiritual notions of enjoyment, neither is he much of a philosopher, and I'm quite confident he'll never distinguish himself as a moralist. But, heavens! don't direct your thoughts to the study of your acquaintances' matrimonial relations. You will be likely to go heart-sick at once — that is, if you have indulged in fairy dreams of such things. Some thoughts, you must know, are best let alone. And, when we come to the realities of things about us, where shall we find one that doeth good? Mr. Irving is well received, and I believe well liked, wherever he goes; and there is one feature in his character which, when I think of it, always seems lovely and pure enough to cover a multitude of sins. He is a passionate lover of music. I have the greatest respect for such men, no matter how unfavorably they may have impressed me, the very moment I learn that they love music."

"A lover of what sort of music is he?" asked Isa, with such peculiar emphasis, that Mrs. Warren laid down her work and curiously scanned her questioner's face. A new idea seemed to have opened upon her.

"Of what sort?" she repeated.

"Why, yes," answered Isa. "If a person told you he was passionately fond of poetry, would you not ask what style, what tone, what order, best pleased him, if you cared to discover the temper of his mind? It would be an easy, and to me most satisfactory way."

"But this is really a new thought to me. You shall judge for yourself. Watch him, and tell me what opinion you should form of him in this way alone. I never thought of it before — it seems strange, too. Then you really suppose —"

"I know that the mere being enchained by sweet sounds, delighted by them, or subdued by them, is not a shadow of a proof that a man may not be all the while the most sensual in creation. In some sorts of music there is nothing of an elevating tendency whatever. And this is equally true of poetry — rhythm and melody may abound, and yet conduce to the lowest enjoyments alone."

"Well, upon my word, this is a great sugges-

tion! Isa, do you know you have explained much to me by merely asking that question?"

"Then I am at liberty to ask another. In your opinion, if one took the trouble to make the special acquaintance of Mary Irving, is there anything beyond her captivating look of sorrow that would pay for the seeking?"

"Very much! I'm glad you have a disposition to like her. If you wanted a companion or a help for your high flights, I could not recommend her. But, if you feel any desire or want for an amiable and affectionate young friend, I dare to say you will find what you want in her."

This answer reassured Isa. Mrs. Warren's admission of these characteristics, and the possession of others which her friend denied, but which she, by intuition, saw in Mary Irving, led her to look with increased and indescribable interest on the wrecked, unhappy life of the young wife—for wrecked and unhappy she knew it was, and no argument of worldly people could convince her to the contrary. Her interest, as has been stated, was first aroused by the soft sounds which drew her back and apart from the listening crowd, that gathered one night around the sweet singer.

It deepened and increased from the moment

when she felt herself almost convulsed with excitement and surprise, on hearing from a stranger's, a woman's lips, the beautiful song which Weare had often sung for her.

For the friendship of this woman, so pale, and sad, and quiet, so gifted with the sweet "gift of song," she felt willing to make advances and sacrifices of her own exceeding reserve. Have you ever met with one or many, toward whom, from the first moment that your eyes rested upon them, you have felt such an unaccountable, friendly disposition? I know the suffering, the aspiring, the solitary, have.

Circumstances did not at first throw these two minds much together. Their acquaintance was long limited to ordinary exchanges of courtesy. But the attraction was felt, and not exclusively by Isa. Her remarks concerning woman's rights and wrongs, had drawn Mary's heart and curiosity as well, toward her—and she was more than willing to meet every advance or shadow of advance, and for a long time they were but shadows, made by Isa toward her.

The quiet, gentle nature of Mrs. Irving was hedged about with extreme diffidence. Intercourse with the world had done little toward conquering her strange, exceeding timidity; and this natural barrier was a formidable one for a



person like Isa Lee. She could have overcome any other more readily. The reason was, that she did not know how to deal with, or the way in which to unite herself with, such a person. Her conviction was, that disappointment and sorrow were sapping the springs of that young life; but, though she made a study of Mary, she could get no further than that. The appreciativeness, and justice, and beauty, with which Mary sometimes spoke with her, when they were alone, of things far beyond the common, her enthusiasm and purity, enchanted Isa; she longed to make a companion of her as well as a study.

On the other hand, the candor of the editress, her generous impulses, decision of character, sincerity, and stately beauty, very favorably impressed Mary Irving. She fancied that one like herself might find in the writer a strong help, a friend on whom to lean; and she often asked her soul, if *she* might not prove this true. They had both suffered. Isolated as Mary was from all but the externals of friendship, and standing in a great measure alone, as Isa did, they both found, by degrees, cause for, and thus development of, sympathy and union between them.

## XI.

Ordinary observers might have seen in Mary's musical talent her one "distinguishing characteristic." Isa knew that there were other, or rather, that this gift was developed in many and complete ways, besides that of sound. It was, however, this power of expression that had first enchanted, and it was all that had ever enchanted, her selfish, tyrannical, exacting, unappreciating husband. It was the one cord, let down from heaven, that bound his soul to things and tastes above the animal. Had his wife properly comprehended the full meaning of this gift, and the use to which it might be applied, and through it exerted what other powers she possessed, she might, through God's grace, have been instrumental in his salvation. As it was, Isa had seen discerningly into the heart of the whole matter: the love of music was with him a mere pleasure of sense, not degrading, it is true, but neither elevating.

"Tell me," said Isa, one day, with sudden earnestness, to the singer, determined to sound her heart at a stroke, "when your lips utter that divine hymn, do you feel as though your whole life were going through it into expression?"

"Tell me," was the unexpected and novel

answer, "when you compose, does your soul go out into all your words?"

"Yes, always," was the reply, spoken in a confidential tone, that was meant to, and was successful in, inspiring a return of confidence; "I never write except in my own mood. I can not."

"How may that be? You are not all-souled, are you? Where, then, shall one be sure of finding you? I should imagine you could not speak in your own capacity, through more than one style of character?"

"Wait, you do not understand me. Strictly speaking, there are but two styles of character, the *good* and the *bad*. Who can not sympathize heartily with each, at times? Nay, who is not each, at times? Why, how can you even sing, and give to more than one poet's thoughts your earnest expression and touching power?"

"I—I sing in all moods, truly. My heart is really lighter than the very lightest song, at times, and—"

"And sadder than the saddest, at others; base as the basest; pure as the purest?" said Isa, inquiringly. "Yes; it must be so; for it is just so with me, and it must be so with all. But there is one song, I am sure, that always touches yourself most tenderly and searchingly, as it certainly does me."

"Which is it?"

"Nay, tell me, yourself. Let us prove whether I am right."

Mary Irving hesitated a moment; her soul fell at Isa's feet; she saw (and she was glad) that a human being was striving, for the first time in years, if not in her whole life, to know her as she was, to draw her out. She loved and trusted that questioner with her whole heart. She would have made a confession had she found the confidence, but she had not the confidence; and so, instead of exclaiming: "Listen, I will tell you the story of my life," she quietly asked:—

"Is it *The Evening Hymn to the Virgin*?"

"Yes! there is a true abandonment, a delightful abandonment, of soul, in the desire expressed by the words:—

"Thou, who hast looked on death,  
Aid us when death is nigh!"

It seems almost like a prayer for death—as though you had a foreboding that the hour had almost come."

"I like you to say that. You are a discerning critic. Your words seem to add a new, and really unimagined worth to my one gift. You have looked into my soul. Have others like power? I must remove the soul-tune from my

song, then ; I must never sing that *aloud* again, at all events. It would not do to be 'singing for the million,' when any and every one could, as you have, read thoughts I would be the last to express in verse or prose."

"I think you have no reason to fear. But, certainly, to me music is nothing if I hear only sweet sounds, and skilful mechanical execution. I love to hear the human heart breasting the waves of feeling, and leaping upon the beach of sound, saved, because it can find expression. I think, that in this world of misery, none are so perfectly miserable as the voiceless—and such are the more to be pitied, if they are not conscious of their deprivation."

"I am glad you have discovered my soul's secret. But do not flatter yourself that such revelation of one's inner nature is only made in song. I too have looked into your soul. And I have frequently longed to tell you of it. I rejoice that you have placed yourself in a position that enables me to say this much to you without fear. Tell me, is there not one picture you are given to drawing, on which you invariably expend your utmost power?"

"What is it?"

"A struggling and lonely human heart, supported by WILL through the extremes of suffering

and misfortune. Patient, content to struggle, determined to accomplish:—is not this your highest, most exalted idea of heroism? Oh, how I wish I had known you before—before it was too late!"

Mary spoke with startling vehemence, and her listener turned away to conceal her emotion, and her joy. She had not been deceived; that voice had in its tone of revelation, a

"Behold, and see

What a great heap of grief lay hid in me!"

She gave her hand to the timid questioner, who had suddenly become so bold, and said softly:—

"My sister—Mary."—

The words acted like a charm on Mary Irving. Her diffidence and hesitancy were thrown aside as a mask; the shadows which seemed for ever folding over her eyes—her sad, "pathetic eyes"—cleared away; there was sunshine in her face. Hastening to the piano, she poured forth her joy, not with words, but in a glad and solemn chant. As she turned again from the instrument, she threw herself at Isa's feet, and her heart sped through its open doors. She spoke with the utmost truth of word, look, and expression:—

"When compelled to make use of this gift as a means of living, I was weak; I faltered, faint-

ed, failed, in my purpose. A door of escape opened. I rushed through it, never thinking or caring whether light or darkness were beyond . . . I met my reward—I found that there are two kinds of poverty in this world, and that the last is infinitely worse than the first. Let no one say there is not a worse thing than hunger, and nakedness, and the isolation caused by such poverty. You do not believe that, do you?"

"So far from it, I know to the contrary; Mary I have tried both kinds of poverty."

"But—but—but—"

"Yes—" said Isa, as hesitatingly, interrupting her friend in the endeavor she was making to express the thought; "I *am* free, but as yet I am hardly convinced as to whether it is my salvation, or madness, and ruin, to be so."

"Think it is your salvation! Oh, believe it! Don't let your mind harbor another idea."

"Do you admire that character you say I am so given to drawing, of a struggling and patient heart?"

"Yes; as I admire the sketches of angels my own fancy furnishes. But it is so much easier to say than to do! Have you not always found it so? I have never encountered a perfect mortal yet, have you?"

"Yes—and one who had grown perfect through fiery trial."

"A woman then! I have a presentiment. Yet tell me, why do you so often represent woman as gifted especially with the hero nature?"

"Does not woman deserve to be so represented? Where, in this world, in this generation, will you find the spirit so alive—so thoroughly alive, as in her?"

"Alas, I do not know. I had almost begun to think that all sorts of heroism had died out from among us."

"Look about you—look within you! Look, but not with the eyes of sense—think of all that woman is doomed by nature, by society, by custom, to endure. Do you not see the evidences of a divine patience? and that you know is 'all the passion of great hearts.'"

"I grant it to a degree. I do see this 'divine patience.' I should feel proud, indeed, if I could see as you do, and so grant it wholly. But can one really do so who takes the present for what it is, unillumined by the great hope of what it will be? Only see of what society is made!"

"Yes—I do see. Society is a masked ball—and the music is discordant, and can hardly in this life be otherwise than so. But it may be

less discordant, more harmonious. And the beatings of woman's heart must make it so; for these beatings give the key-notes to the tunes of life! You are not to judge, you know, by the triflers among women—say what people will, they are few in comparison with the earnest hearts, the striving minds, the effectual workers. Among certain people, Mrs. Warren would pass for a trifling person, gay, light-hearted, made for the sole purpose of enjoying, and fulfilling that destiny. A more selfish nature than that would evince, can scarcely be imagined; for all acknowledge her capacitated to fill any sort of station she may chance to occupy. But it is not true of her, as you well know. She dresses well, dances well, entertains well—is chatty, agreeable, charming—and so are a thousand others just like her. But she is infinitely more than this—and so are those others. She is more than agreeable in conversation, she is considerate and charitable; she is more than a church-goer, being very devout; more than a believer in what she professes, she is a doer of the word, and a worker. She is polished, and warm-hearted, too—the poor love, and the rich admire her. The influence she exerts is beyond telling, and it is for good entirely, as I believe. There are myriads of such women in the world

—they seek no pedestal of fame that they may work, and be seen of men; their influence is silent, but it is mighty, as that of Nature.”

“It is pleasant to see such affection as there is between her and her husband. A rare sight, too, it must be confessed!” said Mary, with a sigh. “They adore each other!”

“Love is nothing, if it be not worship, you know,” said Isa. Mary reflected a moment, and said :—

“Your pardon, but it strikes me love can exist, and yet be nothing *like* worship. How else can the unworthy be loved?—they *are* loved. No one would think of worshipping a bad man or a bad woman, while such may, after all, be the objects or recipients of very strong affection.”

“Love is not animal passion; it is not that principle which leads people to live together oftentimes in perfect peace and comfort. Mary, love is not love, if it be not devotion.”

“Then love is sinful—it must be so.”

“Most assuredly not.”

“What! Do you not believe that there is only One to whom worship should be rendered? Would you apply the same word to our bond of fellowship with man, and with God? A friend, a companion, a husband, or a wife, may be inexpressibly dear, may be necessary perhaps to

the truest happiness in this life. It seems to me so. But how *can* you say that man or woman worship is not sinful?"

"I do not probably understand the word *SIN* in the way you do. For the rest, I should say such worship is not sinful, simply because—it is among the possibilities."

"According to that you regard nothing as sinful, no guilt; then, is involved in crime, because crime is possible! How perfectly monstrous! Oh, do but think of it! . . . . The idea makes me shudder! What temptation is not among the possibilities?"

"Sin does not lie in temptation."

"Is it necessary that I should express myself more clearly? Do you not understand me? As if I could say anything you could not understand! Excuse my presumption. Do let's agree on this point!"

"Most gladly: only agree with me."

"But I can not even reconcile what you say with my impressions of common sense; am not I intolerably stupid, or—"

"Or, am not I? Why not say it out?"

"And you really persist in affirming, that worship of the human is no sin, because it is a possible thing? What a dreadful word that *possible* seems, all at once!"

"Of course, if one is bent on *sinning*, as you call it, he may or can sin to any imaginable extent. Another thing is indisputable: To the pure and good, all things are pure and good; they can not comprehend another order or state of things. All with which they come in contact, all with which they associate, is perfect; for it is a moral impossibility to such that they should be cognisant of any other kind of character. Think of Mr. and Mrs. Warren. I use the word love, or worship, as she or he would use it; now think of these two creatures, who adore each other."

"I do; they could not well avoid being drawn toward each other; but, if their love is such as you style it, I remember that it is only the love of one mortal for another mortal, of beings who are not in any way eternally steadfast, of creatures who change, who are liable to change. How can a passion or worship such as you name, end in anything but disappointment?"

"She sees a God in him; he, doubtless, sees as much in her. Why, do you not see that love can never exist at all, except in the minds of the perfectly pure, toward other beings as perfect and as pure? In such mortals the God is manifestly revealed. We prove ourselves infidels, when, coming in contact with such visible perfections, we do not worship them, or fail to yield

our whole hearts to them; it is the only surrender—the only great and worthy surrender, we can make.”

“I can not soar so high; I am more ‘of the earth—earthy’ than you. I can but believe, if this is the nature of our friends’ marriage relation, it will end in sorrow. They will, what can prevent their finding out the difference between God and man, between worship and love?”

“Apparently they have not yet discovered it: they have had ample time. Mark me: they never will discover it. Mrs. Warren has found her idea of perfection in him, that idea which others find in the Unknown, the Unseen. As great an amount of faith may be necessary to the one as to the others.”

“What dreadful idea possesses you? Are you really confounding mere humanity, with God the eternal? For my part, I do not believe it to be in the nature of man to return such love, even if it be possible for woman to give it.”

“You are mistaken; you are more in danger of dismembering one great verity or unity, than I am of confounding what you call God with man. There is no such thing as spiritual sexuality. As some author says, the only perfect human being is that one formed by the union

of man and woman in a perfect sympathy. He or she who stands alone is not a complete, but only a half-existent. . . . But all our individual experience, I imagine, will not give us much light on this subject; we must speculate and reflect on it, and draw our inferences from our convictions of necessities. We must go out from ourselves. When love or devotion is genuine, its inevitable first result is a supreme reverence in the soul. If this were not true of our friends—if I did not see this true of them, I should have no faith left even in the possibility of love.”

“Since not one in ten thousand, I will venture to say, ever conceived of marriage as you do, tell me, pray, what think you of the institution as a general thing?”

“We are progressive. The institution was well enough for the people of past ages; but its necessity and its power have gone by: it is, therefore, now become a bond too galling, too oppressive. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, people assuming matrimonial vows, especially women, sell their birthright of freedom for a mess of pottage. In its present state, as an institution, marriage is not a holy thing—it is an abomination.”

“Tell me,” said Mrs. Irving, with hesitating but painful earnestness, if you were bound to



another, and found out that the tie was for you an abomination, the covenant awfully ridiculous, what would you do?"

"Break the bond without delay. To me it would be a 'sin' to bear, or to endure it."

"Have you imagined what would ensue, if people dared to do this—if all dared who had the inclination, I mean?"

"No: when there is so much that must be thought of, it is scarcely worth while to brood over the effects of imaginary events. The earth, recollect, is peopled with cowards. If it were not so, if all bound in the shackles of marriage dared to speak, to break their bonds, to be free again, I suppose the very virtue that inspired the unhappy to free themselves, put into vigorous circulation by such act of voluntary divorcement, would of itself produce a better state of things."

"You do not reflect that the virtuous would hardly be swiftest to break such ties, even if the precedent were established."

"Yes, yes! I am sure of that. The vicious are weak, and it is not they who are oftenest truly and consciously unhappy."

"I have misunderstood you all along, then; you do not think it is a crowning glory to endure wrong patiently—to suffer and bear in quiet?"

"No, I have not affirmed that. We are con-

stituted to enjoy intellectual freedom to the utmost. What were life worth to me—to you—without this consciousness? Would you exist without it? How can one enjoy this life himself, or promote any of its best interests, if a low, narrow, abominable, carking care, or grief, or oppression, of another's imposing, of a miserable domestic nature, is for ever souring the life, drying up the fountains of the soul—destroying her best powers—lowering, preventing, annulling her aspirations? How is one to learn, to discover and develop, the immeasurable capacities of the soul or heart, if a grief, that false pride makes nameless, is pressing continually upon it, hiding the light of truth from it, or utterly distorting it? If one would LIVE, one must have freedom. I can conceive of nothing called life worthy the name, without it. Annihilation were better than such existence."

"I believe with you in this—certainly—yes, certainly. It is true—or, rather, it would be true, if in this life only we had hope in Christ, and hope in heaven. There may be circumstances—though my heart has been with you while you were speaking—I am compelled to declare my belief, that there may be circumstances where disunion is of all things covetable, desirable, but duty forbids it. Oh, Isa Lee, en-

joyment, intellectual progress, development of the heart's affections as they would be developed under a smiling sunshine, is not all that must be looked for — these circumstances of social life do not alone make marriage vows binding — these alone do not make the covenant one that lasts for life. A creature who has found the utmost wretchedness in enduring such ties may, I firmly believe, work more virtuously, and strongly, and effectively, even while enduring them, and may so be in a much greater degree blest, than one who has never known sorrows."

"As how?"

"The miserable are compassionate."

"Not always. I might tell you a story which would at once convince you that the point you start from is far from invulnerable — you could not for a moment maintain it."

"Certainly, it is the common, the natural result of sorrow, that the heart feeling it is conscious of acquiring a fuller measure of the charity which comprehends all the virtues! I myself have seen enough of life to convince me that this is true."

"Of rich and selfish people, remember, we are not speaking. They are not proper specimens of true humanity. All is perverted in them. You therefore contrast with what is not

really a truth, if you contrast the virtues of the unhappy, with the selfishness which is the unnatural happiness of the sensualist."

"You mislead me, or you mistake. It certainly is a direct and a common effect, that the unfortunate and unhappy grow perfect through their suffering. It is that this effect may be produced, that justice and religion may continue among the people, that our Father in heaven wisely ordains the great majority of his children to lives of sorrow. Why, what an example is mere patience, as you yourself suggested a while since! It has converted many a monster. What a revelation is made in endurance! Hearts of stone, the most cold and hard, have been subdued by it. In God's harvest we shall see what fruits, precious in his sight, have been perfected by these very means!"

## XII.

Immediately after Isa's departure from Richmond, Dugganne returned home. His mother's lonely position demanded this of him, and, indeed, the chief cause of his long absence was, with Isa, removed. Had she not gone, it would probably have been long before he could have philosophized himself into a state, not of indifference, but of calmness, in regard to her. The idea which possessed him when he parted with her, was that he could never look with tranquillity or indifference on that beautiful girl again; the idea had not yet given way to his clear sense of duty. Though he had loved against reason, it had been with his whole heart that he rendered the homage, and so love had always been a cause of disquietude with him. His reason told him that he was not capacitated to be her head, and she would not allow herself to receive him for her heart — and therefore he knew that all was gone by of this distracting hope, this disquieting love. Long, weary months of wrestling, had those been that followed his departure from home, and Dugganne was only beginning to subdue himself to strive successfully for peace, when his mother conveyed to him the tidings

that Isa's path of life was marked out—that the old ties were all about to be broken, or annulled. For, though Mrs. Dugganne did not put so decisive an interpretation as this, on the fact that Isa had been called to an editorship, Weare, who knew her better than his mother did, could not entertain the least doubt that she would, and at once, embrace the opportunity of going into the world on her own responsibility. His imagination followed her through the probabilities of the new career—he saw her in another, a before unthought-of light, as a different woman from that she had been heretofore. And desolate, indeed, did he feel in the now increasing, and almost new consciousness, that she was individually nothing more to him for ever, that he rather was nothing more to her. He thought of her as standing in that new light to which he clearly foresaw she would aspire—he beheld her, the centre of a circle, as he felt she must inevitably be, law-giving, love-inspiring, enchanting by her beauty, winning by her eloquence, subduing by her energy. He saw her honored, praised, and flattered, and then Dugganne became most painfully conscious of the thoughts, very different from those affection suggested, which she must have had of him. Ah, what need had she of him in her inevitable career?

For a time he could not help pitying, and even contemptuously regarding, himself—why, he demanded of himself, had he not proved fit to go with her as she went into the great world? why had he suffered himself to prove incompetent to appear as her rightful protector?

He knew, he was conscious, that she also must be aware of the bewildering temptations which would meet her henceforth, turn which way she would. He longed but to go with her, to support her in them all, to defend her through them all. But as he thought of himself in that capacity, the question continually recurred to him, could you do that? could you guide, could you help her? And he was compelled to answer, no!

Isa was stronger than he, abler, more ambitious, not better, not holier.

Dugganne, as well as Isa, had his temptation: *She was going forward, oh, how boldly! to meet hers; his fell upon him.*

His soul agonized to write, to speak thus with her once more. He longed to say all that his heart felt for her, as brother might to sister—but even while her heart yearned to hear those words he might have written, and while his spirit would fain have given them life, a desolating conviction that she did not need, and would

not gladly receive now, either his counsel or his love, silenced him—she had not asked his advice.

In the pride of her triumph she might even think he was presuming—and he could not endure that she should unwittingly do both herself and him such injustice. It was not a fraternal affection or devotion that he felt for her—he never could deceive himself into believing it. And yet it was not a wild and blasting passion, nor anything like it. Its growth had been too gradual, had entered too largely, too entirely into his nature, to be ever eradicated—its fine fibres had run through every vein of thought and feeling—never, till he forgot all things, could he forget her—and with forgetfulness alone could this love cease.

The discovery of the existence of such a love in him was, as we have seen, a sudden, unlooked-for discovery: a thought of parting had brought it to light; a hope that it might be returned had induced him to confess it, and he had felt that his

“Life was all read backward;  
That the charm of life was done,”

when Isa as much as confessed that, in her, ambition conquered love. In that, the only hour of passion he had ever known, he would gladly

have heard her acceptance of his proposal, even had it been accompanied by the assurance that her remembrances of the past were powerful to sustain an affection and an interest not absorbing. But in after-days, Duganne felt that such a love (and he could then understand that it was all she could feel for him) would not satisfy him beyond such an hour of passion as that in which his love's vehemence had deadened him to every other consideration.

He knew how it all was; he had pictured such a future to himself, a thousand times. He could love her so fondly, could go with her so peacefully, so joyfully, through life, and such a pilgrimage would, to him, have been like a ramble through the fields on a sweet sabbath-day; for his heart was one to grow holier, calmer, and increasingly mindful of God, as earthly blessings increased. Prosperity did not make him proud; it humbled his spirit; the goodness of the Creator inspired to constant remembrance, not to forgetfulness. As the vision of this earthly future was dispelled, he did not at the first feel inclined to indulge in despairing melancholy; he did not say that the joy and the glory of life had for him gone by; nor, in consequence of this, should his mind, be thought for an instant, by any reader, so childishly weak as to be readily soothed and diverted,

childish in its affections, to be satisfied as the young are. Not at all.

Isa had influenced him for all the years of his life. Her mere words had been sufficient to change the course of his studies, to lead him into a new profession, even when in so doing he acted contrary to his own inclination, and in opposition to the long-cherished hopes of his mother. The thought of her had proved strong enough to induce a lengthened separation between him and his parent; and, for the same reason, that separation might have been prolonged through years. In other ways, in countless ways, she had influenced him, and he felt it; and yet, through all the keenness of disappointment and sorrow, his faith in God, and love to God, had remained firmly fixed, a principle of life, and all her doubting and instability could not move Duganne in this.

Her son's return home, after Isa's departure from Richmond, was a joyful event to Mrs. Duganne, who had sorely felt his continued absence. His medical studies were at once resumed there, and resumed with ardent determination and diligence, but the return was far from a happy one to him. It was hard to feel alone, where Isa had once been his companion; to live again where she had lived, where she would live

never more; for, as to herself, the presentiment had come to him, that the young editor's going was a final one. Only by studious application could he escape this loneliness, and the foreboding of future sorrows; only by great effort could he tempt hope's sunlight into his mourning heart.

Mrs. Dugganne never made an effort to accomplish the impossible work of withdrawing Weare's thoughts from Isa; she did not wish nor believe that he could forget her. Every day her name was on their lips; a thousand things suggested it; so intimately, so thoroughly, had she been associated with all that concerned that little household, that it had been most painful for them to keep silence when the thought of her was presented.

A part of every evening Weare devoted to his mother, and these hours were usually spent in reading. One evening, not long after Isa's departure, he took up the book of poems we have before referred to, and read from it a brilliant fragment.

"You pronounce those lines with exactly Isa's emphasis," said Mrs. Dugganne; "how well she reads poetry. She was delighted with this work."

"I have been happy thinking of her since I knew her to be a poet," said Weare. "Strange

girl! with her ambition and determination, to think of her declaring and insisting that she can not write poetry!

"As if her admission made any difference respecting the possession of the power, the poetic sentiment, or whatever you call it. She will have fuller vision, ere long. Oh, mother, what an extraordinary woman!"

"She had the strangest dream, before she went away. I never knew till she told me of it, how far the poison of skepticism had penetrated through her moral system. When she told me the dream, she expressed her convictions in a strange way. I am at a loss to know how I should judge of her manner, whether it was the confidence and assurance of one whose opinion can not and shall not change, or whether it was merely a revelation of her openness and trustfulness. She was never so frank and confiding with me, as of late."

"I can not tell either. What was the dream, mother?"

"*She* called me *mother*, Weare, when she commenced telling it as she has several times of late. I was quite proud to hear her. 'Mother,' she said, 'I was out on a wild sea last night, in an awful storm. Such blackness of darkness! I could feel the darkness, and imagine how it

might have been felt in Egypt. I was in a ship, pacing to and fro, when I heard a cry suddenly. I ran with others to the deck, and saw a huge mountain bearing down directly upon us. If you could only conceive the confusion there was among us! the screaming, and praying, the rushing backward and forward across the ship! — ‘And what were *you* doing all this while?’ I asked. ‘I caught hold of a spar, and then felt myself safe,’ she said; ‘so I stood and watched the coming of the iceberg. I never in my life saw anything so beautiful. All at once the clouds separated, the moon appeared, and flooded the immense mountain with light; it shone like a diamond in the light. I was so absorbed in its beauty that I entirely forgot the danger. Then, just as the vessel and iceberg came in contact, I saw a figure perched upon the summit of the ice. It looked like an angel—yet like a man; just as I caught sight of him, my eyes were riveted by his gaze—he seemed to be looking me through and through, with such eyes as I never saw in any human being’s head. Then came the crash!—it seems to me now as though I heard distinctly as I did in the dream—three sounds, only three, the breaking of the ship—the one shout, God! that went up from the crowd on board like the appealing cry of an

individual—the other sound . . . it was the strangest burst of laughter, coming from the man-angel on the rock. As I floated away, his laugh seemed to run through me like electricity, and in a perfect ecstasy of joy, I joined him in the shout.’ ”

“Mother!—what did you say to her when she told you the dream?”

“That it was the strangest piece of imagination I ever heard, vouchsafed a dream.”

“Did you believe her?”

“Certainly, I did.”

“But, was she saved? What became of her when she floated away?”

“She did not tell. I forgot to ask. But did you ever hear of a dream to equal it?”

“No—I never did. Oh, mother, she should never have gone away from you; that angel of light, that destroying angel, will come down to her from the rock! he will float away with her on that frail spar—she will be lost! SHE WILL BE LOST!”

“I asked her what she thought when she heard all but herself calling on God.”

“What did she say?” exclaimed Dugganne.

“What I shall never forget. ‘It was a weakness of the multitude—it did not save them—they perished; I was saved!’ ”



"Lost! Lost!"

"Oh, son, it was only a dream," began Mrs. Dugganne, soothingly—but he stopped her, exclaiming wildly:—

"She will never make use of the gift—she will be no poet—she will not heed that light of salvation God gave to her. She has gone down into that sea of the world! Oh, destruction!"

"Weare, let us pray for her," Mrs. Dugganne said; and before he could speak again, she had fallen on her knees and offered such a supplication as never could have been spoken save by a soul filled with such love, and fear, as this mother felt for Isa.

And very frequently were such petitions made for Isa by the mother and the son together—in fact, they never prayed and forgot to name her to the Father in heaven, and to beseech his blessing for her. With the utmost anxiety did they now direct their eyes and thoughts to the young girl's progress. Through the press they occasionally learned the estimate critics put upon her powers, and they learned it with pride, and with hope for her—but the hope was never in the mind of either dissociated from an absorbing fear, when they asked themselves, though the question never, from the recounting of her dream, escaped the lips of either—where she

would emerge—at what point of faith? indeed, in what faith, from the sea of doubt over which she was dashing? If she accepted a guide among men, what sort of guide would she choose? This was, of all, the most trying thought for Dugganne as he himself grew in grace, and, through faith, in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Isa's letters, which from month to month Mrs. Dugganne occasionally received, were the affectionate and dutiful effusions of a grateful and loving heart; but it was not through them, but in her published writings alone, that they learned what was going on in her mind; and it was now only in reply to direct interrogations, and seldom satisfactorily then, that Isa would speak to her foster-mother of her mental experience. The correspondence was carried on only between Mrs. Dugganne and Isa. Weare seldom even read the letters which came or went, and rarely were messages exchanged between them. Indeed, he as well as she chose to have it so. He chose to learn, not from those letters, but in the most disenchanting way, of her mind, and the bent it was taking, and this he did by reading what she wrote for the world to read. He could trace by these printed thoughts a current others knew not of, and he watched her going from light to darkness, and from darkness to light,

with the most absorbing interest. In this way he strove to wean his thoughts and love from her; in this way did he compel himself to look upon her as an ordinary friend, for whose success he was desirous, and to discern whose progress he was curious. And, as time went on, Dugganne in the absorbing nature of this watching, almost lost sight of that other influence, for love, which she had exerted upon him. She was removed from his sight; he might see her no more; but, in those printed words he continued listening to her, and in them he saw that he also was remembered. Reading them, he seemed to be holding new converse with her, such converse as they had of old; and he was confident that she, in and through those words, looked upon herself as maintaining such conversation with him. She put words such as those with which he had been accustomed to address her, again into his lips, uttered them for him, argued as he had argued, as she knew he would always argue. It was a grief to him to see the use to which such arguments were applied, the false conclusions she invariably drew from them, how they went further and further, with rapid strides, from the truth, as he held it; and fear for (I had almost said, *of*) her, did much toward conquering his unfortunate love.

## XIII.

"Mr. Stuart, has the artist who lectured last night a studio in town?"

"Yes; it is just opened."

"Have you visited it?"

"Only yesterday."

"What is he—the artist I mean?"

"A most remarkable man."

"Talented?"

"A genius. Should you not have judged so from his lecture?"

"If it was original with him, assuredly; but these lecturers palm off borrowed thoughts with wonderful facility, and felicity, too, sometimes."

"Norton is an original."

"Will you escort me to his studio?"

"Certainly."

He did not say, "with pleasure," as a gallant would have done; but, as Isa went with him down the street that day, she did not fear that she had engaged him in any irksome service. They found the studio unoccupied, even by the artist. There were but few pictures hanging on the walls. Isa glanced at them hastily and curiously, and then seated herself before the painting of a female head. Stuart did not speak;

he had not inquired the reason of her visit, and now he made no comment respecting the picture she had chosen for her study, until she said, and as if unconscious of the familiarity with which she addressed him:—

"Stuart, I am realizing a dream of years."

"And how, Isa?"

"As the woman ever realizes the dreams of the girl. It was once the great hope of my life to see and know this poet."

"Which poet? Is that a poet's portrait?"

"Did you not know it? This is certainly, it must be, the likeness of the artist's sister. Ah, you do not, surely, learn from me, that — — was a poet?"

"I was not aware of her relationship to this youth. Yes, she *was* a poet. Her death was our misfortune. Are you consoled now that you see —"

"And know her? yes; I say that I know her; I feel that I have, since that night after I heard of her sudden death. I believe her to be my guardian-angel."

"I might have known it too."

"Do you believe the departed hold such angel-office?"

"Yes."

"You have a guardian-angel, Stuart?"

"I have; but she is in the world . . . . Do not ask me to name her."

Isa turned hastily away, apparently for a closer examination of the portrait, which, she was convinced must be her poet's portrait. Perhaps she heard no more than was said by him; perhaps she saw no more than that calm glance he directed toward her, as he spoke. Suddenly, she asked:—

"Tell me my thoughts, as I gaze on this picture."

He drew near her, and said, gravely and slowly, as though speaking in a council-chamber:—

"The grave lies between you and her; you become startlingly alive to the fact, as you look upon the painting; more thoroughly alive to it than you have been before. Your heart yearns to cross the barrier, and greet the spirit beyond. Yet were the passage clear before you, a something, yet hardly defined to you, would prevent your going. The final steps that would close your account in this life would not (dearly as you love her) be taken. Your hand outstretches involuntarily, yet you feel no heart-sickness that she does not take it. Why? You have greeted her in the spirit before to-day! You do not weep, as you would once have wept, when you see that smiling face bent toward you; nor does your

heart weep that you can not look on her living countenance, and return the smile. The fact is, you have met before this, and so your dream does not in its realization mock you as the girl's dreams mock the woman's knowledge . . . Is she very like what you imagined, Isa?"

"Very like," she repeated in reply; "but I had imagined a still loftier, a still more spiritual expression."

"In what does beauty lie, to your thinking?"

"In expression."

"But form, coloring, quality—"

"Are nothing, without the expression that, to me, makes, *is*, the soul of beauty. The animal has an expression, as well as the spiritual; when both harmonize, and reveal some lovely, or pure, or grand, or proud idea, the result is beauty; is this not so, Stuart?"

"Yes, it is so; this quality is the only really marvellous quality in nature or art. How far, think you, would the conception of beauty you have, take you? Could you discover it, if marked by deformity? Do you look with your eyes?"

"Never! defend me from the folly! What my soul sees, that I trust, no more."

"You may believe all that soul tells you, my child," he said, apparently much moved; "it is a soul that will never lead you astray."

A few hours later on this same day of the visit to the studio, Isa received a brief note from Mary Irving, beseeching a few minutes conversation.

Isa obeyed the call. She found her new friend alone, awaiting her arrival with anxiety and impatience. Mary received her in one of her stately reception-rooms, but with very little stately ceremony—for as soon as they were alone, she exclaimed with an hysteric sob, she could not smother, "You must, you will stay with me to-day?"

"Certainly, if you wish it. You are ill, Mary?"

She might well ask the question as she looked on the colorless face before her.

"No; I'm not ill; but I've had such an unpleasant, unhappy night. Mr. Irving is from home now, and sometimes it is quite impossible for me to remain alone; I can not endure myself. Give me your hat and shawl; now, come away from this, I want to be alone with you. Remember," she said, addressing a servant as they passed through the hall, "I am at home to no one to-day."

From the house they went arm-in-arm to the winter-garden. It was a cheerless day, but in this fairy place the fountain, birds, and flowers,

made a sunlight of their own, most grateful and reviving for Isa—but not for the mistress of this luxury and splendor. She, poor child, looked upon it all with the eyes of an unhappy, longing, and dissatisfied spirit—for disappointment was in her heart.

They conversed on many themes, but Isa was at a loss, and in distress too—for she knew her friend was suffering, and that she dared not reveal the cause. She had ventured on some unusual topics, hoping that the right one might be casually touched upon at last, but all to no purpose, till she chanced to say:—

“I was at the Athenæum last night.”

Then she felt the small hand that rested on her arm tremble, and she detected a tremor in Mary’s voice as she asked:—

“Who lectured?”

“Have you not heard?” asked Isa, in a tone that might have been rendered, “you have heard.”

“The town is in some commotion on his account. And Mr. Stuart, too, is somewhat enthusiastic on the subject, which is high praise for the lecturer, I think. He is a young man, an artist, and one of the greatest enthusiasts. He has certainly done his part toward magnifying his office. But you would smile, Mary, to know how I was at first affected by his appearance!

I was frightened, and almost startled out of propriety. Verily, I should have supposed, had I been only a little more imaginative, that the man had come up from the infernal regions—and, judging from first impressions, I should have called him Lucifer. His hair and eyes are very black—complexion dark, but clear; person very tall, erect, but gracefully so—dazzling white teeth—head very finely shaped, rather small—but—how can I give you an idea of him? I thought him horrible, when I first looked at him—the expression of the man, and that clear, ringing, bell-like voice, were so uncommon, so Satanic—now I am just as confident as one can be of anything, that the impression he left on all the audience was the same as the final one he left on me, that the man is remarkable for beauty as well as for genius. Perhaps, the very effect his appearance produced on me can explain, or could to some, the mystery of Satan’s operations, for he looked the devil completely, at first sight. If I had not continued looking steadfastly at him for an hour and more, or if I had gone away with that first impression, I don’t know what would have become of me.”

“I’m glad he lost the infernal look. Does he speak well?”

“Admirably; his voice, manner, and elo-

quence, are altogether captivating. I wish very much you could have heard him. But, I am told, that he intends remaining in town—so you will perhaps be favored.”

“This artist—they say his name is—”

“Norton—Gansevoort Norton.”

“Isa, listen to me,” Mary began, with a desperate sort of earnestness, and Isa waited patiently—but she heard nothing further, for the very effort the speaker made to control herself in the endeavor to speak calmly, proved too much. Her head drooped—her face became white as a ghost’s—she fainted.

Several weeks went by, and though these friends were, meantime, often together, opportunities seldom presented when they could speak alone, or with any freedom; and when the time and place did seem favorable, Mary showed no disposition to dwell further on her secret trouble—and Isa never questioned her. At last, however, another importunate call was made, and Isa at once obeyed it, determined to sound and remove the difficulty or sorrow whatever it might be.

“I’m driven to desperation!” was Mary’s exclamation, when she and Isa were again together; “in God’s name, help me!”

“Most gladly, Mary. Yet, I can not prescribe for a disease I know nothing of.”

“I am going to confess now,” she replied, hastily—pausing a second to nerve her resolution, and then speaking rapidly, as though fearful that the resolution would give way.

“You must look with me into my former home. Come quickly. Look! You see me there in that old house, a very different sort of person to this you have before you—placed in circumstances very different from those which surround me here. I was poor, sickly, miserable, growing up in sorrow and loneliness, the eldest of six children—an only daughter. My mother was an invalid—O God! she is sick now, and always—and my father is a poor and unfortunate workman. When I was very young, my gift of song was unknown—no chance occurred making me a child-wonder. Oh, if there had, I might have been a blessing at home! I was a lonely, sad-hearted child, and never well; longing for ever to do something, but I had not a single discerning friend to tell me what was in me. I was not born to be fondled, caressed, screened from all harsh, external influences, nor was mine the nature to be thus developed. Early, even in those years, when, through weakness, I was far more dead

than alive, I was accustomed to labor. Excepting my poor, darling mother, there was no one with whom I had to do that knew how to pity me. She knew—for she was a woman, she could feel for her daughter! My father had never time for any thought, except that his chief business was to get food for us to eat, and clothes for us to wear! Look around you, Isa—see the splendor of this place—would you imagine that I knew what it was to labor, and go hungry, ill-clad, and tearful, in my youth? . . . My musical talent was at last discovered, by an accident. It was soon known to be more than a common gift—the usual story follows: some charitably-disposed people helped to educate me; it was settled that I should make a profession of music. From that time, I was drilled in the science. I sang in the choir of our village-church—I learned to play on various instruments; some people regarded me as a prodigy, I believe. I was more at ease, more contented, certainly, while engaged in this new and absorbing study, than ever before in any kind of amusement or occupation. For, besides the pleasure derived from the study of music as an art, I was to make a living by it, which was a glorious thought. My lessons were finally put into practice—I began to teach. I loved my profession more and more

—it gave me thoughts for the loneliest days, the hardest times. It was a privilege to be able to pray, or lament, or rejoice, and give praise, as I would, in song. . . . Among my best patrons in those days, were Mr. and Mrs. Irving—Mr. Irving, now my husband. He was a passionate lover of music; you know he still is—he has done a great deal for the cultivation of the science, and for the encouragement of such as would become artists. Mr. Irving's wife died; in little more than a year he became a suitor for my hand. To have declined his suit had been madness in me. I married him, Isa."

"And without love?" said Isa, sadly; "oh, how unwise you were! and you had such a glorious profession!"

"Bear with me. I have not told you half of that which makes my true history. I did not love him—I never for a moment deceived myself with the fancy that I did. He did not ask me to, but solely to marry him, and I complied. But, Isa, I did it through fear and hope. Temptation was before me—I knew not what else—I saw the need of my parents; I might be taken sick, disabled—I might die any day—and who, then, in our household, could take my place as their support? I married, Isa, to help them—and—and one whom I worshipped stood by—



saw me given to another, and did not speak. If he had spoken, I should have been saved. I would have said, had his hand held mine, 'Perish riches! Love is all in all!' I would have acted on that sentiment, too."

"Oh, why did you not delay? This other—he might have saved you!"

"I knew that he loved me—alas! that I loved him, I knew only too well. But he thought, as he would have me believe, that I was infatuated—that I did not care for him, that my soul lusted for such riches as Roderick Irving could give me! He knew I loved him—he must have known it—but pride, or coldness, or dullness, silenced him; and, though he had roused all my soul within me in answer to his soul, he let me go. Nothing remained for me but to marry riches. I began to be sick of life. Weary, and absolutely from weakness, unable to labor, so—I married."

"You do wrong in speaking of this to any mortal. It would be your glory now, if, having sacrificed yourself for others, you should bear your burden in peace through the future, uncomplaining, even with hope. Forgive my saying so; but would it not be nobler? As you have said before now—'It is a grand thing to suffer, if one do it in patience—in perfect patience.'"

"I have not told you all—nor what is really the sum of the matter—and I must. Do not—do not condemn me. Only hear me. Since you were here that morning, when I tried so desperately to confess to you, Gansevoort Norton has been here repeatedly. He has managed to find in Roderick an enthusiastic patron. They are the most intimate friends."

"Well—and what of this?"

"What! do you not know? Don't you guess he is the same! he whom I—I loved so once? Why should he come here now? Why—you ask? You may well ask it. I have, every day, with increased perplexity and terror, till this letter came. He thought I would not dare show it to another human being, and that, keeping it a secret, it would soon have the designed effect on me. I have avoided him whenever this has been possible, during his visits here; I have tried to show him that he must not presume on our past—that, having sealed his lips when in speaking he could have saved me, he must not speak now. It is eternally—eternally too late! And now he insists on painting my portrait! He has gained Roderick's consent. What shall I do?"

"I am confounded! are you the very weakest of human beings? Have you no courage? Let him paint the portrait—what then?"

"What then?" repeated Mary, wildly; "is it nothing that I die for a love that I can not receive? is it nothing that I live for what I loathe? is it nothing, *nothing!* that I can not, even through my pride, argue myself out of this tempter's way, beyond his reach? You do not understand me, least of all, him. He knew what was in my heart when he kept such dead silence, before my marriage—then, when he could have saved me. What has led him here to me, now? Read this!" and she laid a letter in Isa's hand.

"I demand, in the name of our old-time friendship, a reason for the reception I am meeting at your hands. Why do you shun me? why do you treat me so coldly? why do you speak to me so disdainfully? I demand an answer, too, in another name than that of our old-time friendship. Answer me! I came a stranger to this city, thinking but of you, poor, without powerful patrons, without any patrons whatever, dependent on my profession, scarcely daring to compete with the illustrious gathered here already. I was upheld in my daring only by the recollection, that this place is your home, feeling, that to be near you was to be near heaven. Madman I was, to believe that you ever cared for me! Fool, to imagine you would remember me! You, the wife of Roderick Irving; I—what am I? Liar,

that my heart has been, I tear it from me, and see, it lies bleeding at your feet! Do you hear me, Mary Irving? It is at your feet, and you are smiling, are you not, to see it there? You are so happy! You go as you will among the gay, the intellectual, the rich, the happy! You go where you will; there is no door, no heart, perhaps, closed against you. You sing, and all people listen! You speak, and as many as you will allow, gather about you to hear! Your house is a palace! You robe yourself in brightness; you shine and dazzle! People envy you; many call you in their hearts an angel, for so you seem to them!

"You are very happy. There is nothing imaginable worth having that you have not. There is nothing denied, or rather, all heaven has come down to you, while you abide on earth. You are very, oh, you are very happy! It is an infamous lie! I know you better. You are not happy. What you have now, what you call life, is no life to you. You would have scoffed at it once in the days (you know those days, you remember them!) when we only lived in each other. You have, in this trickery and pomp of fashion, Mary Irving, you know you have in them, no joy whatever. You are miserable! There is death in your face; there is sorrow in your heart!

You are disappointed, and undone to peace! You weary of the splendor surrounding you! Why? Is it not because you love, and *not* him with whom you live, whose name you wear as a crown of thorns? Whom, then, *do* you love? Do you refuse an answer? I could tell you! Does *your* heart cheat you with the fancy that I dare not tell you? I am more courageous than you think, then. You love me, Mary, even as I love you—unutterably, wildly, wholly! God made us to be one; and you—you—professing to not understand me, you let riches come between us! You saw what was in my heart, how I worshipped you and your divine gift; you know that I stood back when he approached, because I would not deign to think you could feel as though choosing between us! I would not deign to compete with him for you! You knew, you know *now*, that I had faith in your affection, that I believed it would overcome this cursed lust of gold. You knew that you were deceiving me, as well as crushing your own heart, in saying ‘amen’ to him. You knew that I did thus delay the confession of my adoration only that the triumph of love might be more complete in you. You married with all this knowledge, and we were parted!

“I have been a lonely laborer since that time.

My strength to work I have found in a thought of you; the strength of that thought has unfolded my genius for me. To satisfy that aspiration of your heart (of which you once assured me) for my glory, I determined on winning renown; thus would I do homage to your love. You had taken the place my adored and gifted sister held; you assumed her influence and power. You may well be proud to know that, Mary Irving. I do not hesitate to speak thus of your love, because it is a sentiment that does you honor; for it shows how grand a spirit of humanity is in you. Scripture, you know, commands us to love one another; no mortal should be ashamed of fulfilling the injunction. But you shun me now, notwithstanding this love. Why is this? Let me reason with you. Listen to me! Do not, I entreat, shun me so! You will ruin me. Sing to me, speak to me! Charm this fiend within me! The thought of you maddens me; but the sight of you, Mary, soothes me, and calms me with gentlest power! Pray for me, from that pure, high soul of yours, and I shall be purified. Suffer me to calm myself in your calmness. We are doomed to suffer. Well, it is glorious to suffer! Let us have done with reproaches. Receive me only as a friend you respect. I have written madness; I know it; but something within me compels me to send what I

have written to you. Do not shun, do not reproach me! Do not, do not, even try to hate me! You can befriend me—perhaps, it may be possible, in some way not now thought of, for me to befriend you. Teach me, show me where and how to find peace! Mary! Direct my ambition! guide me!”

“Well!” exclaimed Mary, as Isa folded the letter, and returned it; “is not this horrible? I am so bewildered—what shall I do?”

“Let him paint your portrait.”

“What!”

“Let him do as he wishes in this one thing. You have now opportunity for teaching him a lesson he will not soon forget.”

“Teach? I? Isa, what do you suppose would become of me in the attempt to teach him?”

“Ah! forgive me. I had forgotten!”

“Yes—yes—I see plainly enough you had forgotten that I, being married, and living in this splendid place, could in any way expose myself by coming in contact with that remembrance. You had forgotten—you had forgotten that I am the very weakest, most miserable object in creation.”

“Not the weakest—far from being the most miserable. O Mary, do not for one moment believe it. The guilty alone are miserable.

Don't you see that numberless blessings are scattered around you? Ah, I might tell you a tale sad as your own—sadder far. For your own sake, do not let your fancy conquer you. Love! Love! What is it? If an impulse, doubt it—if a passion, trample it under your feet—your, his love! Child, do you not see this is a serpent creeping into, coiling around your heart? Do you not see you are nearing the crater of the volcano? See the flames! oh, escape! escape!”

“Where shall I find refuge—to whom shall I go?” exclaimed Mary, wrought up to the highest excitement by Isa's extraordinary energy and tone.

“Just here, where you are,” answered Isa, with sudden calmness, and perfect self-control. “Here, in his very presence, if you will, you may find a refuge from yourself, and from him! I dare repeat my counsel. Let him come here to your own house in his professional capacity, and even as a friend, if he will. I tell you, there is a glorious opportunity before you now. Conquer him, conquer yourself. Ah, what a curse is imagination!”

“Imagination,” slowly repeated Mary, as though the word were a new one to her, “what is it?”

"A curse, I say, when employed as you employ it. What, in the name of wonder—let me ask you a plain and common sense question—what do you see in this Norton? A very gentlemanly person to all appearance, yet how even his appearance deceives. It does not seem to me possible that he could be the brother of a poet such as ——. He is a gifted, ambitious man, too, but corrupt in heart. His corruption, indeed, is so manifest, that it is the only thing about him of which you can have no doubt. You, Mary, are not corrupt. You do not love vice—you would not tempt another to 'sin'—you are pure. What can possess you that you do not see this man just exactly as he is? But you love him? I can not understand the nature of that admission, nor the nature of the sentiment either. But that is irrelevant. If you feel sufficient interest in him, bless him, purify him by letting his soul come in contact with the purity of yours. Cleanse that heart of his—mould it anew—send him on into life with a new purpose—with new aspirations, new desires."

"Oh, it would be glorious—most glorious! But how can I believe that it is possible for me to do that? You might—but you, Isa, are so different from all other women. I am not a god—I can not make a new heart in him.

Alas, I can not even create a strong heart in myself."

"Mary Irving," said Isa, with the emphasis of a deep conviction, "there is nothing on earth to prevent your becoming a god in this work. You have it all in your own hands. It is in you at this moment to work just what you will, and just in the way you will."

"Who will help and guide me?" asked Mary, bewildered and afraid. "You do not mean to say that the guide dwells within me, in this sinking, coward heart—that at my bidding it will appear?"

"That, precisely—nothing more or less, Mary," Isa hesitated a moment; in deep thought she reviewed an idea which she was almost afraid to present to the trembling and excited woman before her.

"Mary," she said, at last, solemnly, "do you ever pray?"

"Yes—no—I don't know whether I do or not. You mean, of course, is the spirit of supplication in me?"

"Yes—did you ever 'pray in faith, nothing doubting'?"

"A thousand times."

"What gave life to your prayers at those times, when you *knew* that you were praying?"

"Earnestness—faith."

"No—imagination."

"IMAGINATION?"

"Yes."

"Do you say that of me individually, because you think I know nothing of the life of our religion?" asked Mary, humbly and anxiously—completely roused by her astonishment. "Or, is it possible you mean that the prayers of all Christians are mere outbreaks of self-distrust, a desire to escape self, and the imagining that there is really an ear to hear."

"The latter. Prayer is nothing more or less than the longing of weak hearts in the midst of self-desertion, to give vent, voice to that weakness. It is just like the throwing off the burden of a secret thought on to another. \* That is all."

"You could not convince me of that, Isa, if you talked of it to all eternity. I know my own unworthiness—and I also know my insufficiency. I have no power to help myself. It is not a work of imagination, nor a desire to relieve the heart by giving a sorrow, or need, form and expression. Once, long ago, I used to pray with the heart—and I know that my prayers had acceptance. I know it just as well as though God had spoken with an audible voice, and assured me. He did speak audibly to my soul!

I have prayed unfaithfully of late—and it is for that reason that I have grown so weak, and inefficient, and miserable. For that reason, there has been given no sort of answer to my petitions—they have fallen back to earth rejected—the Son would not present them to the Father. They were unworthy oblations. It was solely for this reason, Isa, and not because there is no ear to hear, no arm to save."

"Nay, child—it is not so. You are wrong—you err," said Isa, calmly and firmly. "You did not at these times send the force of imagination in the right direction, where you imagined your God was. You centred it all the while in objects seen and heard. I tell you, and I know very well, I am speaking of that which is the foundation of an immutable truth—if you will only do as I advise, you can not fail of proving it for yourself."

"Seeing him?"

"Yes."

"To be with him day after day?"

"If it chance so."

"To speak with him—to see him—listen to him—dream of him?"

"To dream of him? Never! what madness are you thinking of! Why should you dream of him? Dream of music, Mary—of soul-songs,

of birds, of flowers, of poetry, of anything beautiful, of everything noble—but not of him, who is neither. Elevate your imagination, I repeat—even beyond this trivial employment of giving voice to your sorrow, in such an exercise as you call prayer—for in that, I tell you, you are only giving supplication to the wind. Elevate your imagination, I repeat; put yourself entirely away—step out from your human nature with an energy equalling that implied in the ‘Get thee behind me, Satan’! FOR YOUR NATURE IS SATAN if you suffer it even once to tempt you. Oh, will you not learn to forget yourself?”

“I have, I have, in him,” she murmured, as one beside herself.

“Then will you not save him? You will heap ruin on yourself! How I have mistaken you!”

“I should lose myself in the attempt to save him, I tell you! No; you do not know me! You could never dream how weak I am!”

“I tell you, notwithstanding, you may rival the strongest in strength. Just think how absurd it is, this idolatry, this passion, or whatever you may call this you have confessed to me. You can not justify it at any bar of reason.”

“If I could be alone, Isa . . . . I am so confused—”

“No, I shall not go: you sent for me to coun-

sel; and I shall stay to do so. Let me suggest to you, since it seems you have not thought of it, how are you going to be rid of this man? I see clearly, he is bent on an object. He may have some faint idea of love, but he can only conceive of it profanely. He sees that in some way you have suffered. In days gone by there has been something like a romance enacted between you. He must have a wild fancy, and a bad, cruel heart. If he imagines you shun him, that you fear him and yourself, what will he argue from that, but that you love him? This is the truth, perhaps, but would you have him find one proof of it? Do you think it is not in his nature to follow up such an advantage? Do you think it would not set his passions in a blaze? There is but one way in which you can make use of all the strength of your character. You have strength, I know you have. Put your imagination under the bonds of your will, dear Mary; so you will be sure to keep peace in your soul. It is the only way I know of, and a way that will be successful. Promise me you will try it; tell me you will do this.”

“I am saved!” was Mary’s reply.

Her tone was so peculiar that Isa, who had averted her face while she spoke (for she was more moved than Mary supposed), turned sud-



denly, to look on Mary, and she was astonished to meet a clear glance, and a tranquil smile.

"*I am saved!*" she repeated; "but forgive me for saying so. I could not endure to hear another word of this, to-day. I must be alone with . . . . Will you come again, Isa?"

"Always, at your call, dearest. This, in pledge of my love and reverence," she said, bending low, and kissing Mary; and immediately they parted. Isa, the stern teacher, imagined not with whom she left her pupil; it was with none other than God! For, while she spoke so valiantly of human will, and force, that poor, crushed creature, in her despair, had fled away from the new temptation, had thrown herself before the cross of Christ, and the grace of God fell upon her, even in the midst of her agony, with an abundant mercy. Though, as the help came, Mary Irving felt that the springs of life gave way.

## XIV.

The strong and energetic natures of Alanthus Stuart and Isa Lee were destined to act powerfully on each other. In accepting him, as she was well aware she did, for a teacher, Isa accepted an instructor who would be content with effecting no half-work, with exerting no contracted or limited influence. He would not spare her—she felt he would not—and so rejoiced with something of the conqueror's spirit of rejoicing, as she reflected on many of her old doubts and beliefs. She sought to learn of him, and he knew no other way of teaching her, than just by leading her through the same hard and painful paths he himself had trodden. Isa waited for his instructions, and all his teachings she received in purest faith; and not at all in that spirit with which she had once contended and argued against her heart's suggestions, when she and Weare Dugganne lived in bondage to each other's influence.

Isa had loved Weare; and, in the resolve to subdue her affection, before it should reach its last and all-subduing development, she constrained herself to doubt what he might have, finally, merely for love's sake, have constrained her to believe. She had no wish to believe, on the contrary

would have spurned herself had she felt capable of believing, anything merely with the heart. To her, that was only the belief of imagination; and, therefore, to all high and true ends, unavailing. She had never doubted her brother's goodness, and purity, and earnestness; and, as a brother, she loved him for these very characteristics. But his mental strength and dominion—his far-seeing power, his ability to soar high—she doubted more and more, as her own mind developed; and it was because of this, that, impelled by a presentiment of her own future, and a conviction of her ability, she compelled herself to crush the tenderest love of her heart, at the very time when it threatened to become absorbing.

This teacher, this intellectual guide, which she soon after found in her appointed co-worker—there was apparently no sort of danger that she would love him. She felt in no danger of such a climax. She was very sure that he could never instil a single doctrine of belief into her mind, through a predisposition of her heart to receive it; she felt that it would in no degree be a work of the heart, if her mind were ever assimilated with his. She learned to go to him as confidently as the child of faith goes to God—sure that it was in his power, ability, to clear all

clouds of darkness from her mind. She went to him through her published writings, and through her correspondence, more frequently even than in conversation, for in person they could not often be together. And every suspicion that beset her, every enigma that presented itself, he unfolded to her entire satisfaction—he compelled her to the conclusions he had previously arrived at, by the suggestions of her own mind, or, in some cases he himself presented these suggestions, and by force of his unanswerable arguments, he made all things clear to her. But he never aimed to produce such result by mere eloquent reasoning. He argued until, to her apprehension, he made all things clear as day. Alanthus proved her to be an apt pupil.

To see her, to instruct her, and to learn of her again, he found himself compelled, and, by his strange increasing inclination, as well as at Isa's expressed desire, to go more frequently into society than he had ever before, at least, in years. In doing this, he had but one object, to be near, to speak with, to instruct Isa. And so, while he conducted her away from God to the thorough reception of a dark, and stern, but pure creed, she, in turn, conducted him back to humanity. He unfolded for her as clearly and as skilfully as he would have dissected the most perfect flower,

her own inner nature, her soul's existence. He invited, nay, compelled, her to an enrapturing freedom of thought; and, while he did this for her, she unfolded in him, to his amazed view, a capacity by him unimagined, a capacity for, and a new conception of, the universal spirit of humanity, as developed (and there only in truest light) in social life.

In one respect, they acted in the same capacity, they drew one another from self. Alanthus began to lose sight of himself, as a neglected, unappreciated, misunderstood man; and gradually, in proportion as this influence told on him, he became happier, more ambitious, more courageous still. And Isa, in contemplation of this man, forgot herself, and one who had been a part of herself, Weare Dugganne. Not that love was giving place to love; nor, that the sweet dream of the past had fled away, without leaving a memorial. But, certainly, there was nothing like love, in its common acceptation among men and women, in the reverence, and interest, and awe, with which Isa studied the words, deeds, motives, ay, the very looks of this man.

She had done much, and shown that she also had great influence with him, in inducing him to even question the justice of his misanthropy; Alanthus saw in her a beautiful spirit, and a

nature as courageous as his own—what was it that impelled him to put forth his hand, when he saw her striving, and struggling, endeavoring, though in the place she then occupied, her beauty and varied talents brought around her the appreciative, and the lovely, and loving, endeavoring still to pass beyond the fascination of praise and admiration, to a higher place, though it proved one of isolation and danger? What was it that impelled him to put forth his hand to help her, when he saw her eyes directed with appealing look toward him? Was he able to free her when she grasped his hand, and placed all her trust in him? or, was the way of escape he showed her, one that led to utter darkness? She never thought to question. For the first time in her life that was presented to her about which she would not question.

Perceiving the, to her, grand results of his years of toil and application, the idea never entered Isa's head of looking back into this man's past life, to discover what cause produced all the great, uncommon results she saw in him. It never once occurred to her that mortified vanity might have driven him from the world, to make a marvel of his intellect; she never attributed to what, notwithstanding all her own pride, she would in his case have called a most unworthy

starting point—had never attributed to pride his hermit life, nor imagined that because of pride he had been tempted to give all the best years of his life to such study and working as would be sure to produce results astonishing, bewildering, overpowering, to the inanities around him. She had not one slight suspicion (or results had been otherwise) of the glorying with which his first nature rejoiced over his second nature, when the tribute of this woman's admiration and faith, was laid at his feet—when she besought his instructions, and placed her mind at his disposal. This was his first grand triumph! Other triumphs had occasionally gladdened him—such as recognition as a deep thinker—but his doctrines had never prevailed; he had been called a man of genius, and originality, and some among his admirers had sought to bring him from his retirement; but all had been as a vain oblation, till this woman, so beautiful and young, herself so gifted and appreciative, had come, subjecting her intellect to his. Before they met, even while she thought him dead, she had lived her intellectual life through, in, and by him; he had himself read the proof of this before she told him it was so. And thus he had fulfilled his life's desire—he was acting on a powerful and beautiful mind which was content

to take his intellect as the standard of THE ALL IN ALL!

It was not till he saw and knew her, that Stuart felt all the conqueror's glory. It was no tribute of mere love she brought, but something to his apprehension infinitely grander. Her submission to him, he saw clearly, was growing, week after week, month after month, to be that of the veriest slave. What, indeed, could equal it? Her mind was open to all impressions he chose to offer—and the knowledge of that fact led him to place a double guard even on his thoughts. He was careful as to what he offered her—for he revered Isa—and after all that has been said and suggested, not only because she revered him!

Did he not behold in her the completion of himself? . . . He saw her confidence—and he was well aware that confidence is the keystone of Power, of Knowledge, of Love. It was his pride that gloried in this confidence—he had not found in his disciple a weak and faltering child, a vain and credulous woman.

Stuart was as honest in his belief, such as it was, as he was mighty in intellectual power. He was making of his life a grand experiment—and it was that which he desired to make, and determined to make of hers. As Isa's, his

youth had been educated in the knowledge of the unseen God, the Jehovah-Jesus of the Bible—the eternal Three in One. It had been one of his earliest formed habits to study the Scriptures, and to pray. But, bitter personal experiences, a thoughtful contemplation of the world, and of the people in it, the very lives of those around him who professed to be regenerate, aroused his thinking mind—he began to tremble, to fear, to doubt, to disbelieve, and from that unbelief he had never returned.

It is not improbable that in the skepticism Isa at last confessed to him, he rejoiced greatly; for he stood alone, and without sympathy in his peculiar faith, and thus not quite happy in it. He was glad to be associated with one intelligent, far-seeing, gifted as she. And from the first words she addressed to him, he felt that it was she who was to influence him—whom he was to influence in his future career.

He thought of her much in the way that she thought of him. Not at all in the common way, as of a creature for whom an ordinary marital attachment could be formed. He beheld in her the completion of himself, as we have said before—one belonging to him, whom he had a right to appropriate without asking the world's leave, by complying with the established form

of matrimonial service. He found in her the perfection, the accomplishment of his own nature; and in watching the development of her powers, he contemplated them, and to himself reasoned about them, much as though they were his own, or a part of him. She was to him so beautiful that he received her within his inner life, acknowledging her there as the crown of his thought, the flower of his soul, the voice of his heart.

How singularly alike, notwithstanding all dissimilarities, they were! How twin-like in spirit, in impulse, design, and desire! Another man and woman might have been years in acquiring such mutual confidence as a few weeks established between them. Another woman might have died in the longing to reveal her soul, as Isa, after a brief intercourse, did to him. And then, probably, there was not another man in the universe who could have so clearly understood, and appreciated, and received, what Isa said, in the manner that Stuart did. She told him all her thoughts—he could have told them *for* her with the same ease that he listened, for without explanation on her part, he knew what her heart and soul must have passed through.

So, when she told him of this strange life she had led—of the strugglings from darkness—of

the wonderful revelations of light, he only recognised a complete reproduction of his own experience and story—he could not believe that it was not his own soul proclaiming itself through her. Yet this substantial difference was observable: in all the similarity he lacked the tenderer spirit of humanity which graced her so well. He was sterner, not stronger.

Of those who saw Stuart drawn out suddenly from his solitude, into the world, not one perhaps understood the reason of the change; but to many, indeed, to all who observed it, the reverence, the homage, which Isa Lee showed this man whenever he appeared in society, or whenever she had occasion to speak of him, seemed most strange.

For, the people first to observe such consideration on her part, would, of course, be the last capable of understanding it—such, having eyes, see not—they could appreciate no other bond of union than that of personal attractions, conversational talent, grace, or something of such nature. Very few suspected his great gift of language, which to her alone was revealed in its eminent degree. She it was who first, and for a long time alone, knew wherein his great ability for, not shining, but overcoming with splendor, lay. And Isa rather gloried in the thought,

though she would fain have had him acknowledged for his high and full worth, that for no other woman, and for no man, had he ever deigned to reveal his matchless and entrancing eloquence.

Whatever he may have been, or seemed to others, he was never dumb before her. And certain it is that, at his suggestion, there was nothing she would not have dared and done.

The fragmentary sort of intercourse, which at first was all that was outwardly maintained between these two, was a pure delight to Isa. She had found *a rest*; and the Christian alone who has struggled out of darkness into the marvellous light of full faith and of “joy in believing,” can understand all that rest was to her. One, whom she felt was far greater than herself, older, wiser, more experienced—one who had trodden through the very path she was in, was her guide. She could not, she never knew how, to fear him. She could not be repelled or deceived. She could learn from him: therefore she would.

One day, in the early part of their personal acquaintance, Isa said to him:—

“I wish you to become a more than general critic where I am concerned. Will you not? I wish that you would; or, that I had a friend who

would enter with sufficient interest into the spirit of what I write, to understand that."

He answered her, and it was almost his first teaching by uttered words:—

"What you write needs no criticism. You are only as one walking in twilight. Go on; you will reach the morning soon."

"It will reach me, rather," said Isa, smiling.

"No; you must go on to meet it. It will not fall over you, as the natural daylight. That is the very secret of the fact, that the nations, so many of them, are now sitting in darkness. They want the energy to go forward, where the day is begun."

"It is ignorance, is it not, that prevents their going?"

"You mistake; it is not ignorance but a wilful, persevered-in inefficiency. It is no easy way to tread the path to perfection—daylight. You have proved that for yourself already."

"Indeed, it is not easy."

"And the worldly are sluggards. And it is easy for the sluggard to accept a lie for truth."

"It is what I always thought."

"You are right, then. Do not you stop anywhere. There is nothing to hinder you. Go on—you may in all things trust yourself."

"And how far can I go?"

"You will never arrive at a point that shall prove a barrier."

"Oh, tell me, whence comes this power?"

"You have a thousand times answered that question."

"Is it from *ourselves*?"

"Yes, Isa. From what other source could it come? *You are—you will be*, for ever. You need no testimony of ancient philosophers to convince you of that."

At a later day, she referred again to those "ancient philosophers," and asked him if he did not believe in their inspiration. He answered her:—

"Most thoroughly I believe in their inspiration; their pens were inspired by their genius; and the loftiest, most wonderful genius must have been existing in those men, or they could not have devised such fables, unaided, unpolished, as they were by education. Their imaginings were sublime. The language of truth is simple and forcible: these men showed their wisdom in adopting such a style as has commended their writings, their fictions, to some of every generation, since their time."

"It is singular that they have found such multitudes of believers, these same writings."

"No; I do not think it singular—take any



plausible tale, my child, add to it such statements, and envelop it in such a garb as religion, present it to the minds of children, keep it year after year before their thought as a sacred thing, one half those so taught at least, will, in riper years, place their 'hope of salvation,' as they call it, upon those fictions—and if any rise up in opposition to them, their 'faith' will also rise—they will fight to the death to maintain their 'creed.' But I think you mistake greatly in supposing that this Bible *has* such a multitude of believers. Even of those who confess the faith—do they live by it to any great degree? Habit, custom—a necessity peculiar to weak people that they find out of themselves something to lean on, something to depend on—a power to whose greatness and incomprehensibility all problems of nature may be referred for final solution—this is the secret of the popularity of the Christian religion."

"Yet, it is singular, very wise people sometimes tell us that they find all they need in their 'gospel,' both to live and to die by."

"Which assertion is but a proof of the genius of the writers of that said gospel. I will tell you—it must have been in this wise that the whole was written. The book was not the offspring of one mind. One deep, earnest thinker penned

the original gospel, which set forth in clear and beautiful light his own bright dream. He wrote it on a day when he had climbed above sorrow, and despondency, and what he wrote was to those toiling still in darkness and tribulation, a 'gospel' indeed. Then, at a later day, some other mind, of this germ fashioned a fair flower, which in the hand of others yet again was transformed into fruit. The strong mind stands in need of no such tidings—the book is well enough for all who do not see its insufficiency—its writers evidently had but one object or desire."

"To prove their own genius by their believers? to delude, to cheat?"

"No: not that I think, since they would not probably be of the sort of mind to delight in such triumph. They wished to do good—to give to the weak, the self-deserted, the poor, the afflicted, a hope through which they should conquer themselves, their griefs and trials. But you—you, Isa, are not such a child as to accept the stories which did very well to entertain us till we grew too old for such fables, such nursery fictions?"

"I utterly reject them—they are false," answered Isa.

And it was in such discourses that these mor-

tals attained to a fuller insight into each other's mind and character.

Did they not tremble as they spoke, and confessed thus? She, in her beautiful purity of womanhood, confessing that which swept away all defence, all control, all power, but her own? She, in her youth and dependence acknowledging that, and he listening to it! They denied, but there was an arm to save! they confessed, and angels and devils heard, but the Lord God also heard, and he was long-suffering and full of mercy.

## XV.

Soon after the close of the first year of Isa's engagement, about the time of Mr. Warren's anticipated return, his wife was made acquainted, through a friend, the captain of a steamer just arrived from Liverpool, of her husband's desire that the house should be closed, and that she should rejoin him in that city, preparatory to another twelvemonth of travel through Europe. The management editorial of *The Guardian* was still to remain in the hands of the first appointed conductors, Isa, and Alanthus Stuart.

In compliance with her husband's wish, Mrs.

Warren made preparations for immediate departure, and the week after the missive was received, she was speeding over the Atlantic; and Isa was established in a boarding-house down town. It did not once occur to her, in making this remove, that there was another home to which she might return, though loving hearts would have greeted her there—and the door of that house was open for her coming, whenever it might be.

Yet Isa, to the view of both Weare and his mother, had wandered far, very far from the path of womanly labor, thought, and feeling, in her editorial work—and they had, in their way, endeavored to save her. She, self-confident, proud, taught by others a very different creed from theirs, had repelled their authority.

At first, a correspondence was for many months faithfully kept up between Isa and Mrs. Dugganne, but on the part of the former it began at last to flag; and never, save by messages sent through others, and by her public career, in as far as her career was public, did Dugganne hear from her; notwithstanding this, the mother and the son both loved Isa with such love as others could not have for her. There was, however, far more than love, there was fear in their hearts for her—for in the very cause which in-

creased her gradual estrangement, in the flattering attentions her writings met in certain quarters, they felt and saw that while Isa was losing in humility, and increasing in knowledge, she was going far beyond the paths of true womanliness, and assuming positions, which, while they placed her conspicuously before the minds of all thinkers, could but arouse mistrust and misgiving. They clearly saw that she was entering a wilder and a wider path; and it was with very sorrowful studiousness that each applied to the discussion, and unmasking of those thoughts, which were so completely engrossing the mind, and the pen, and bewildering the fancy, of poor Isa. Increasing anxiety led them to confer upon this subject, and at last, in the third year of her absence, when the editress had, by her published and acknowledged articles, proved herself an apt scholar of the evil but gifted teachers, to whose influence they were confident she must be in some extraordinary and uncommon way exposed, they ventured a remonstrance—the second time they did so, an answer was returned which, for a time, checked all intercourse between them.

But their duties toward Isa were not yet ended. And so they felt, when finally a plainer proof than had as yet been given, was laid be-

fore them, and they saw that the poison of the great unbelief, which is the parent of every wild belief, had entered into the very veins of her mind. A story appeared under her signature, whose whole tendency and meaning, though clothed in the most gorgeous robe of fiction, could not be doubted. Isa was converted to the faith of the socialist!

When Weare Dugganne was compelled to believe that of her progress, he would willingly have closed his eyes, and died for ever to the life of this world. Much as he had already feared and trembled for her, he was now lost in astonishment. His heart 'died daily' in the thought of her. He had learned to live, and not cherish even a hope, for her love, or further love than she had once professed for him—the love which had not equalled her ambition. But now, though he was content to give her up, he could not silently stand by and see to what she, still so young, and so good as he knew she was, gave herself. For the first time he ventured to write her in his own name. He cared not for the answer to which he thus subjected himself. His duty was clear. He could conscientiously, and he ought to remonstrate. His duty should be done; so he said to her, as though he had been talking with her face to face:—

"That we live in a changeful world, that we are changeful beings, dear Isa, I feel more than ever conscious to-day, when I address you for the first time in many, how many! months. You, in your sudden and well-won celebrity, having grown accustomed to homage, and influence, may perhaps consider my letter intrusive—its particular contents, at least, might be received in that light. Dear Isa, do not so receive them. Do not, because a portion of the world (recollect how, after all, it must, comparatively speaking, be a small portion) has received you by its praising as a teacher; do not think it is in a complacent remembrance that you once accepted me as your counsellor, that I dare, or would presume, now; I believe you know me far too well to think it—to do me such injustice. But I have thought that you would look for our, Isa, for my protest against what you are claiming to be truth. Dear friend, have you really not felt that doctrines so averse to all that you were in earlier years content to receive for truth, *must be* opposed by us who still cleave steadfast to the faith we held then? Perhaps by me, who can not believe those strange new things whereof you write unto us? Whether this be so, or not, I should be sadly wanting in my simple, and first duty, if I failed to entreat you to re-

trace the steps you have taken, for you are going fast into a wild path which can only lead to destruction. I can not, though I forfeit thus all that sympathy and regard which I once gloried in, I will not shrink from the obligation, which as a believer in Christ and his gospel, I feel to be mine. It would be the idlest thing in the world for me to address you in the formula of preachers—to say to you, pause and consider. You have always been a thinker, and have not, I am well convinced, taken these last steps without solemn deliberation. You never rushed to conclusions. It has not been your fault that you accepted for truth all that others pronounced such, without close investigation. In this contemplative and discerning habit of mind, lies your power; does it not? It is the power with which God endowed you! He united with it a wonderful imagination, and the spirit of perseverance, and a just conception of its necessity! He gave you the use of words, and taught you the might, the force, the power of them. For what has he thus endowed you? What has sent you out before that class which rejoiced so much in your coming? Isa, what has God meant in the providences of your life?

"Is it not apparent still—is it not even to your mind a possible thing, that you have erred

in the decisions at which you have arrived, and arrived, I know, only by the severest thought? O Isa, is it true that you have disclaimed the power of religion—the blessed religion of Jesus, in the hearts of men? Have you, indeed, made Will your only God? . . . Is this your faith? yours, Isa, that socialism is based on a virtue—that its principle is virtue—that marital obligations are shadows without substance, without warranty? Have you, indeed, been led, or have you led yourself? I can not believe it! Yet you aver it all, though aware you must be of the results which will unavoidably flow in from the ocean of darkness and corruption, through the channels of social life, if the grand bulwark of virtue is once torn away! Is it possible?—Oh, could you only know how often I have hesitated and attempted, before I could bring myself to express a doubt of you, by asking such a question! Is it possible that you are willing the mass of mind, which can by no effort raise itself toward the transcendent height to which yours has soared—are you willing that the multitude, which can not comprehend you, shall put the base, narrow, awful construction upon your words which is possible—which is, indeed, alone comprehensible to them, or rather, alone derivable therefrom. God of heaven forbid!

“Only write to me! . . . . Bless us with the assurance that we have not understood you. Write, that the light of religion is in your heart; that our fears, caused by an inexpressible interest in you, forced us to the belief we now have. Will you not for a little while, for a few days at least, cease wielding that powerful pen? Come home, Isa! come here! My mother and I entreat you! Come, and think over, in solitude, that great theme of your discoursing. Come, in God’s name, and study truth! May He bless and guide you!”

“Adieu!”

Other letters were laid before the editress that morning, when Duganne’s entreaty was read. They were as follows:—

“MADAM: I am a subscriber for the periodical under your management, and, therefore, consider myself one of the great number to whom you have particularly addressed yourself, in the splendidly written letters, tales, and editorials, which have appeared under your signature. Pardon what I shall say to-day: it seems to me as though I have a sort of right to speak—a right conferred by years, if nothing else, for I am old, and you are, I am told, madam, very young. I have watched almost as anxiously as a father would watch the progress of a favored and gifted child, your

progress—every step of it, since you became a public teacher; and my interest has grown deeper and deeper as I have continued gazing after and listening to you. I have been much in the world, and am cognizant of the rise, progress, and downfall of many a powerful mind. I see in you what is not often seen, a woman whose unlimited ambition is supported by the finest intellect, justified even in its absorbing intensity, by that intellect.

“Yet, madam, I have perceived this with trembling, though I confess that I have many times given myself for the moment, when I held converse with your thought, wholly to you, bewildered, dazzled, charmed, by your argumentative powers. But, as I am a sane man! because you have at times exercised such control over me, I feel compelled to answer you as formally as though you had in these writings formally addressed me—me, exclusively. Your arguments, brilliant as they seem, are wanting in real grandeur, and the force of thought inspired, because they are not founded in truth. Not in truth, as that is unfolded in God’s word, and in his universe. Not in truth, if truth is purity. That this is an era of progress, who shall doubt that listens and can see? But how is this progress made? What, in fact, is it? Does not the

light which falls on the advancing age stream from the abyss, where minds led astray and lost have fallen, as powerfully as from the hills whereon the fires have been kindled, and the martyrs offered up? Let me entreat you to be well assured, as to whether your light streams upward, in warning, or downward on the world, in the calm assurance of justified hope, to bless the toiling and striving pilgrims. Believe what I say: before such beautiful edifices as you, with your master-hand, have built, can be safe dwelling-places, they must be planted on surer foundations. Your theories must start from truthful propositions, and not from sophisms, before they can gain substantial confidence, and work good in the world. I can but think of this—of you, therefore, incessantly. I can but pray incessantly while I think, that you may be enlightened from on high. Your mission was to do good. Can you doubt it? Are you going to pervert its end? You are endowed with ten talents, and you are not hiding them. Will the interest you shall render please your master?

“I feel bound to write this, madam; for, though I stand in awe of your genius, I stand more in awe of my Maker; and this I say without a wish to flatter you. For genius cometh neither from the east nor from the west, from the

north nor from the south—it is the gift of God, of which you are the recipient in the same way that the child is of its parent's love—you are the recipient, not the Creator! And the principles you advocate go to disprove all that God, and God in Christ, has declared since time was. Moreover, I can not rid myself of the feeling that you are not yourself, in the highest sense, persuaded of the reality of the things you advocate. You are merely self-deceived. Let me entreat you to beware how you pervert the gift of God. Remember how it was that Lucifer fell, and that the 'sons of the morning' have, ever since his fall, been seeking out evil devices. Oh, refrain from using these glorious powers given you, in support of a cause whose originators are doubly cursed in that they have succeeded in deceiving you."

And from this letter, which she read with only a shudder and a sigh that was not meant for herself, Isa turned to another.

"The blessing of a sad heart, a solitary soul, be upon you! the words you have written, lady, have come to me like the whisperings of an angel; they have roused me from mortal and mental death; they have taught me that I, long ago as I did believe—though it was with a trembling and

altogether useless faith—reached a point where endurance ceased to be a virtue. The bonds which have bound me are now broken; and it was your eloquent teaching that gave me courage to break them. I, even I, am free!

"It is not needful, to convince you of my entire sincerity in these expressions of gratitude, that I should reveal to you my past—which has been, without exaggeration, a fearful past—nor that I should tell you of all from which I have escaped. It would be intrusion on my part, though I can not consider you a stranger. It is enough that I am now separated from the frightful, terrible influences which made me a slave in this free world: I should dread the recalling of all that past, even to my own memory. But if the thought that you have, through your works, appeared as an angel of light to guide me when I was in the night of despair, will serve to encourage you at all; if you have now reproaches only, when blessings should have been pronounced upon you; and if the assurance that you have saved a fellow-being is at all grateful or in any degree useful to one so strong as you—here, I lay it at your feet, and pray you to go on in your lofty way! continue your high teachings! The suffering bondwomen whom you have enlightened will bless you: a crown



of honor awaits you; and the thanks of myriads whom you have dared comfort, encourage, and inspire with new hope. God grant that, even if discouragement attends you, your heart and intellect may not 'weary in well-doing.'"

"This compensates for all," was Isa's tearful exclamation, as she read the last-cited letter; and laying the three aside, unterrified and far from disheartened, she turned to her daily labor again. . . Many times after the reception of Dugganne's remonstrance, she wrote in answer to him; but all that she could bring herself to say in such epistles failed to satisfy her, and so, one after another, they were destroyed. She could not now, as once, find it in her heart's inclination, or ability, to contend or to argue with him. It was a bitter thought to her that he should look with dissatisfaction on her career—that he should have no idea, no belief, no hope, in common with her.

The great disappointment occasioned by the apparent coldness with which Weare let her go into the world, though it had undergone a change, never for a moment took the form of indifference in her heart. She had effectually governed her absorbing love by force of her will,

and a purpose that obstinately directed in far other ways than he would tread in. When she went from home it was with a savage sort of joy, a triumphing of mind over affection, that in the new scenes, amid the new duties by which she should henceforth be surrounded, she should in time forget him. But after weeks of such vigilant occupation as had driven almost every idea but that of labor from her mind, she knew by the light which would gather around a suddenly-suggested thought of him, that Dugganne could never be forgotten by her; that he lived in her memory, and would eternally, as an image of perfect manhood.

It was this conviction which, from her first reading of his letter, prevented her from once thinking of replying to it in anger. After many attempts to answer it, in her perplexity, Isa was driven to consult with Alanthus Stuart.

"Can you enter into the controversy, and carry it on with him as though he were a stranger?"

"You can not," he said, watching her expression closely, and without giving her time to reply. "Then I should advise you to defer the answer. He can take advantage of you in many ways. Half the victories such men achieve are obtained in this way; I advise you, do not argue with him yet."

"I will not."

"This Dugganne—he is not a very extraordinary genius, I imagine?"

"No—but one of the best of men. His mother is an angel."

"She was like a mother to you?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And this son of hers—he was like a brother?"

Isa looked up somewhat agitated—he had never questioned her thus before—but she knew his curiosity was not impertinent, and though her voice trembled as she replied, she said clearly:—

"He was a brother to me, Stuart."

"He would have been more—he would have married you?" said Stuart, in a calm, decided way, as though he were making an assertion, not asking information.

"Yes: he would have married me," Isa replied.

"You did not love him, then?"

"What do you mean by 'love,' Stuart?"

"I use the word as the young, hopeful, believing, use it."

"I loved him."

"Yet you are here—why are you here?"

"Because with him I should have been mis-

erable. I would not bind myself in that form that is thought binding by the world, to any man; he is a good man, but not a lover of progress as I."

"You believe this ordinance of marriage child-play?"

"Yes: as it now exists."

"You are right—it was well enough to introduce into that old romance, and a very good ordinance for people sufficiently weak to acknowledge and abide by. But do you know the fate of those who will not acknowledge it?"

"Yes: they are despised—cast out—shunned as if they had a moral leprosy about them, that was contagious."

"It must be a brave soul, however, that can uphold itself in opposition to this respectable, humbugging world. The days of martyrs are never gone by. Truth was never enthroned—one step of progress was never made but some were sacrificed."

"And those who are sacrificed are the very ones to whom the future ages pay reverence. Oh, if one can not enlighten in any other way, let the fires be kindled that are to consume him! before those fires go out, the multitude will be sure to read a new gospel!"

"Are you ready to be offered?"

"Yes: I anticipate no other fate. I am prepared for it."

"Do you know what this martyrdom is to which the sluggard world condemns the aspirant soul? Have you imagined what it is to be embalmed in the ice of neglect—to listen to the scoff and scorn which, though issuing from the lips of the ignorant, has a poison that tells on the soul? Have you thought of the venom of slander—the bitterness of having pure words and pure deeds misconstrued? O child, you have not thought of all this!"

"I have weighed it in the balance—it has been found wanting—the thought of all, of far more than you suggest, does not alarm, nor even dismay me. I will not sit still in this darkness! I WILL go on, and forward."

"And your guide, Isa?"

"Is before me, Stuart," she said quickly, with the prompt, frank confidence of a child.

"I accept the trust—I will fulfil my office worthily."

\* \* \* \* \*

And how was it with the broken household in Richmond?

Failing health, and a sickening disappointment, occasioned by an unjust, though natural suspicion of Isa's speedy forgetfulness and in-

gratitude, together with the improper ambition, and bold daring, and too prominent stand, Isa was taking, increased the anguish of Mrs. Dugganne's disappointment as she thought on the progress of Isa Lee, her dear and gifted child.

But this coldness, mutual suspicion, and reproach, which had by accident and chance been fostered and strengthened, during the continued separation, was all forgotten, completely done away on Mrs. Dugganne's part, when she felt her nature (which had been tried too greatly and too dreadfully in the years of her husband's life, and which had never rallied since his death) giving way so completely, so entirely, that no apparent strength was left to rally, and restore life's failing energies. In the conviction that she had not long to live, she bade Weare acquaint Isa of her condition, and beg her to come home. She forgot all past estrangement, and the causes which had induced it—her heart yearned toward her adopted child, her daughter, and she felt it would prove an unspeakable comfort, to have that strong life beside her while the last hour of her own existence was drawing rapidly near.

And Weare obeyed his mother—with what emotions and feelings may be imagined. Isa read his brief note, and totally forgot all that

was gone by. Her mother was calling to her, her mother was dying—and with the grief of a penitent child, she prepared to obey that call home. Courageous and dauntless as her spirit had been, it was in fear now. She had a religion that could support her through all life, and a faith that enabled her to be a conqueror and a glorious worker; but, lo! death was before her, not life. She was going to look upon the workings of His power. Had she not occasion to go with a quailing, failing heart? For what had her religion, what had HER FAITH to do with death!

## XVI.

Was it, then, indeed true that Isa stood in Mary Irving's sight as one disputing the very existence of a Creator, and the consequent possibility, that there was one willing and mighty to save? Proclaiming thus her own entire self-sufficiency? It was so—verily, and indeed so!

And, in all sincerity, Isa held this belief. She had arrived at it by profoundest reasoning; and it was the only rational conclusion she could arrive at; for, alas! she had in the beginning assumed a falsity for an eternal truth, and, step by step, self-directed at first, and then, with

Stuart for her guide, she had reached this climax, had been able to gain no other. Her words, awful, as having meaning for herself, they might be, were of infinite service to her friend Mary Irving; for they had, by what appeared to her their monstrous and terrific novelty, driven the soul of that tempted one to its Savior!

Mary returned no answer to the artist's letter; neither did she suffer herself to stand before him in the light of one afraid of, and endeavoring to escape him.

In the increasing intimacy between Norton and her husband, she would have found it impossible to avoid him in her own house, without attracting Irving's attention and wonder, and she knew that wonder would be with him suspicion, jealousy, and all evil. When he signified his wish that the portrait should be made, for these same reasons she offered no objection, and did not even prefer the request, at first in her mind, that he should be with her during its progress. Why? Listen, and learn why.

During the first sitting, they exchanged not a solitary word. But there was a volume of conversation between the glowing face of him who had penned that wild letter, and the holy expression of her pale, sad countenance. His heart,

such heart as he had, was on fire, and her heart was far from cold; but, though he was as well aware of this, as she was, he dared not speak—he was afraid of her.

She had received, she had read his letter—of that he was well aware. She had not replied to its first sentences; she was surely not replying to them now! Why, then, was she before him! What had induced her, who was in past days, he knew, a woman wholly without strength and energy—what had induced her to even admit him to her presence? He asked himself this question in wonder; then he recollected how he had closed his letter; the feigned humility he had expressed, how he had said that she might save him! Could he doubt that the image of meekness and purity before him was there for any other purpose than for such salvation!

The second time he was with her, he did not allow himself to remain wordless. After a half-hour of silent work he laid his pencils aside, and she arose to leave the room. Then he exclaimed, with great pathos:—

“Have I offended you, so that you have no forgiveness? Have I fallen so low that it is not possible for you to speak with me? Are you afraid of pollution? Believe me, I have not come here, and insisted on doing this work with the thought

or wish to distress, or vex, or fatigue you. On the contrary, to prove what I say is true, if you wish, I will never take another step in this work, I would destroy it and all I have wrought, rather than give you a moment's pain.”

“My husband wishes the work finished; it were better completed at once. Is it necessary for me to give another sitting?”

“Do you think I could paint from memory?”

“It seems sufficiently advanced for that. You have the outline—more!”

“I know nothing—I can think of nothing! I remember nothing, except when you are near. I can only guess at the fullness of life, when you are by.”

“You certainly do not know it when I am by. Do not dishonour me with the reflection, that I have permitted this work be done, in order that any hope should be nourished by you, which I should blush to have the world know of. It is not true; it is the farthest possible remove from truth!”

“‘Blush’!—‘the world’! It is the guilty, the weak, who fear. But you! The world is not worthy of you! Least of all, am I! But for all this, I can not live away from you. Do not imagine that is a possibility. I must look upon you and sometimes speak with you, and, in turn, listen to you. I must approach God through

you. There is no other way in which I can live. Oh, you may be my salvation! Will you not?—will you not?”

“You are mad! Other salvation have we not than that which is granted to fervent supplication, and faith in the mercy and grace of Christ Jesus. It is he who cleanseth from all sin. It is to him alone that sinners may effectually look for pardon and peace.”

“It is all true of you. You can say this much with truth. You need no advocate with the Father but the Son. But I—to whom shall I go? *To you!* Through whom can I acquire confidence to approach the Intercessor even, but through *you!* Save me—save me from myself! You can do it!”

“Whether this appeal is made to me with the real sorrow and distress of a broken and a contrite heart, God alone can tell. You are, at all events, mistaken in yourself, in me, and, above all, in the God above you! Approach him, I conjure you, if you feel that you need his favor; and who is there on earth that does not need it? Lay the burden of your sins at his feet, and may you find grace and acceptance!”

“You drive me to desperation! I swear—hear me!—I swear that if you cast me off, I will cast him off! turn from me, if you dare—I

will turn from him. Refuse to hear me, and I'll curse him before you.”

“You dare not cast him off. You are a madman, and I am mad to waste a moment listening to such ravings. Oh, I sadly fear for you, that He who is almighty to bless will forsake you! Can you imagine what it is to be forsaken of God? How you will have to repent of such horrible blasphemy!”

“The guilt rest, then, on you! I am not accountable for what I say so long as you are in the world. Why will you not guide and lead me? Why will you not direct my steps!”

“Because you have an unerring guide within you. You stand in no sort of need of my guidance. Some idea of right and justice you have. You are sinning now consciously.”

“You do not love me, then? . . . say it—it is all you have to do: you love me not.”

It was a searching question, and Mary Irving was silent, till strength was given her to say:—

“As much love as any human being deserves, I give when it is asked.”

“And how much do I deserve?”

“Let your own soul answer you.”

“Then so—it answers thus,” exclaimed he, bowing low before her—“with the whole entire heart! Put on your disguise of saintliness—it

becomes you well. But, let me tell you, I understand it all. You have feigned this coldness; you have put on this moderation; you have placed a barrier before the surging waters of love, and endeavor—that stumbles me—endeavor to compass and chain mine. It is a vain work. You had better strive to control a flood of volcanic fire. Ha! you would soothe me as a child might be soothed: I will not receive such consolation—I despise it. I see it all—you can not deceive me. I know within that veil of sanctity there is a voice pleading for me. I remember the past—how we loved then! You are not so changed as you would have me believe. I know there is another voice than the one you acknowledge as chanting hymns to the Unknown. It is telling you my name—repeating it for ever. It is supplicating for me that I may be heard! I know that what I wrote to you is true. Fate made us one, and we shall not be parted; it is in vain that you say we will. You can not even attempt to insure the separation. In vain would you now say ‘Go.’ You might, if you chose, it is true, crush me with your foot, and thus degrade me, and send me from this palace, and teach men to deride and scorn me. If you did all that, what would it avail you? I should be in all your thoughts; I would

reign in your heart; I would haunt you, and be the curse, and the effectual curse, of your life. Who has ever laid the boundaries for love? Who shall say, ‘Go back!’ when Love stands already within the heart, a part of the life? You weep! you weep!”

“Yes, and I have cause for weeping,” said Mary, rising and striving to go; but he prevented her: “I have need, God knows, to weep, when you, you dare to degrade and insult me by such words. I pity, I deplore—I could despise you; but I do not love you. If I did, I should hate myself.”

“It is false. Affirm it again and again, if you will—I say it is false. Your tears are not occasioned as you say. You do not pity me, only as I pity you, and that I allow I do with all my heart. That we—we should be so wretched!”

He watched her to see the effect of his words: they were true words as far as she was concerned, and Mary knew it; but she was true to virtue, for she looked to God.

“Then, if I am, and thus, an object for pity,” she said, her eyes involuntarily lifting heavenward, “I will be sure to look for pity to Him whose mercy equals his power. If I were, as you say I am, tossed by an idle passion, he alone could help me to wrestle with and overcome it.



And I assure you I would not let him go till he had cast out all unbelief from me, till he had blessed me with his peace. He has given me that peace; it passes all your understanding; and in vain do you, or any mortal, strive to deprive me of it."

"Is it truly so?" exclaimed he, rising suddenly to his feet, his voice full of bitterness, looking upon her half in scorn, and half beside himself with passionate admiration and love. "Are we parted forevermore? Have I lavished my whole heart on you and exhausted its affection for naught? Do not despise me! Do you?"

"No."

"What then? do you hate me?"

Hate! she had been lost could he have read her soul at that moment; but her calmness deceived him.

"No, I do not hate you," she replied; "for how shall I hate those whom I have seen, and yet love God whom I have not seen?"

"Good morning," he exclaimed hastily, as he almost rushed out of the room and the house.

## XVII.

Stuart would have made the journey to Richmond with Isa as her travelling companion, if she had not determined at once on going thither alone. The night on which Weare's letter, containing the tidings of his mother's severe illness, reached her, she sent for Alanthus, and acquainted him with her intended departure on the following morning, at daybreak; by leaving J— thus early she would arrive at Richmond the same night—for though the intervening distance was over four hundred miles, it was annihilated by steam; the route was, moreover, a direct one, and she would not, she said, think of being attended by any person.

The morning on which she set out was the fit herald of a dismal, dreary day. And the day was in perfect keeping with the thoughts which Isa was compelled to bear with her, for they also were most dismal and dreary. Gloomy and sad, whether retrospective, or turning futureward. How well she remembered the bright day on which she first set out for Richmond! What a tumult of happiness was in her heart when she went that blessed day with Weare, the bright, kind-hearted boy, from that horrible

place where her childhood had found refuge—how strange it seemed compared with this return. She had gone then from a scene of labor, poverty, terror, and distress—now went she from her noble toil, from her triumphs, from the midst of loving and admiring friends. Then her heart had been full, to overflowing, with gratitude—gratitude that in its excess and strange delight was speechless. Now was she silent as then, but in more than one way self-condemned. She had not then given way to tears—she had no need—but now her heart continually wept, for she could not hide from herself the fact that she had proved in one way, and in a degree, ungrateful. She was not blameless, and she felt it. Her friend, the benefactress of her life, was dying! She, between whom and herself, no sort of misunderstanding should even for a moment have been suffered to arise! her mother, was dying! . . .

She thought—she could not put away the continual suggestions of memory. She looked upon her past as on the experience of another—on the strange courses the strong current of her own life had taken since that day of her rescue from ignorance, and poverty, and misery. Of her heart's love—of her soul's progress—of her love's surrender—of the growth, and unlooked-

for development of her intellect, of the past months, those many, many months of absence from her mother's protecting care—of her position in life—of this return—and it all seemed to her, as she pondered thereon, to be rather a strange and allegoric tale, than her own actual experience.

The day waned while Isa reflected, as she had never before, long, intently, uninterruptedly upon these things; night came on, the very climax of despondency, and Isa wept tears in that increasing gloom, which she almost believed prefigured her whole future; for her tears could no longer be controlled even by her own WILL!

Would any one be waiting and watching for her coming? For the first time she thought to ask herself this question, when the cars rushed through the tunnel, and stopped before the great dépôt at Richmond. It was yet early in the evening, and not quite dark, when Isa went from the cars, and stood for a moment gazing around her on the many strange faces of the crowd of town-people and passengers, and as she stood there one figure from the midst of those passing hurriedly to and fro, approached her—it was Duganne.

He had come there, he said, to meet her, yet

hardly in the hope that she could so soon reply to his despatch.

"It was very kind of you, Isa, to come so speedily. I had very little idea that I should see you to-night."

It was strange to hear him speaking once more in the simple language of friendship to her—stranger still it seemed to him when she quietly took his arm, and said, in the very tone and way she would have done long ago:—

"There was nothing to detain me, Weare. I would not have suffered any delay, nor endured it. Why did you not send for me before? How is your, our, dear mother, to-night?"

"She is much better, I think. It was a sudden attack. She has been ill but a few days. Our dear mother! She will feel so grateful!"

"'Grateful,' Weare!" repeated Isa, as they moved on toward the cottage, walking, in accordance with her wish.

"Yes, very grateful, Isa: it was asking much."

"What! to call me to her bedside, to watch over her in sickness, who watched over me so long? Do you speak to reproach me, Weare?"

"No, Isa."

Yet, though he said it, whom she knew to be the "soul of truth," Isa could not persuade

herself that his words had not the tone of reproach. And . . . did she not deserve that he should, even in that way, speak to her?

So great was her anxiety respecting Mrs. Duganne, that when she first saw Weare and spoke with him, all other remembrances and ideas than this, that he had just come from his sick mother, and could tell her of the danger or the hope he entertained, completely escaped her mind; and she attributed to like causes the emotion revealed, not in his words, but in his manner, and in the extreme pallor of Duganne's face. He gratefully spoke his thanks for her speedy coming; but, as she took his arm, in that frank, unembarrassed way, and spoke to him as though nothing but the friendship of childhood had ever passed between them; as he remembered what had been in the last few days, and what was now his constant recollection, of the other experiences of life they had known together; as he remembered how she, who so calmly this night, after an absence so long, a separation so eventful, gave him her hand, had once with those arms wildly embraced him, and with those lips kissed him, and from those eyes wept over him, all the restraint he had put upon his heart in the past gave way! Where he had loved he adored—genius, perfect womanhood, perfect

beauty—these were her, and she was beside him! he was leading her to his home, to his old home, to the house of sickness, which was her home no longer; and he felt his heart worshipping her, when he knew that it more wisely might despise!

And why not despise, reader, if you exclaim against this judgment?

In fact, a change had come over Isa, in that very moment when her eyes rested again on Dugganne. But not a change like that of which he was aware.

It was a sudden and an everlasting change, or a change for everlasting. She could have looked upon, have talked with him, without the least excitement, of himself, and of his fortunes—of every imaginable theme, and her heart would not, whatever fount of recollection he opened for her, have felt itself moving toward him. From the moment of his first greeting, she lost all understanding, in regard to the love for him which she once had. A thought of it might live in her memory for ever; but all ability to conceive of it, or to enter anew into its nature, was gone from her. A veil had been lifted “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” from a depth in her being, which, since parting with him, she had kept shrined from her own vision. What tore the veil away? What forced her to

gaze into the depth of her soul? What enabled her to see, without one sigh of wondering, that his image was not there? It was beyond her power to tell; but this she knew, this she believed, this she saw, beyond all doubt or question—she loved him not.

We are knew not, guessed not, could not have imagined the possibility of this sudden revelation, made for Isa. But he also was thinking of changes, of change in her, as they walked, arm in arm, exchanging hardly a word, up to the door of his house.

Abashed as he was by her manner of meeting him, his heart had not one reproach to make against her. He would not, even to himself, think that she was cruel, selfish, without feeling. He saw that a change, a great change, had come over her, but could not tell if it was a recent, sudden, or a gradual change, her character had undergone. Not one feature of the change wrought in her beautiful person escaped his observant eyes, in the first searching, anxious glance directed toward her, before she was aware that he was near. Under happier circumstances, even in another way of meeting, that change would have delighted him. But now he could have wept, and did, indeed, barely refrain from weeping, as he looked upon the resolute, polished,

self-possessed, beautiful woman before him. Yet he knew this grief originated in a selfish cause—in the fact, that Isa was less the woman of impulse and passion than when they parted—that she was so proud and majestic, so aspiring, so conscious of her fame!

It was merely the excitement caused by the hope that Isa would come back again, that produced those favorable symptoms from which Weare argued his mother's speedy recovery. But the excitement did not die away with the actual arrival of Isa, and it was attended by an accelerated strength, which led the despairing physician to entertain great hopes of a recovery, which he had pronounced impossible. It was much to say for Isa, that her coming gave life to one who was at the point of death, and yet not too much to say. She was like an angel—like an angel of light, too, as she moved about the sick-room, lavishing on the invalid a constant and loving attention; thinking of so many things to say and do, to amuse and enliven her foster-mother, that Weare or the nurse could never have thought of! Seated beside her bed, or, as she went about the house, mindful only of the comfort and happiness of those around her, and seeking in every way to promote it, one would

never have imagined who saw the lovely, tranquil girl, in this light, that she had ever filled any other place than that of the good daughter, the most kind sister.

Isa at once gave herself up to the work of serving others, and she would not believe that all she desired could not be accomplished. She would not doubt Mrs. Duganne's safety, any more than she would admit the idea that Weare continued to look upon her with any other sort of regard than an affectionate brother might cherish.

And in one respect she was not deceived. Her coming seemed to work a miracle. At one time Mrs. Duganne was again thought to be at the point of death, but once more she rallied, and a strange strength, that seemed foreign to her enfeebled, diseased nature, baffled the fury of the fever—it was vanquished. Not for one moment, even when that fever raged at its height, did Isa despair—when she and Weare stood over the sick woman in the last great crisis, while others said, 'she is dying,' Isa manifested no such thought or fear—her gentle ministrations were continued with perfect outer calmness, and when at last the physician exclaimed, "She will live"—something very like triumph expressed itself in Isa's face.

Before Mrs. Dugganne entirely recovered, while her daughter, as she now constantly called Isa, was devoting herself to the duties of a nurse—all those manifold duties—she was summoned to the editorial chamber by Stuart—and though another call, however importunate, had failed to draw her back into the world at such a time, when his word came to her she had no thought but of immediate obedience, or compliance.

And, indeed, when she had received the call, and announced the necessity of her immediate departure, Isa was conscious of relief—she was glad to go. She had done her duty with a loving, joyful heart, and in it had forgotten the outer world, but the first greeting that called her back to HER world, told her that this quiet cottage home was not her home, that these friends were not of her heart's household.

Neither she nor Weare could hide from themselves the certainty that the tie still uniting them, in some degree, would very soon be broken in a new way, and for ever. When alone with his mother, no child's love and tenderness could surpass that which Isa lavished on her benefactress—and this cordial love, and devoted attention, was most grateful and precious to her who received it. In its reception,

the fears she had once for the daughter of her adoption, were entirely forgotten by the sick woman. She wondered at Isa—she admired her—she in a manner revered her, but she no longer thought of offering counsel or warning; she seemed, on the contrary, absorbed in profoundest emotions—aroused by something else than suspicion of the virtue, or fear for the religion, of the gentle, strong-hearted, and lovely nurse, who soothed and comforted her so well. Isa, enchained, enchanted her, and she quite forgot that it was this same young creature who had aided, by her genius, in giving currency among the people to deluding thoughts and sophisms. Nor did Dugganne cease wondering during the whole of her visit, under the roof which once had been her home shelter, that he had ever presumed to teach her to whom, as it now seemed to him, all knowledge was revealed.

On the day of her departure for J—, when she had parted with the invalid, and was alone with Weare, an oppressive and hardly expressible feeling of her great indebtedness which could not be repaid, and a desire to confess it, or her sense of it, at least, possessed her, and led her to say, but not as involuntarily and tearfully as she would once have done, but quite formally,

and as if actuated by an unavoidable conviction of obligation—

“I wish to tell you, Weare, that I have the deepest sense of the obligation I bear you individually, I am as conscious as you could desire, of the fact that all I am, all I ever can be, is owing to your charity. If the memory is anything worth, I beg you will always remember that I shall never outlive my gratitude.”

“It is not that I wish to hear, Isa,” he answered, deeply pained by her words, and her manner of speaking them. “I had much rather hear you say, ‘Weare, I shall never forgive you for that letter’—I believe it would at least be a more honest expression.”

“No, indeed! It would not. Why is it that you doubt me? I believe you constantly doubt me. You look on me with suspicion. Oh, how marvellously we were deceived, Weare!”

She certainly, by her word and manner, seemed bent on effecting an ultimate separation between herself and him. What else could she mean? Why was she so determined on dispelling every dream, every lingering illusion? As he asked himself this he turned away from her, wordless, and commenced pacing through the room. But he felt himself acted upon all the while in a way unaccountable, irresistible, as

though magnetically. He felt compelled to stop directly before her, and say:—

“How deceived?”

He did so.

The question seemed to startle and astonish Isa. For a moment she was sadly embarrassed. Then a sudden recollection came to her, and she was as calm as a stoic, and so replied:—

“In our passion, or love, as some might call it, for each other. In the sentiments of our hearts—more especially in ideas of our mental capacities.”

If it had been possible for Weare to control himself, he would not for the world have pursued that conversation further, but Isa’s cool and indifferent manner maddened him, and he said, with bitter emphasis and scorn:—

“Have you yet found a limit? Have you yet found it your wisdom to acknowledge a finite?”

“I had no reference to that school-day subject of dispute,” she answered; “but I will reply to your question—what my imagination guessed at then, I have long since seen to be a fixed principle in NATURE. There is no limit—ALL IS INFINITE.”

“Where have you learned that—of whom?”

“Of the world—the great philosopher.”



"Oh, my God! what a teacher you've had!"

"You have vegetated here too long, Weare. I should advise you, if a true friend may take that liberty, go into the world. When you do go, how strange, nonsensical, I was going to say, one episode in our history will appear to you! It will seem then as impossible to you as to me, that things which have happened between us could have happened."

"God grant that I may never find it possible to argue about those things, they being our hearts, Isa, as though they were of the nature of stocks and stones."

"A stock or a stone," she said, with perfect gravity, "is all in all to itself. The outer is but a development of the inner world."

"It is, nevertheless, the joy of all unperverted humanity, that it does need outward appliances, outward means of enjoyment. What thorough selfishness, what an insanity is implied in your suggestion!"

"Peace! we are about to part for ever. Do not compel me to take away from this place, for ever hallowed to my mind, because it is your mother's home, such accusations as these of selfishness, insanity, ingratitude! You are unjust!"

"Isa, do not say that we are parting for ever. We are not!"

"Would you not have it so? The boy who rescued me from—"

"Not another word! You shall not speak of that! Look!" he cried, pointing to the window, and the cheerless prospect without, "there is my future life, if you wish to know it. Go, now, but I charge you remember that coldness, that dreary darkness!"

"Weare," she exclaimed, actuated by a sudden mastering impulse, "I might point within my own heart, and say that, if I would! Tell me, once for all. I thought I should have strength to for ever repress the question, but I have not. When the great crisis had come, and I was going for the first time from this roof, why did you permit me to go without one solitary word of counsel, one suggestion that would prove that you cared for me or for my interest at all?"

"Because I felt that you did not need such words, because I knew that you would spurn them."

"I would have blessed you for them. I did sorely need them. You let me go, and—and I went."

"Never, never to come back again. You are not the Isa Lee of old. You are not my Isa! What are you? A woman—proud, self-defying,

world-defying, splendid, famous! Ah, it is no great wonder that you despise me, when I am only common and human! It is not surprising that our past astonishes you. Receive my confession, madam. I regret that I wrote you as I did. Had I known you as I do now, I should not have dared presume."

"It went from me while I waited for your words, and they did not come! I would have you bear that in mind for ever," she said, almost fiercely, gazing on him with flashing but tearful eyes.

"What went?"

"The whole power I had to love."

"O Isa!"

"O Weare!" she repeated, with an emphasis and an agony to which he could not have given utterance. For one instant she was changed. She was the child of old, and it was with trembling that she added: "We shall never—we must never meet again, I am convinced!"

"Never, I know," he rejoined with the utmost sadness.

"In your mother's name, O brother, let us part, then, this instant!"

Isa looked upward. Her glance rested on the portrait of Mrs. Dugganne; the recollections of the past overwhelmed, subdued her; and

again, as *once*, her arms were about his neck, her pale face pressed against his own. And thus, once more they parted!

### XVIII.

Isa had erred lamentably in her teachings, and they met with signal failure as far as Mary Irving was concerned. For, while she imagined that such a disposition to weak self-mistrust as Mary evinced was a most unnatural and unworthy weakness, the young wife was in a fair way for proving to herself, that her friend and chosen teacher was an unnaturally courageous, if not an unnaturally heartless woman. Was it not so? she asked herself, while day after day, in compliance with Isa's directions, and her husband's unescapable wish, she met, in her own home, at her table, and in her parlors, the man she feared and trembled for—whom she could not hate—whom she could but love!

There was only one help for Mary Irving. Sooner than reply by word or look to Norton's impassioned words and glances, she would, if tempted too far, have put an end to her own life. But she found another escape; and she shuddered when she thought that Isa, could she have done so, would have closed that door

through which she fled. Mary "fortified" herself "with prayer!"

And if she did not pray acceptably—if her supplications were, as Isa affirmed such supplications could only be—if she prayed with the "imagination" alone, she, nevertheless, was aided and strengthened thus. Her petitions were, perhaps, not perfect oblations of faith; nor would I, in reply to any of Isa's arguments, say that her prayers were answered; though by means of them she stood, who might have fallen, unimpressible as a rock, to all the bewildering temptations of an idolized adversary. But she fancied, thought, believed there was, out from, beyond her, One who, unseen, could help her, and in that idea was her safety. The possibility of all this Isa would have admitted at once, as the firmest unbeliever could not help doing; but Isa would have greatly wondered why her friend could not as implicitly trust to herself. She would at the same time have freely granted that any idea whatsoever, to which one fastens faith with the resolve to act from and by it, becomes at once, and necessarily, a power of deliverance—salvation. It was only the weakness implied in the fact, that mortals seek this power *out of themselves*, that she condemned. And so, though she had not faith at all in prayer, its efficacy

as addressed to, and seeking a prayer-hearing God, a power independent of and over-ruling herself, as a reliance on a fixed thought she would at once have confessed its all-availingness and potency.

Mary Irving could thus, by her prayers, maintain a perfectly impassable front, could listen to Gansevoort Norton's eye-language, and give no sign that it was in any degree comprehended, even while her heart, panting to respond to it, was crushed. She could meet the glancings of his thoughts, and return no look that gave evidence she was not afflicted with a mental ophthalmia, even while floods of tears were pressing against the barriers she resolutely raised and maintained. She could through those prayers live in the steadfast performance of every duty to the selfish, brutish man, whose name she was named with, even while she beheld the scarcely disguised contempt which the artist felt for his senseless, sensual patron, Roderick Irving. She saw them together, day after day, the men who held her whole life in their hands—she could not escape them, nor their influence—she could not break the bonds which bound her.

Never by word did she give the artist to imagine the consuming grief he was creating—the

destruction he was occasioning. Not one word did she utter to signify that he in any way affected her. What might not be the result, if she once admitted his influence? She saw how he enchained all his listeners when he appeared in public as a lecturer—how he won his way in private circles by an irresistible eloquence—how he was in his profession taking the rapid strides of a conqueror—and though she did not wonder for herself, that he should in one way have such power over her—she could but wonder for him—she could not understand him.

Knowing his own bad heart so thoroughly as he did, Norton could understand the whole nature of their relation thoroughly. He knew why Mary Irving avoided him; he heard her saying to her heart, 'Get thee behind me, Satan'—he heard her saying to herself, 'Spare me! Go! I die for you!'—he saw and heard it all, and yet he stayed—yet he haunted her with his presence, yet his vanity and his selfishness, that intolerable, wonderful selfishness, prompted him to stay!

What angel brought to her the assurance from the source of destiny and knowledge, that  
IT IS THE MISSION AND THE GLORY OF WOMAN  
TO ENDURE, AND TO TRIUMPH ONLY IN ENDU-  
RANCE?

Mary thought that thought once when despair was covering her utterly. She forgot all Isa's teachings then—she bethought her of the history of woman—how it has been recorded of all who have lived truly, that their years were years of sorrow—yet that their joy, the joy which no man could take from them, issued from the fountain uncontaminated by any springs of earth;—and looking back on her own earlier years, those of her heart's disappointment, and of her bodily toil, she saw for once, and for all, that if she only persevered in virtue to the end, even her wrecked unhappy life might not prove itself a vanity. True, she had sacrificed herself in marriage for naught—they whom she had hoped thus to serve, had never been benefited by her union with the rich man; from the day of that marriage all intercourse between her and her father's household had been denied—she had given up father, and mother, and the little joy, for the great sorrow, and life with Roderick Irving. True, an overwhelming, an almost overwhelming trial was now in new shape given her. He who, years ago, might have with a word averted all this misery, had come before her, and only to increase it—yet might not this love even, whose existence she could not deny, might not this love prove itself her puri-

fier? An effectual purifier before her spirit escaped, as she felt well assured it would ere long—from earth.

No mortal besides herself seemed to have imagined that she was slowly and surely dying. None but herself knew the languor and faintness that oppressed her—the unnatural brightness of her eyes, the unnatural paleness of her face, escaped all observation. In one sense it was mournfully true—she was dying to herself!

From the day of the conversation recorded, during the further progress of the portrait until it was finished, till long after, Norton did not venture on any such ground again. Did not venture, I said—there was nothing in that way he dared not venture, but he deemed it not advisable until several weeks had elapsed, and then one morning, during Mr. Irving's absence from J—, he called at the house, and without announcement was shown into her presence. To propitiate her, and to furnish topic for conversation, he brought with him a beautiful gift which was, as he truly said, one of his best works, and, as a painting, of high value. It was the picture of a girl at prayer.

"I made bold to bring it, Mary," he said, "for I thought it worthy of being placed in the room with your own portrait. It is, indeed,

a fitting representation of your own beautiful spirit in its constant act—you are an embodied supplication."

She took no apparent notice of his familiar mode of addressing her, but said briefly and coldly:—

"I decline it, sir."

"That you can by no means do."

She did not reply.

"Mr. Irving has expressed a wish for it."

"He can pay for it, then."

"I do not wish him to become a purchaser."

"Reserve your gift for him in that case."

"I wish you, madam, to receive it. I offer it as a slight token of my respect for you."

She was startled by the simple, quiet candor of his voice and words. As she fixed her eyes upon the picture, she felt constrained to ask:—

"Is it a portrait?"

"No—a work of fancy that I designed purposely for you. Is it not something in my favor that I could conceive such expression?"

"In what way—in point of talent evinced? If you mean that, yes."

"I do not mean that. Having never seen a woman at her private devotions, I ask you plainly, must I not have been inspired—at least, must I not be better than you imagine me—to

be able to give that face such a noble expression? I do not speak of it as an artist's work, but as a production of the spirit—judge me.”

“I judge no man.”

“You pass judgment, on the contrary, on every act, every word of mine. You can not deny it. I only ask you, judge in charity. Remember, I am isolated—bereaved—desolate through you, Mary Irving.”

“I know nothing of the kind whatever. How dare you say so?”

It was the first time she had permitted herself to reply so directly to his passionate recriminations, and she repented having said so much when aware of the advantage he would take of such reply.

“Why, am I not bereaved—wholly, irretrievably? What, think you, brought me to this place but a desire which was destroying me, to see and to be near you? And yet, in your saintly purity, your horrible coldness, you dare to doubt my words? It is simply because you will not understand them. You can not understand such love as mine. Do you not know, that in this very way you heap fire on my head, and make my heart one flame?”

“Oh, misguided, mistaken man!” exclaimed Mary; “do you, can you know what you are

saying? to whom, and of what, you speak? How terribly you are misled! How fearfully you are sinning! Hear me: why is it that you come here day after day, seeking to see and speak with me—a dying woman—yes, a dying woman?” she repeated as she saw him start back in astonishment when she said that. “Will you not at least, for mercy's sake, suffer me to die in peace? Has life been such a sunny way to me, that you feel authorized to cast a shadow over the little that remains? Has time proved such a merry companion that you must avenge my human nature for its enjoyment? I beseech you go—and do not appear before me while I live.”

Awed and confounded by the irresistible conviction that she spoke the truth of her past and her future, he exclaimed, with unfeigned anguish:—

“Save me! save me! Angel of beauty and of purity, save me!”

“From what?”

“Myself!”

“Salvation comes for such as you and I, only through the Savior who died for us.”

“Save me!” he repeated. “You can!”

“I? I? I, save you? Oh, how shall I myself escape condemnation?”

“You can save me if you will,” he insisted,

but now another spirit was actuating him than that which had only a moment since.

"How?" she asked gently, and with compassion.

"By one word."

"That word—what is it?" she asked, with eager interest.

"Say that—that—I *can not* speak it. Can you not understand it?"

The wild appeal rang through her heart. She hesitated—she bethought—she reflected on the greatness of the pending issue, and she answered—

"Yes."

"And will you say that word?"

"NEVER!"

"Exquisite selfishness! There is a word that comprehends, embraces all your life—and yet you will not speak it? No—though you know it would work salvation in me!"

"It would not work salvation."

"It could not do otherwise! Salvation hangs upon that word!"

"Salvation can not come—it never came in such a way. Humble yourself to that degree, Gansevoort Norton," she said, pointing to the child's picture, "or you will never—never be saved. You are not looking to me, as that child

looks to God—and if you were, how great the sin! You know you are not looking to me for anything but return for a sentiment of which I wish to know nothing."

"You wish to know nothing of it! Do you know nothing of it? You never have loved then, as I have loved you? . . . I pity you."

"You are taking the name of our Creator in vain!" she exclaimed, now speaking fearlessly, and as if inspired. "Do you not know that it is God who is called Love? Do not pity me. I rejoice that I shall not plunge with you into the depth of an unsanctified passion. I could wish to see you a better, a holier man. Guided by that spirit of divine mercy what a glorious life you might lead! To what prostitution do you compel your high and beautiful gift! Lend your pencil the force you give your words, and then look at the result. For the first time in your life, I assure you, the work you accomplish will satisfy you. Live, Gansevoort, to noble, to pure purposes! Oh, if you only will, you may, in this life even, meet with great reward! And if you do not strive thus uprightly—truly to yourself, and for art—what a shame will this gift be to you. It is for you—for you are one of the appointed, to leave a record on earth to the eternal loveliness and grandeur of purity and



holiness. Look upon that child—learn from that expression of your own work. Let your soul droop to her knees, and pray constantly for you—you may grow perfect thus.”

Her words seemed to have made a favorable impression; she allowed herself to speak them with such tender solemnity. He said, in answer:—

“If I had you for my guide always, I should accomplish all you foretell. You might be my deliverer. You might make this hell of a life that I lead, a heaven.”

“No,” she replied; “there is One mightier than the mightiest of earth, who will compass you with the everlasting arms of his mercy, if you will only suffer him. Go to him. He alone can help you.”

It was only casting pearls before swine, and so she felt it when, with another passionate outbreak, he fell on his knees before her, exclaiming:—

“I have no faith but in you! I have made you my God—I will pray unto you therefore. *I have sinned. I am unworthy. Suffer me to be the least of all thy servants. Have mercy upon me!*”

“Then I have compelled myself to speak this much to you in vain,” she said, rising, and lean-

ing for support against the piano; one hand drooped against the keys as she did so, and at the touch, a plaintive, sorrowful sound escaped, that chorded well with the tone of her voice. “You have driven away, and destroyed what faith I had in you. . . I might prophecy for you of your future. The fate of a man who has so debased a conception of the eternal Father is not uncertain. In denying him, you abandon all that you need, all that is worth having. You have not loved me—I would still say it if you repeated your protestations for ever. You will again seek, as you have doubtless sought before this (and merely that you might thus give vent to the imagination granted you to add beauty to the treasury of beauty)—you will give vent to it in protestations which I pray God may fall always on deaf ears, and dead hearts. . I do not wish, I will not receive your gift. Remove it. I will not have before me such a proof of your ability, knowing how wilfully you pervert the talent God intrusted to you. You have an idea of the real nature of worship, and of holiness, or you could never have painted this. You have a greater love for sin, or you could never have descended to speak as you have to me. You have sought to compass my ruin. I understood your design, but my support, God! has proved

stronger than my tempter, you! Your selfishness is astounding; greater than I had imagined could find place in the soul of an artist gifted of God. I charge you to never forget the failure you have met in seeking to accomplish what you well know you have sought to accomplish here. I do not hope that this failure will prove a useful lesson to you. You will but study it to learn the way to better success in like attempts."

Norton made no effort to interrupt Mrs. Irving as she spoke, nor to delay her going when she moved toward the door, and vanished so from his sight. He did not consider himself conquered—nor that he had seen her for the last time in his life;—but when she was gone out he placed the painting on the mantel, and left the house humming a tune, and with a countenance that expressed no sort of emotion; nevertheless, he was in a measure touched by her rebuke, and to a great degree astonished by her daring.

—"Imagination!" Isa, could you have seen your friend when she was alone after that interview! could you have heard the cry her soul repeated all that day, and the night that followed, as she lay upon her bed exhausted by her sorrow, and her fear for him, and the excitement her frail nature had undergone—that cry which

FOUND ITS WAY TO THE MERCIFUL: "God be merciful to me!" You would not surely have dared to think that the strength, and efficiency of prayer, depends upon imagination!

That day Mary Irving cast Norton from her heart for ever. A dreadful sense of his complete unworthiness crushed her completely and suddenly to death: and with a deeper, a more importunate longing for peace in the love of the Invisible, she strove to nerve her heart with all spiritual strength. And though this strength was given in its efficiency too late to avail for any spiritual earthly purpose, she found it soon enough to fit her soul for heaven.

## XX.

When Roderick Irving returned home, after his short absence, and when Isa went back from Richmond to her lodgings in J—, they were both greatly shocked and amazed by the tidings waiting their arrival, of the dangerous and almost hopeless state to which Mary was reduced. For neither the friend nor the husband could longer conceal from their own mind the fact of which Mary had so clear a presentiment, that her days were numbered. It was a great grief for them to find her thus. So covertly had the destroyer

done his work, so heroically had Mary borne suffering and weakness, that the vigilant eyes of devotion alone (more vigilant and tender eyes than had rested on her since her mother wept over her in their last parting, on her bridal-day) could have traced back to its beginning the change which now, to all around her, seemed instantaneous.

Roderick Irving lamented this change. He suggested every sort of remedy imaginable; he was willing to do anything that might possibly avert the fate which Isa saw at once was not to be averted. Could he have had his own way, instead of suffering her to remain and die, as die she must, quietly at home, in her bed, he would have set out with her, to journey to the world's end, had any one offered him the slightest hope that health would be found there. The idea of death, of death in his house, of her death, was horrible. His song-bird to die! He had never imagined such a thing was going to, or could happen. And certainly, she seemed dearer to him then than she had ever before.

Yet nothing like self-reproach mingled with his fears for Mary, with the sorrow he felt, when told finally she would not recover. Thus would he have answered his conscience, had she presumed to question him. He had found Mary poor and

feeble, compelled to work for a living, and he had given her rest. She was a passionate lover of the beautiful; he had made her home a palace of beauty. He had introduced her into circles, which, but for him, had never opened to her. She had journeyed at her will, and done all things as she would. He had done all for her that mortal man could do. It never occurred to him, that in the perfect, constant separation from her own home-circle, which he enjoined upon her, he was annulling all other temporal benefits that he could confer. He never thought that, surrounded as Mary was, by all the outward means and appliances of comfort and enjoyment, she might still feel in need, in cruel and bitter want. He was so selfish that he could not even conceive of this. All he had ever asked her to do for him was to sing, and in this respect he had not proved exacting. Quiet, lady-like, graceful, sensible, obliging, but the furthest possible remove from brilliant—such a woman had his wife Mary been to him. And exactly as such he thought upon her; and fain would he have so pleasant a companion spared to him through all his own life. She was too young to die! There was far too much surrounding her of this life's good. She ought not to die!

These reflections were the sum-total of his thoughts on this novel subject. Repeatedly, every day, he went over the ground of such reflections, going neither to the right nor to the left of these.

At the first he was beside his wife's sick-bed much of the time. She had never been ill before . . . he felt chained. He had some sort of idea that his proper place was there. But then, in that still place, solemn thoughts oppressed—dreadfully oppressed him; and Mary could say so little, and what she said was uttered in such a strange, altered tone, that he was frightened when he heard her. Besides, she coughed so dreadfully and incessantly, and looked so pale and emaciated, that he became quite nervous. To hear her cough suffocated him; when he looked at her he felt as though he were in the presence of a ghost, or something unnatural. She was no longer his lovely Mary.

And besides, again, and full as decisively, Isa Lee was a constant attendant there; and Roderick Irving was actually afraid of her. He did not like her, either. Her very taciturnity seemed to him the expression of an unnatural and unamiable severity. He had never felt at ease in

her society, and, more especially, he found it impossible for him to feel so in this sick chamber. Furnishing himself with such excuses as these, Irving, by degrees, entirely withdrew himself from his wife's bedside: but he needed not to make apologies, nor to furnish reasons for this; his absence was felt by those concerned only as a relief.

On hearing of Mary's illness, Isa had at once expressed a desire to be with her, and when she signified as much, her offer met with grateful acceptance. And so she watched over and attended her friend, until there was no more need for waiter or for watcher. But her attendance was given in a far different mood, and with such curiosity and anxiety, as had not for an instant been aroused in her recent watching by another sick-bed.

"The mystery of life and death" had not, at the time of Mrs. Dugganne's dangerous illness, appealed to her at all in the way it now did. Weare's presence, recollections of the past, prevented her mind from turning its energy to the study of the soul which all around her believed was on the point of departure from the body.

And even here, by Mary's side, while watching the flickering light of the lamp that was almost exhausted, while pondering that poor, dying

creature's experience, and pitying a weakness which, in fact, no longer existed, though she was burning with the desire to speak to her friend and extort from her the whole secret of her thought while departing, Isa could not—she dared not do it. She suffered not a doubt to escape her, though she knew that existence was becoming less and less of an enigma to Mary, and that the mystery of death was being unveiled before her eyes. Something chained her will fast; she found no words wherewith to express her wonder or her imagining; though she felt that the life about departing had been, to a degree, lived for her (how else could she account for it, that they, so different in all respects, should have been so strangely associated?), she made no questioning whatever concerning those things of which she had, all her lifetime, argued with herself. A spell seemed upon her, restraining, preventing her. She had no courage, no strength, no ability, to speak with her friend of that faith in which she was dying. What was it—who was it—that prevented, that forbade her disturbing the tranquillity of Mary's sundering nature?

The little Mary found strength to say convinced Isa that her faith was the faith of the Christian. Yet the dying believed with fear and trembling. Not until she had passed beyond

the long path of death, which life had proved to her, could faith learn the hymn of confidence, and triumph; as yet it induced in her only patience, resignation, and hope. Her confidence was, however, fixed. It was enough to die by, as in her deepest grief and temptation it had been sufficient to live by. It was fixed on the unseen Father, on the immutable, self-existent, creating God; and this confidence was so expressed, was such a revelation of truth and dependence, that, however much Isa believed her friend deceived, she would, on no account (and, as we have said, she could not, if she would) give utterance to a word that should make the faith less sustaining.

Mary's death was not one of ecstasy; had it been, Isa would not have failed to pronounce it the ecstasy of delirium; nor was it attended with any degree of agony, with the throes of mortal anguish, which sometimes attend the departure of the holiest and best. She went to sleep softly as an infant, and Isa, weeping, closed the eyes which were blind to mortal sight for ever, but Isa never thought to say:—

“God gave, and He hath taken!”

For none upon earth was that quiet going home an event fraught with lessons of wisdom or

warning. To none was it a "savor of life"—to none, and least of all to Isa Lee, was the simple faith through which Mary Irving resisted temptation unto death, an example of that will which is mighty, even in the weakest, unto holiness. Roderick Irving's gentle wife had lived and died, apparently to no purpose, save as the exceeding love and hope, and the great disappointment, through another, to the poor of her father's household.

But, is it, indeed, true, that Mary's pilgrimage was wholly and for ever in vain? Where is the mortal that believes it?

## XXI.

After this death Isa Lee stood more completely than ever alone in this world of striving intellect. The only friend that her mind and her heart (yes, her HEART!) now recognised as influencing and living in any degree for her, was Alanthus Stuart.

The next five years of her life saw many strange, unlooked-for changes wrought in her experience. Through these years she was, as she had been ever since she made literature her profession, a sincere and constant worker; but all her efforts and all her aims—alas for her, and for

him, too, that they would have it so!—were still directed by that master-mind—her first acknowledged teacher!

Most unhappily, most wofully for her, she had effectually resuscitated him from that grave of his hermit-life! He was now (and it was owing to her influence solely) as completely in the world as she was, but no more of it than she; and no less scornful, opinionated, confident, and bold in his mental life, than in those former solitary years when he had held himself aloof from, indifferent to all.

With the reverence—with far more than the reverence and submission of the slave, did Isa consciously subject her will and all her intellectual powers to the guidance and direction of this man. And very proud she felt, in rendering the homage... for was he not her God, who was become her will?

In many respects her position in the world, both of society and of letters, changed very much during the progress of those years. In the second year of his absence Mr. Warren determined on residing abroad, and he therefore made a final disposal of his paper. It passed into the hands of other proprietors; and an editorial corps, actuated with very different principles

from those held by Isa and Alanthus Stuart, undertook the management of *The Guardian*.

It was not without regret that Isa relinquished the work which had for many reasons been a delight, as well as a pride to her. Nor was it entirely without consternation that she saw the new tone in which her well-beloved "GUARDIAN" was compelled to speak to the people. But when she looked for consolation and encouragement to one amply able to give it, from whom it could not come without healing power, she had not to look and wait in vain. He was her guide—he would be her director still.

As composers of books, the indefatigable hands and minds of these workers were now employed. And Isa, by these curious and powerful emanations from her brain, won sufficient notoriety and fame of a certain sort, that is, earnest attention, to satisfy her. Works that her hand penned were always attractive from their brilliant style, and they were singular enough to enchain attention—it became a fashion to read them, and for a time, among certain classes, those who longed and labored for the progress and advancement of their kind, to praise them; in short, Isa was such a writer as no general reader pretended to be ignorant of.

It was not long, however, before critics

aroused themselves, who, bearing in mind what she dared to teach, felt justified in laying aside all show of gallantry in their endeavor to bring her to an account for the spirit of her writings. These men were sufficiently bold and able to separate the tares from the wheat, which grew up in the visible fields of thought—her books. They were so courageous as to say, that from her very power and brilliancy, she was to be condemned for presenting immoral and dangerous doctrines for the study of the people; for presenting them, too, in an alluring guise that would not fail to deceive, as to their true nature. They declared that her fictions should be decried, because her beautiful sophisms were so beautiful that they commended themselves almost resistlessly to the imaginations and passions of young and old.

Stuart had instructed Isa in his faith—he had encouraged her in the maintenance of the extreme opinions and principles which she was now so powerfully and openly advocating, in spite of all the astonishment and reproaches of unbelievers. He felt called upon, bound to defend her; to aid her in proving to the world the truth and justice of her tenets and positions. He could do this—but not without producing results far other than those most desirable. Both



he and Isa knew what the results must be, but they had gone so far there was now no other way than for him to lift his voice, and speak—and defend. . . Well, the world recognised his voice.

\* \* \* \*

And then—then suddenly, but, alas, not unaccountably, Isa found herself standing alone, forsaken by all in that world but him.

\* \* \* \*

And yet her position was not irretrievable. Had she WILLED it even then, she might have been saved; but she had given him her will, and she would not call it back.

Two ways of escape at this time unexpectedly, certainly providentially, opened for Isa: through the marriage covenant, which she had set at naught, mocked, defied—and with it defied the world's opinion and that confidence, without which human life were, to woman, nothing worth.

But Isa did not, would not, or, perhaps, she could not (let us think it in charity), see the hand of God outstretched toward her through these men. And perhaps only one of them might have looked on himself, and have been looked on by the discerning, as a deliverance for a woman like her.

He who did so look, was one who had care-

fully read her whole heart and soul-life in her writings, the long lost sight of, good old General S—. But from the hope of saving Isa from a worse fate than matrimony, he would never have thought of marriage. It was not in his own behalf that he determined to speak with her. Almost the whole of this man's life had been spent in the service of others—it was a fit conclusion for his pilgrimage that he should devote its final years to the cause of the solitary, defenceless, and defamed girl, whom he saw so sadly in need of a guide, and friendly counsellor.

His interest in Isa had been first aroused on the night shortly after her arrival in J—, when she had discussed so earnestly with him the question of woman's rights. A desire to see and hear more of her, led him to a thorough study, and consequently to a better knowledge of her mental nature, than any mortal with the exception of Alanthus Stuart, had. No woman, alas! had ever understood or comprehended her, as these men had—women shrunk from, were afraid of her; and from him who could have saved her, she turned away, preferring the protection of him who could only be her ruin.

As time went on unfolding the capacities of Isa's intellect more and more, revealing through all natural disguisements, the unnatural bent

that intellect was taking, as her danger and her power became more apparent, the old man found his interest equalling his compassion—both were completely roused; and when finally the hour for rescue came, if rescue were indeed still possible, he bethought him with the suddenness of inspiration of the way through which he himself could save her.

He was no prophet, but he scanned her future with a prophet's eye; he read the works she wrote, and those which bore her own and Stuart's names unitedly; he saw how vast, and constantly increasing, was the mutual influence they exerted, and he knew she needed an arm of flesh to save her. There was but one way—he offered her his name, his fame, his fortune.

It was a gift that many a prouder woman might proudly have accepted. But it was no affectation—in her heart Isa scoffed at the idea of the bond thus to be imposed. Forgetful, or unconscious to the last, or else defiant of the infinitely more galling bonds, for such even to her they must eventually prove, which the moral government of the world would force upon her.

This was the first—it was also the last time in his life that General S— exposed himself to such rejection. But, mortified vanity had nothing whatever to do with the deep and abiding

regret he felt because of it. He had offered Isa his name with the single idea that it was powerful to cover her with honor, who was recklessly exposing herself, however pure in heart she might be, to dishonor. His sorrow, when he failed in his unselfish, noble endeavor, was not for himself—it was for her only, and for her sincerely.

Gansevoort Norton, who, as Mary Irving had predicted he would, lavished on his baser passions all the great force of the imagination given him to work worthily in that calling to which Nature ordained him, in a mad love (he called it love, and we use the word as he did, aware, however, of the prostitution) in a mad love for Isa Lee, called forth by her peculiar beauty, which he could well appreciate, and increased by her fame, and fraught with an uncommon interest, from the strange and proud position she, in her isolation, assumed, himself famous now, and as rich so for his vices as for his eloquence as a speaker and his genius as an artist—this Gansevoort Norton, utterly misinterpreting the writings and the nature of Isa, and wronging her by his profligate desire to a degree only surpassed by the wrong she was heaping on herself—this man dared to throw himself at Isa's feet; and,

if she did not indignantly spurn him, from that assumed humility with which he fell before her, it was not because she did not know his abjectness, nor because she did not despise it. She had never borne with him at all from the moment that she was aware of what had passed between him and Mary Irving, but for the dear memory of his dead poet-sister. All that she could do she had done, from the time when Mary so suddenly fainted in the midst of her work; and her labor for his reformation had been, like Mary's, in vain. He did not understand her, and he offered her his "love"! But what had she to do with the love of such a man? To her, misguided as she was, misunderstood as she was doomed to be, life in marriage with a man like Norton would have been—I say it in no spirit of exaggeration—would have been an irremediable plunging into the torments of hell.

It was not to accomplish any such destiny as might have been hers with either of these suitors for a protector or companion, that Isa had reached this point, and as certainly was it not with any other passion than a defying and deifying pride, that she chose to accept for a protector, guide, and home-companion, the man whom she had chosen for a God to follow him! A gulf yawned

between them, their hands clasped across it. They thought not of peril—it was their disdain. Isa's will was throned now, as it had never before been throned, in the brain of Alanthus Stuart. He was become her All in All—her Thought, her Hope, her Love, her Life!

## XXII.

Turn many pages in the book of years. Pass by the record of wanderings through a desert of poverty that followed fast upon this last daring step that Isa took—of benefactions from unknown sources, which Isa's heart many a time traced to the heart of one long dead to her—even to the heart of Weare Dugganne—pass by the record of a night when two proud souls bent to the dust, and wept and agonized, and none came near to comfort them—pass by the record of that unutterable grief with which, in the despair of their bereavement, Stuart and Isa buried the child that was born to them—turn all these many pages of afflictions, reverses, sorrows, wrongs! The years have done their work; their mission of judgment is fulfilled. Isa and Stuart are together and alone, still faithful to each other, still the slaves, not the rulers, not the monarchs of their Demon-Thought.

Dauntless, brave, and bent on victory, still they cling to one another, and the thought of their disunion is the last they will receive.

Only the final pages of the most strange book of their years, may I, or have I the heart to transcribe. But this is written—let it stand for a MEMORIAL.

One dreary evening of a dreary midwinter day saw the death of Isa Lee.

Neither in the room where she lay, nor in the house which she called home (she who had better been shelterless than call that place "home"), were any traces or tokens of poverty, or of humble life, to be found; for they had valiantly battled with, and conquered, want, need, adversity; they were prosperous in worldly matters now. It was a romantic, and besides a very comfortable nook, in a corner of the world that Alanthus Stuart and Isa Lee had fixed on for their abiding place, and their own energetic labors had gained it for them. All their earthly treasure was gathered with them there; they were together; their works were before them; and beneath Isa's study-window was a little grave, where their only child was sleeping—so bravely did they still defy the world, so proud and grand a world was that which they believed within their control.

In this house, from the time of their dwelling

together, Isa, as well as Stuart, had unremittently continued her literary labors; but in the recent months her strength had greatly failed her: with ill health, ambition had also in a measure failed; and this, the last year of her PILGRIMAGE saw her fading and drooping, day by day growing weaker and weaker, until the last day of her life dawned.

With emotions never to be expressed on his part, nor to be explained by another, Stuart had watched this gradual, sure, irresistible decay. He beheld the courageous being whom he loved now with an all-absorbing devotion, perishing—yes, perishing before his eyes; he saw, too, that Isa was fully alive to the knowledge of this inevitable fate. But it was long before they could bring themselves to speak of the fate appointed, by the Will opposed to theirs, which was hurrying her away; and the first time they attempted to do so, they wept like children. Though such tears were speedily banished, in their hearts both wept incessantly through all the days of darkness that ensued. In those first, few, visible tears, they seemed to have expended or vanquished all their fear and grief; and it was an awful sight to see the perfect calmness with which they would then speak with each other of separation, death, and change—a fear-

ful sight, for their help, their strength, was not in God. They had lived together, it can not be denied, very happily. When society forsook them, the very reason for which she disowned them was, in itself, sufficient to bind them more closely together. When poverty came down upon them "like an armed man," they found a sufficiency in each other, and patiently, and hopefully, and lovingly, they strove on, until they commanded both success and fortune. When death bore away the little creature who was more than the world, or fame, or fortune to them, they found their consolation in each other, though the grief really never died out of the heart of either. By their energy, they at last compelled the world to grant them fortune—the world bought their works once more: and other favor at the hand of their increasing audience they wished not, asked not, would not accept. They could command hearers; but they never strove to re-enter the world, which, according to their belief, was too weak to conceive of the spiritual beauty, the spiritual freedom and grandeur of their alliance.

Isa's devotion to her protector was not now what it had been, when she first knew and bowed before Stuart. It was a thousand times intensified—she loved him even

"To the depth, and breadth, and height  
Her soul could reach, when feeling, out of sight,  
For the ends of being and ideal grace!"

And her "soul's expression" to him fully equalled this confession of another:—

"I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight;  
I love thee freely as men strive for right;  
I love thee purely as they turn from praise;  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, AND WITH MY CHILDHOOD'S  
FAITH."

She never had repented that she took so bold a stand with HIM. And is it asked by any who are wont to look to this life's experiences for God's judgment on evil deeds done in the body, is it asked, what had meanwhile become of CONSCIENCE, of the innate sense of RIGHT and WRONG, of PURITY and SIN? She had overcome, destroyed it all! But *not* consciously, as the soul BENT ON SINNING battles with itself, and its divine instincts; so thorough was her worship, so absolute her belief in him, so completely was he her God, and she his worshipper, so deaf and blind was she to all that other mortals in her position might have accepted for WARNINGS and PROVI-

DENCES, so completely had she destroyed what people sometimes call their moral sensibility, that her life with Stuart was never for one moment an unhappy one. The course she had taken, so defiant and extraordinary, was never for one moment repented.

Was her condemnation any the less? was her blindness less to be deplored, because she did not, like others who have found themselves in positions resembling hers, repent, and weep, and strive to retrace the path by which she had wandered from virtue? was she the purer, the holier, because so strong in her will that she never thought of severing herself from him, when they were once united? Was her career one which the world could behold with less of trembling because the Almighty poured never out upon her the fury of his wrath? because he spared her afflictions with which he sometimes chasteneth his faithful children? . . .

Stuart for his part never anticipated separation from any cause but death. He saw clearly that Isa's love, and confidence, and veneration, were what he might count on so long as their lives should be spared. And there was no danger that he would ever weary of her, for her weakness. On the contrary, he loved her more and more, as he learned her better, for a heart

more devoted and true than hers, never beat. He became full as fervent a worshipper of her beauty, and her woman-soul, as she was of his intellect.

Therefore the idea of such a separation as reason assured them was approaching, when sickness and disease fastened on Isa, was to them one of unutterable agony. But when they had received it, and pondered upon it, and spoken of it to each other, they began to grow peaceful and calm again, and to abandon the almost frantic efforts which they had both made to arrest the progress of the resistless One.

On this mid-winter evening, this evening of her death, Stuart was alone—and for the first time in months alone, in his study. Failing health, much pain, intolerable weariness, had been to the last defied, and every day and every evening Isa had sate beside his desk, suggesting to him, or herself engaged with her pen. But on this day and evening Isa's will had failed her—she was conquered at last by weakness.

Stuart wrote rapidly, as one who works to finish a nearly completed and an important task. He was writing the closing lines of a work which bore their united names as authors, for Isa had furnished many of its most novel

thoughts, and had indeed with her own hand written for it many chapters.

Isa lay listening to the sound of Stuart's unflagging pen, and watching his shadow where it was cast on the opposite wall. She was not wondering now upon the probable fate or issue of the last work that would embalm thought and imagining of hers. Her ambition to astonish, to dazzle, if she ever was infected with such ambition, was long gone, and there was but for her one thought now—the thought was LOVE. She was recalling all their united life, she was thinking of the years when they were so powerfully affecting each other, long before they came under one roof to live together, without assuming one name. She was contrasting that great and mighty love she bore him, with an affection that had gone before, a love that had disturbed her earlier youth—and, oh, how poor, how paltry, did that seem, compared with this!

Years had passed since she had even heard of Duganne, or of his mother—months had passed since she had even thought of them—but they were recalled to her mind now—she contrasted the life almost over, with that she would have led with him, and her heart and mind proudly decided anew, as if for the first time, that the love, guidance, companionship of

Stuart was her best good, her incomparable good!

And then she thought of the separation that was near at hand—of Stuart, when she should be with him no more—of his loneliness; for she knew that no other woman would ever fill the place that she had filled in his heart or home. She thought of his future on earth, of his triumphs, and his finally-acknowledged greatness. She did not weep, nor shed one tear, as the thought of all this future went through her mind, though he had never seemed so precious, so dear, so glorious, as now, when she was going from him for ever; and thinking of him and that for ever, the shadow of which was hovering over her, she sate up in her bed, and leaned forward, that she might look on him, her GIANT MASTER-THOUGHT, as he sate bending over his desk at work.

She was too weak even for the little exertion required in this movement, and almost instantly her head drooped again to her pillow. She slept and dreamed. Yet it was scarcely a moment more when she called Stuart strongly and clearly to her side.

She had striven to rise again. Stuart looked up; he saw her gazing on him, and for an instant his heart failed him, for he interpreted the meaning of her look. Laying aside his pen, he rapidly



crossed the room, clasped her to his breast, and kissed her.

The movement and the emotion thus betrayed were unwonted on his part. He looked at her steadily, as if he would read all her thoughts, but he failed to read all. She smiled so brightly and tenderly upon him, he counted yet on weeks of life for her, and, relieved from the fear that tortured him almost to madness while he held her in his arms, he kissed her once more, and, without having uttered a word, was turning to go and resume his task, when she again repeated his name: "Stuart!" She spoke this time more faintly, less steadily, than when she called him to her side; and now grief almost unmanned him, as fear had done before. But, in her anxiety to speak, she did not observe his emotion.

"Stuart," said she, "wait while I tell you. I slept just now, and I had the strangest dream. I had one like it, long ago. It is so singular; let me tell it you." He would not deny her, though he would gladly have done so. His presentiment was of evil, for she spoke as one in fear and bewilderment. "I was out sailing on the ocean, over beautiful clear water—as clear as Ontario was, Alanthus, that day when we went to Niagara. But there came up a sudden storm. Oh, I never dreamed before of such mountains of

waves as broke over us and around us! I was afraid!—And then, when I looked about, and ran through the ship, seeking for you, Stuart, I could not find you. I asked every one for you, but none could tell me where you were. Dear soul! I grew so terrified, and then I heard a great cry, and some one said, 'There! the iceberg is just upon us!' There was a crash; and such an awful cry of fright went up from the ship! I was floating away, and I did not care if I was lost, Stuart, since I had lost you. I made no effort to save myself. But at last I heard your voice. You stood up high on the summit of the iceberg, and I was drawn up just by your glance, till I stood beside you, on that flashing, glorious mountain! I was saved, and so happy, Stuart, when I stood there! I would sail through a rougher sea than that, my beloved, and endure a greater fright, to know again such unutterable bliss as I felt while rising from those horrible waters to a place beside you, drawn up, my angel, by the glorious light of your eyes!... But," she said, hesitatingly, and in a whisper, "I do not think that I *could* wake again, if I dreamed, and heard that cry of the lost passengers! Oh, it was so horrible! It frightens me yet, though it was but a dream!"

"What was the cry—despairing?" he asked,

for he knew by the look she fixed upon him that she was only waiting for the question.

"It was despair, fear, grief, and then, I thought at last, hope. It was the cry of 'God!' Stuart."

"The very call natural for a crowd to make. *You* did not make that cry?"

"I was thinking but of you."

"The passengers were lost?"

"All but I. Even the ship went down, and there was a mighty calm."

"And you ascended from the waters to the throne beside me?"

"Yes, I was saved by you."

"Isa," he said, "how marvellous a mystery is this life! Oh, that you might abide here yet longer! That we might together solve this wondrous problem! You and I have gone far; and it seems to me, that if we made but *one* other step of progress, our hands would rest upon the key, which, turned in its lock, would unveil to our eyes every mystery of nature. Remain with me! Go on with me! we have only begun to accomplish!"

He was endeavoring to perform a miracle by his own energy of will, communicated to gesture, voice, and glance—to arouse her, and restore her to health! And for an instant she did seem fired with new life; but it was only for an in-

stant that they were unconscious of the madness of his words. She struggled to arise, but fell back in the endeavor. Looking up into his face, she smiled, and said: "Not yet; but together we *will* soon unveil the mystery! Stuart, do you believe that man will yet discover how to master death?"

"I have no doubt of it, Isa. This it is which makes the thought of parting with you terrible—this shocking waste of life! oh, to the future generations with whom death shall no longer be a necessity, but merely a choice, what madmen, what blind idiots, we shall seem."

"Stuart . . ."

"Well, Isa."

"Would death with you be a choice, if you became his master?"

"Yes," he answered her in deep emotion. "The world will have lost all its charm to me, Isa, when you go from it."

"But you will be content to labor still for the advancement of the people? You will not let your soul stay in its grand progress! You will not suffer your voice to fail, Stuart, you will not?"

"Not till I am lying here, in this room, upon this bed where you lie, my head upon this pillow that supports your head—then my voice

may fail, my hand will falter, but my work will be all accomplished."

"Who will watch beside you then, as you watch over me?—who"—As she spoke, a light tap at the door was made. Stuart was so absorbed by her words that he did not hear it; but Isa caught the sound, and, thinking it was the physician or the servant, said, "Come in."

To their surprise a stranger entered; he was, however, no stranger to Isa, the dying woman: ay, though it was long since she had looked upon the figure that advanced into the room, muffled as it was against the cold, she knew Weare Duganne, and a faint cry of surprise broke from her. He went up to her without ceremony, and said:—

"I heard you were ill, Isa. Forgive my coming here, if my presence pains you: I was compelled to come."

"You heard I was dying," she said, gazing on his care-worn and haggard face, not with the anxiety of one who longed to hear her conviction refuted, but with the steadfast, tender gaze of one who felt that she was looking on a long-absent and dear friend for the last time; then she added quietly:—

"It is strange that you should meet for the first time here to-night. He heard I was dying,

and came! I hardly deserved as much from him. This is Weare Duganne, Alanthus Stuart."

The men bowed, and looked gravely on each other for an instant; then their attention was again drawn to Isa.

"Do you wish to have him here?" whispered Stuart, as he bent over her and arranged her pillows.

"Yes, if you are willing," she answered faintly.

A silence of many minutes ensued. Duganne stood at the foot of the bed: he declined to sit when Stuart placed a chair for him. Finally he said:—

"Am I intruding here? Is the friendship and interest evidenced in my coming as soon as I heard of your—her—Isa's sickness, disagreeable to you, sir?"

"No, sir," Stuart briefly replied.

"No, Weare, I am sure it is not," Isa said kindly. "I am very glad to see you. Tell me of your mother, Weare."

"I came to bring you her blessing, Isa." He laid his hand upon her head and blessed her; and Isa silently took the hand in hers and pressed her lips upon it.

"She has gone before me, then," she said at length. "How went she, Weare?"

"In peace, and hope, and gladness."

"And she sent me her blessing."

"With her dying breath."

"Your life has been a gospel to me, Weare Dugganne. You have never brought me any but 'glad tidings of great joy.'"

She overlooked, she had forgotten, all that had gone between them: she remembered only the present, and that far past when he had besought for her a home in his own mother's house. —"And you," she added, "you *are* happy, Weare?"

He hesitated — "Yes!" he said in a clear, firm tone.

"You are noble and worthy! Stuart, take this man to your heart as a brother. He is worthy."

Stuart took the hand Dugganne extended to him, with solemn cordiality.

There was a silence, and the two men saw that rapid changes were passing in Isa: they saw it with emotion — what varied emotion! Her face grew very pale, and her body was in a constant shiver: yet she was not trembling with fear.

Stuart looked at Dugganne, and his glance had a world of meaning in it. He sat down on the bedside, and, taking Isa's hands in his, he pressed them fervently. She looked up into his face as

if she understood his movement — as though his soul had asked her soul a question; and she said: —

"No, Stuart, I do not fear to die."

Yet to Dugganne she looked not so much like Isa, the fearless, dauntless woman he had known, as the confiding child whose teacher was beside her, and who had ceased to believe all save what that teacher told her.

"For the last time — — do you anticipate annihilation, Isa?"

He said it so tenderly that Weare could scarcely believe the words issued from him. He leaned forward, and looked with scrutiny on Stuart's countenance — and Stuart's face was not averted, but Dugganne was baffled in his attempt to read if this strange man were making of that death-hour a time for triumph over him. If Stuart were seeking to assure himself, or Isa, or to prove before him that the woman's faith was enough to die by, Dugganne could not tell.

"No," said Isa, in reply, "THERE IS NO ANNIHILATION. I have never for a moment imagined that there is. I am going within the veil — you will follow me. I shall wait just beyond the point on which your eyes are fixed now. I will not go further until you join me, Alanthus."

"Stuart! Stuart!" exclaimed Duganne, in a suppressed tone, so low that Isa could not hear, "why will you not speak to her now the name of God? Are you making a victim of her? Do you truly love her? Save her, then!"

"Peace!" said Alanthus, with calm authority, but his face worked as in convulsion. Perchance God's spirit was proclaiming to him then an awful truth, and making for him there a dreadful revelation. But his human pride supported him—that was not the place, then was not the hour, for *him* to quail.

Evidently there was something in Duganne's words which affected him more than he would acknowledge. Perhaps, thought Duganne, it is pride struggling with his conviction of truth, and they may yet be saved. But he knew, as he thought this—that it was a vain, wild hope.

"Isa," said Stuart, "I will meet you *THERE*. We shall never be separated after that re-union. Perish the dream that death is anything but change! Long ago, I told you that I had my guardian-angel! She is being now withdrawn from the sight of these eyes, but to my inward vision she stands revealed for ever! You will not even for a second be conscious of separation, Isa; nor shall I. When others might, because

of their spirits' apathy, be conscious of loss, we shall be aware of immeasurable gain! I shall know of you as near—you will constantly behold your soul's husband and our child. You will be near me for ever and for ever. While I remain on earth, to guide and guard me, since our spirits are proved so inevitably *ONE*. We have never been so entire, complete an existent, as we yet shall be. Perfect, eternal, beautiful, shall our union be, my beloved, my beloved! In the day-time and the night, in bitterest need, in loneliness, in desertion, in danger, wherever I go, whatever I do, you will be with me! I am above the world!" His voice grew fainter, and lower; he bent over her more closely, and whispered in her ear while her eyes and her smile were upon him, until the beating of her heart was imperceptible, and he believed she breathed no longer. For a moment after he thought that she was dead his head bent upon her breast, but not one sigh escaped him—not one tear fell.

Suddenly she moved again; she looked upon Duganne—her lips parted, and she cried out, "God!"

There was another apparent departure of the spirit, and another re-awakening—"STUART, LET US GO," she said softly, and her last look was a smile on him.

320 IS THE UNION COMPLETE AND ETERNAL?

"Dugganne," Stuart said, at length, to the pale, motionless man beside him; "Dugganne, how beautiful is that change which we call death! I have lost her daily presence of the body—oh, how I have gained thus in nearness of soul! She is dwelling in me now! Our union is complete and eternal!"

He spoke as though forgetful of the thoughts and emotions which his heart-broken listener had so plainly revealed since he came there. And Dugganne passionately exclaimed in answer:—

"May God, whom you have denied, pardon you, Stuart, for your cruelty and blasphemy! You have ruined an immortal soul!"

His voice proclaimed no anger, but it trembled with the passion of grief; and when he had finished speaking he bent hastily over the lifeless body—he did as she had done, in days long gone, to him—repeatedly pressed his lips to her forehead, and before Stuart could speak again, DUGGANNE HAD DEPARTED FROM ISA LEE'S PRESENCE FOR EVER.

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