

# WHAT WILL THE WORLD SAY?

A NOVEL OF EVERY-DAY LIFE.

AND

## ONLY A WOMAN.

BY

OJOS MORENOS.

*Clay*

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TO  
CAPTAIN DOUGLAS OTTINGHER,  
WHO COMMANDED THE U. S. REVENUE CUTTER "FROLIC," ON  
THE PACIFIC COAST, TWENTY YEARS  
LANG SYNE,

*This Little Volume*  
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

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WHAT WILL THE WORLD SAY?

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### CHAPTER I.

THE mid-afternoon sun was casting its rays aslant through a large room—evidently a library; for there were books—big books, little books, books old, books new, books of all sizes, sorts, and conditions; and nothing but books, barring a table and some chairs.

Two of these chairs were drawn near together, and occupied by an elderly gentleman and a very youthful lady. The two are poring over a book—held between them.

Draw near, reader, and see what book it is; and do not be frightened at the Greek characters; for it is a volume in that language that is engrossing them both, as conjointly they construe the difficult words, stopping, however, for an occasional controversy over an intricate passage. One of these arguments grew warm, and hotly contested on both sides; but was abruptly terminated by the young lady, who, taking forcible possession of the volume, closing it with a snap, said, "Not another word, papa; but let's go out for a nice walk."

Papa looks lovingly at the young face, but is not in-

clined for a walk. "*Pardon, ma fille,*" he answers, with a smile. "I put in 'Bob' as a substitute."

Away dances, rather than walks, *ma fille*. Opening wide the door, she stands in the hall, calling, in loud, clear tones, "Bob! Bob!" Little dark curls cluster all over the head, which even the high-heeled boots fail to elevate to a greater height than five feet. One foot doing temporary duty for both leaves one at liberty to beat a reveille.

That was me; and here comes "Bob"—let me introduce him. Bob walks on four feet, and is not handsome; his ears and tail have been curtailed of their fair proportions, and his coat is neither shaggy nor sleek, and is of a color evidently ruined at an early period of his existence, and under the influence of numerous misfortunes has received permanent dilapidations; and Bob is not amiable,—reared, as he was, in the school of adversity, his temper has been soured; and I blush to acknowledge that his greatest happiness consists in worrying cats and small boys, unlearned in the art of self-defense. Bob was a purchase of mine; he cost me the sum of five shillings, and a true version of the matter is this.

One day, when I was out taking a walk and had gone farther from home than usual, my ears were assailed in a horrible manner, blows, howls, and curses making an unearthly din. Rushing to the scene of conflict, I beheld a dog tied by the neck, and a man striking him heavily with a large stick. Instantly I made offer of purchase, which was promptly acceded to, the man saying he was "glad to be rid of the darn' brute;" but he demanded the surrender of all

my pocket-money. But that was nothing, I didn't care for it at all; I was now the triumphant possessor of "Bob," as I christened him on the spot, and in immense delight I conducted him home. But candor compels me to acknowledge that his appearance was not hailed with joyful welcome; on the contrary, I must confess that, unbacked by my powerful patronage, he would have suffered ignominious expulsion, and only as my personal property was he allowed to remain. I flattered myself that in time he would endear himself to other members of the household; but it was not in his nature to pursue a conciliatory line of conduct, and frequent were the differences which arose between him and Peggy, our servant of all work, but who was, as my story will go to show, a power of no mean importance.

So hostile was the feeling that actuated both, one toward another, that a mutual look-out was maintained for the work of annoyance.

It was a strong point with Peggy to leave uncovered a pan of milk, and while Bob, with inserted muzzle, was drinking deeply of the liquid, for the time oblivious of having an enemy in the world, to slip up and cudgel him with the frying-pan; and Bob, on his part, had a line of aggression: whenever his watchful eye detected the above female with a bowl of butter in one hand, and a pot of dripping in the other, then was his time to make hostile demonstrations on her shins, and loud cries of anguish often brought up the household to her assistance.

At the first scream of distress, snatching up a bottle of camphorated spirits, I would hurry to Peggy's rescue;

but that lotion was always rejected with an acrimony that led me to the belief that I was considered as a party in complicity with the offense.

Bob and I started for our walk. It was my intention to proceed to the little hamlet, about a mile distant, and call at the post, where we went and got letters for papa. So far very well; but on the return, getting out on the open plain adjacent the village, we came upon a group of boys who, with boisterous mirth, were engaged in the pastime of torturing a kitten, after the diabolical manner peculiar to boys. Without an instant's hesitation, I was in the midst, cuffing right and left with a vigor that induced prompt flight, and left me in full possession of the field. With a mew of relief, the kitten bounded towards me. I picked up the frightened little thing, and was stroking it, trying to make it comprehend that it had found a friend, when my attention was drawn to the fact that a carriage had stopped, to give the young gentleman lolling in it an opportunity of witnessing the affray, which he had enjoyed, judging from the undisguised expression of amusement still on his face.

I straightened up, making myself as tall as I could, and gave him a glance of dignified displeasure, intending to wither him for the impertinence of looking on; but he was evidently of a turn not to be withered, for he was still laughing, as he leaned out of the window, saying,—

"I was coming to your help, but your spirit and address scattered the enemy before I could get my battery in position."

If a look could have killed anybody, he would have

dropped dead that minute, as I scowled at him, walking off, not saying a word. "Daughter of the Hon. Roger Lenox," I heard somebody answer to the inquiry who I was.

The evening was passing, as papa and I sat together. I had gotten a new idea, and was thinking.

"Papa, are we rich?"

A cloud gathered over the kindly face, as he asked, rather gravely,—

"Does my little Pussy want to be rich?"

Instinctively I felt that it was not the answer wanted, but I could not help saying,—

"If we were rich, could we not live in a large, grand house, have no end of servants, and," I added after a pause, "a handsome carriage?"

"Yes, to be sure; but go to bed, Susette," and with the tender good-night kiss he always had for his motherless girl, I was motioned to the chamber next to his own, where I had always slept. I obeyed at once. Very often I made some demur, but not to-night; that is, I obeyed about going to my room, but not to bed, for, throwing up the sash, I leaned out to catch the pleasant breeze, and for the first time in my life fell into a reverie.

I was not an only child. Grace was my half-sister, and was older by eight years than I was; but she was generally with her own mother's relations, only coming down from London for a short visit once a year. She had a fortune of her own, from her mother. I knew that; and, furthermore, I knew that, almost in his old age, my father had married my mother, and that the young wife had only lived long enough to leave a helpless babe. Gathering the little one to his

heart, he held it there. I had heard how, many many times, he had walked the floor the live-long night, soothing the fretful child with tenderness passing that of woman. From the nurse he became the play-fellow, then the tutor. Learning of the highest order he instilled into the young mind; his patience and love making easy the usually laborious hill of science.

Years have passed; but oh, my father, how fervently my inmost soul rises up to bless you! How treasured up are the fond tones of the lips that never had utterance for one harsh word! The bright childhood your loving care made has always been a very treasure-trove; in sorrows and joys its benign influence has equally been felt.

We lived in an old house, and Peggy comprised our staff of servants. Rarely had we visitors; and I never had made a visit in my life. At intervals papa dined out, with the Earl of Huntington, with whom a strong friendship had long existed, and whose seat was only a few miles distant, the magnificence of which I had formed ideas of, derived from the Arabian Nights.

But we were not rich. That was the way I worded it, and I think that this fact was at the time only startling from its newness. Certainly my ideas on the subject were very indefinite. The old house and lack of a train of servants was the only tangible part I could fix on; and the absence of a carriage,—yes, that was something else. I mused on these matters until I heard our old-time hall clock strike a late hour of the night. Slowly I began to undress, when, with compunctious visitings, came the recollection of the sad look I had called up on papa's face.

I will not go to bed, I thought, without seeing him. I'll just slip in and take a look as he lies sleeping. Without noise I opened his door; and not in his bed, but beside it on his knees, was my father; that he was praying for his youngest and best-loved daughter I had no doubt. Gently I reclosed the door without entering, feeling that it was not lawful to look on when man was holding private converse with his Maker. But the idea haunted me, that our not being rich was in some way connected with the protracted petition. I wonder if I could not do something to make it easier for papa, was the mental query propounded; and, with the promptitude attending my every thought and action, To be sure I can, was concluded, and forthwith I began calling to mind the number of exalted personages I had read about, who had actually labored with their own hands, until my imagination was all on fire with the theme, and I feared that I would not be able to wait until morning, so great was my impatience to begin. Peggy shall never wait on me any more, of that I am determined, I said, shaking my head, and almost shaking it off in the energy of the negative. To-morrow I shall get up at peep of day. I was a sleepy-head, and knew this would be a severe test; but difficulties were only a spur to go-aheadative natures like mine. There is no use in sleeping at all, I decided; it's a waste of time; I'll wake the family up now: but at the door I paused. Thoughts of Peggy created doubts about the expediency of the innovation I was going to inaugurate. Perhaps it may be better to wait until morning; it is better, I pronounced, thinking a second time of the powerful domestic now slumbering.

## CHAPTER II.

I FELT sick with chagrin, upon awaking, to see that the sun was shining brilliantly; but I will have just to be the busier, I said, making a toilet with wonderful rapidity, and with a stupendous air of business I made direct for the kitchen.

Speechless was the amazement of Peggy as I unclosed the range, and began piling in the fuel, under the impression that I was helping about the breakfast.

"Stop, Miss Susette!" she cried, recovering speech in the emergency: "you'll burn the rolls to cinders."

"Very well," said I, not at all set back in my useful efforts. "I'll just stir this a little," diving a rolling-pin into a gently simmering pan.

"Don't, Miss Susette: you'll mash the taters!" was exclaimed in a voice of agony.

"Very true," I replied, with indestructible good humor. "But I'll fix these," poking vigorously into another pan.

"Good gracious me!" fairly screamed Peggy, "if she hain't busted every aig!" And overcome by her feelings she sobbed aloud.

"Never mind, Peggy," said I, soothingly, "it's no matter about the eggs, they'll do for Bob."

"Bob!" she gasped, almost choking in the rapid

transition from grief to rage. Backing herself against the wall, as if claiming support from its immovability, "You leave here," she commanded, pointing towards the door. The greatness of her injuries gave her a majestic appearance. She looked to me like an insulted priestess driving out an infidel, who had dared to profane a temple dedicated to the sacred fire; and I told her so. The effect was to make her wrath rise higher and higher, until I was afraid she was going to bite herself, she showed such strong symptoms of hydrophobia.

"Do not be angry, Peggy," I remarked. "I'm sorry if I have done anything wrong. I came in here to help you. You know that we are not rich."

"How!" "What!" "Which!" exclaimed Peggy, all reliability of language deserting her, in her bewilderment, her eyes looking like a couple of pewter saucers.

My communication was repeated in a hurt tone. I was mortified at not receiving the moral countenance that I was conscious of deserving, in my praiseworthy efforts, and I was getting convinced that the great people who had made such successful struggles in life did not have Peggies to encounter.

"The Lord love and save us," was the piously worded expression she saw fit to use. Our want of wealth was no new theory with her. "But who has been putting that into your head?" she sharply demanded of me.

"It's immaterial," I answered, stiffly, imitating my sister Grace in point of manner as near as I could.

"But I would not have thought, Peggy, that you would

have been so cross with me, and I was wanting to help you too."

"Don't huff up so, Miss Susette," says Peggy, unbending at once. "I didn't have no notion what you was after; and to tell you the gospel truth—don't go to gettin' mad agin—but it's my belief, you hain't got no turn about cooking, and you had better try on some other hook. I allus was afeared that your par would spile you with learnin' all that truck that nobody decent can make heads or tails of. Miss Lenox (Grace was called Miss Lenox) don't know no Greek, and I don't know no Greek," she asserted triumphantly; "therefore it stands to reason that you never will be good for much:" with an impulse of pity, at the forlorn prospect ahead of me, she added briskly, as if pleased with the happy thought, "But I'll tell you, Miss Susette, what you can do: you can knock down that mortal big mud-dobber's nest I spied on a yisterday, in the roofin' of the front porch. Not now, child, wait until you git your breakfast," she added graciously, flourishing aloft her dish-rag.

With a sigh, I withdrew from the culinary department. My beginning in the useful line was not brilliant; but I cheered up, upon reflecting over the task Peggy had pointed out to me. Peter the Great had something to do with wood when he was a ship-carpenter, and used to sit on boxes and write his ukases—was the consoling analogy. "I rather think," I said, calling to mind some of that czar's resolute qualities, "that I would like to have been Peter the Great myself,—if his disposition was none of the sweetest, and if he was addicted to strong drinks." It also struck me that there was some

affinity in his character with Peggy's, about the temper; and I started to mention it to her, but returned, upon the second thought.

Some hours subsequently, armed with a long-handled broom, furious was the onslaught made upon the "mud-dobber's nest." I punched and shoved, but the thing was obstinate and would not come down; in fact, my height, or rather want of it, was a disadvantage in the attack. Making a hasty reconnoissance for an adjunct, in the way of something to stand on, and failing in this, I called up science to my aid. I aimed the broom skillfully, making a frantic leap. Unfortunately, the leap was not calculated with sufficient nicety. There was too much force employed, and the consequent rebound had the effect to precipitate me backwards, my head striking sharply against an abutment. "Ouwutch," I howled, as soon as I could get breath, being sensitive to pain. An unsympathizing laugh caused me quickly to look up, only to behold that impertinent stranger, who had looked from his carriage window upon my rescue of poor pussy. In confusion, I sprang up, striking out wildly with the broom; and as ill-luck would have it, hitting the patrician full in the face, the straws uncomfortably penetrating his Grecian nostrils.

I was really sorry for what I had done; but as he stood, blinking, and rubbing the flushed nose, my risibles got the better of me. Sitting down in the doorway, I laughed immoderately. The young gentleman joined in my mirth, but in a less degree, saying, "I am on a peaceful errand, young lady, and I protest against being maltreated."

Somebody has said that circumstances make men;

but what I mean to say is, possibly I might have found a way of extrication from a scene novel in good society, but the trouble was spared me, by the appearance of papa, and the stranger introducing himself as Gerald Fitzhue, nephew to the Earl of Huntington. He had been abroad, consequently was personally unknown to papa. He was the bearer of messages, and an invitation for dinner to Mr. Lenox and daughters. I pricked up my ears, but he said daughters, that meant me too. I admired his style of address towards papa very much, and was going to compliment him upon it, but was interrupted by papa saying, "This is my daughter, Susette."

Mr. Fitzhue "believed that we were already acquainted."

"Ah!" said papa, leading the way in. Grace was sent for. I knew by heart every chair in the room, and seated myself in the tallest one, with a view of looking stately. I sat there in silence, unless a little hysterical giggle, now and then, counted,—cooling my heels, which wouldn't begin to reach the floor; I judging it most imposing to sit back to back with the chair.

Pretty soon my sister Grace came in, high-bred and graceful as possible, superbly beautiful! Indeed, it would be difficult to find a handsomer woman. Her more than common tall form was faultless in its outline, and not more deeply blue was the mid-day heaven than her glorious orbs; and the pink and white of the most delicate sea-shell was not lovelier than her complexion; and her hair did not break out into a million of little short fussy rings and curls like mine, but shaped itself into long seemingly ringlets. And then she

was amiability itself. This world which has been the theatre of many turbulent times and scenes had nothing in it that could disturb the even tenor of her way. I think that even in the embrace of a grizzly her perfect breeding would have stood firm.

Previous to my sister's entrance, the conversation was entirely between my father and Mr. Fitzhue, and I might have thought my presence overlooked by that latter person but for a rueful glance now and then, as he rubbed his nose to comfort that still tingling feature, which had assumed quite a rosy appearance.

Grace was scarcely introduced ere the dialogue was put to instant flight. She assumed the reins of conversation with an ease and perspicuity I admired immensely, and I felt glad that I was Grace's sister.

The morning call was protracted, too long I thought: I found myself getting tired of it, and longed to hear the sound of my own voice. I had heard that people sometimes forgot how to talk from too long a silence, and when the young gentleman got up to leave I felt grateful to him, and would certainly have told him so, but I could get no opportunity to slip in a word. I think my intention was appreciated however, from the pleasant smile that rested on me when he bowed his adieu. My parting salutation was given with an alacrity that received a reproof from papa.

The invitation was accepted, the earl's carriage was to come to fetch us. My spirits, always buoyant, became mountain high, and I knocked over tables and upset chairs, until mildly desired by papa to affect some regard for these time-worn articles; plunging out of doors, careering up and down, around and

around, until I brought up plump against Peggy, nearly knocking her down, for which I narrowly escaped a shaking. My excited brain was reduced to a dead calm at the sudden flashings of the momentous question of a toilette. The gingham I arrayed myself in on Sundays, smooth and stiff fresh from Peggy's conscientious laundry, did look well but not distinguished; and I desired to look that very way when I should again be seen by the gentleman who had beheld me in two situations, where I felt that I had not appeared at my best. I was afraid that he might not consider me very dignified, and I was not without misgivings as to my ability to support a character answering to that description, without the adventitious aid of dress. I pondered long,—had struggles,—was tempted,—and fell. I made up my mind to purloin a green silk dress that I had seen Grace wear, and which had struck me as magnificent. I doubted if the Queen of England had as fine a one. Of course I felt ashamed of myself; I felt very much ashamed indeed. The inward monitor whispered, Don't do it, but there was a louder whisper, Yes do, do it. The evil suggestion carried the day; it was not entirely right, but then great emergencies justify, not to say demand, irregular measures. Some of the best sovereigns that ever lived in the world have levied forced loans. I repeated this to myself, and did get some comfort from the precedent of so exalted a source; but the seriousness of the undertaking saddened me, and with slow footsteps I turned toward the house, meeting Grace, who asked me in passing if she could be of any service to me about my dress. "No," I replied in embarrassment, hurrying on. I

was afraid to confide in her, almost sure that she would refuse the dazzling dress my soul was so fixed upon. And the ease with which I got it into my possession led me to thinking that I must have a natural aptitude for thieving. I did not know whether I ought to feel proud or not.

### CHAPTER III.

THE important day arrived. I was up at cock-crow, being entirely unable to sleep. Indeed, between anticipations of the grand *entrée* I was going to make into the fashionable world, and the prickings of a guilty conscience, I had become a stranger to the calm refreshing slumber of yore. My appetite had also become impaired, and had the delay been greater, I would undoubtedly have grown thin under the harassing circumstances. I did not look well as it was; papa noticed it at breakfast, and noticed that I kept on looking worse as the time drew near to begin with preparations. I looked so very badly that papa, in concern, proposed that I should "remain at home, take a bowl of gruel, and go to bed."

"Yes, and stick her feet into a bucket of hot water fust," recommended Peggy, putting her head in at the door. "Don't be oneasy, Mr. Lenox, for if she don't git better, then I'll jist fix her up a mustard-plaster."

I did not take these well-meant anxieties kindly, but "wished everybody would let me alone. I was not sick, there was nothing the matter with me."

"Well, pussy," says papa, "if you are sure you are well enough, run up and dress. Let me see your tongue first, child."

"I won't do it!" I cried, rushing out of the room.

I spent a long time before the glass, trying, with brush and soap-suds, to reduce my refractory locks to order. But the more I tried the more I couldn't. I could have wept over the failure, but for knowing that if I did my eyes would infallibly get swelled and the tip of my nose red,—perhaps the whole of it,—and I am looking about as badly as anybody can look without that, I murmured, gulping back the tears; but a glance at the green gown, that now lay spread upon the bed,—the door locked,—re-assured me. I shall look splendid anyhow, was my thought, respectfully taking the dress, gently insinuating my head through it, I stood too much in awe of all that finery to use it roughly. I hooked up the back, and stood before the mirror to gaze at myself; the effect was hardly as grand as I had imagined it would have been. My sister being so much larger than I was, the waist hung like a bag, and I do believe it would have slipped off of me but for a prudently inserted pin at the neck to make it fast. But then the train was magnificent, there was no denying that.

I heard the rolling of wheels, and peeped out of the window; there it was, the carriage, footmen, and all. I felt very anxious to be in it, and might have jumped down through the window but for the restraining influence of my finery. "Splendor has its duties and penalties," I remarked, stepping back out of view of the temptation.

"Susette, love!" called papa.

"Come down here this minute, Miss Susette," screeched Peggy.

I was a little behind the others. I was in no hurry

for my ill-gotten robes to burst upon the astonished eyes of Grace. Her anger would be righteous I knew, and I was prepared to receive it; but I wanted to put it out of her power to demand instantaneous restitution of her property. But I might have spared myself this uneasiness; an almost imperceptible smile of amusement for an instant flitted over her fair face, that was all. As for papa, I might as well have had on Peggy's striped cotton short jacket and red flannel petticoat. The ride was not one of unalloyed happiness; a feeling of guilt made me avoid Grace's eye. I felt mean and miserable. The green gown was making me sick. I would have liked to have had it off, even if I had to have worn the blue gingham dress that had such a great triangular tear in it. But misdeeds are not always easy of remedy; there was no help for mine now, for we were driving up the grand avenue, and stopping at the entrance of that magnificent house with its colonnade of tall pillars. The sight struck me aghast. I threw one little look at Grace. There she sat as composed as possible, radiant in silks and laces. And papa was bowing perfectly at his ease to Gerald Fitzhugh standing at the door to receive us. It must be because I am such a mean little sneak that I feel so put out, was my mournful reflection, but making a grand rally of my faculties I cheerfully bid the young man "good-night."

"Miss Susette," he answered, gravely, "up to this moment I would have, if called upon, made a solemn oath that it was not night; but if you say so, let it be night: but don't send me to bed," he added, laughing. The hot blood rushed to my face. Grace and

papa had already mounted the steps. I made a spring to join them, grabbing eagerly after papa's disengaged arm, but was stopped by Mr. Gerald. "Allow me the honor of presenting you to my uncle and Lady Margaret," he said, placing my hand on his arm with an air of quiet protection. I was greatly exasperated, and wanted to strike him, but my resentment did not live to a very old age. One sight of the elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen in the drawing-room, the ladies particularly, drove me into a state of mortal terror. I grasped the arm of my escort so convulsively, that involuntarily he gave a little grunt. My knees were knocking together, a lurid light obscured my vision, and standing before the earl and lady, a mist seemed to rise up on purpose to hide them; and the sound of "Miss Susette Lenox" went off like a pistol-shot at my ear, and made an echo that reverberated all over the room, died away, and returned to repeat the echo, driving me almost hopelessly insane. An order for instant execution would have been a relief.

I did get into a chair, I recollected this circumstance afterwards, and was thankful that I did not stand on my head, for I was entirely bereft of reason. It might have been an hour afterwards,—or maybe three, I can't pretend to any accuracy concerning the time,—I felt myself slowly recovering, and fondly hoped it was the dawn of some lucid moments, when the announcement of dinner reduced me again to a state of lunacy. And, with the cunning sometimes possessed by those unfortunates, I meditated crawling under one of the sofas; but before I could effect it Mr. Fitzhugh was in front of me, saying his uncle had "sent him to take me

to dinner." I did not want any dinner. I knew that I should never want to eat again as long as I lived. But death by starvation was not at present a means of escape.

Sighing heavily, I took his arm, and we followed on in the tail-end of the others. I had a dim consciousness that papa and Grace ought to be somewhere, but I had lost sight of them, forever I feared. I was too dispirited to take a hopeful view of any subject.

I sat down to the table, quaking in my shoes, but I had never ceased to do that since the instant of my arrival at the house. With terrible promptness I overturned a goblet; the ice-water it contained took a lateral direction, and trickled a lovely rivulet into the coat-sleeve of my table-companion; this was closely followed by a plate of scalding soup, hurled, an avalanche, into his lap. My favors were coming too thick and fast. Mr. Fitzhue did not enjoy them, that is, he thought enough of a thing was enough; and he said, "Miss Susette, if you throw another thing at me, I'll have the table cleared within your reach."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"I should think you ought to be," he said in reply; "the malignancy of your hostility to me is past belief."

"I am not an idiot," I went on to say in mortification, "although I know that I have been conducting myself like one; but the truth is, this dress I've got on belongs to Grace, and I took it without asking her,—stole it," I said, a burning blush crimsoning my cheek; "and I might have known no good would come of it."

"It certainly does seem to be," he remarked, sup-

pressing a smile, "an instance going to show the beautiful workings of retributive justice."

"Yes," I answered, "and I shall have no peace until I explain to Grace, and get her forgiveness."

"Do you ask forgiveness for all of your faults?" he inquired.

"Indubitably," was the prompt answer.

"Then when may I expect the *amende honorable*, that you have been owing me for some days?"

I looked up in surprise. I didn't recollect taking any of his dresses.

"For the assault," he went on to say, "that you did willfully, maliciously, and viciously—and unprovoked, make upon me, with an instrument I am told is called a broom."

Ordinarily I should have laughed, but I was too depressed now, in the matter of Grace's dress, to feel funny. So in an embarrassed sort of way I announced myself *hors de combat*, and asked quarter.

"Is the surrender unconditional?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered, wishing that he wouldn't talk so much; but he did not seem to have any gift about holding his tongue, for he went on saying:

"Then my honor is now concerned in being lenient to a vanquished foe; and to show you how generous I can be, know that I am a registered barrister, duly qualified to appear before the Queen's Bench, to plead for or against, prosecute or defend, in any of the aforesaid majesty's courts, and if sister Grace is implacable about the dress, and proceeds with her vengeance to the rigors of the law, you can count on my services; I shall feel myself retained to appear in your behalf."

"You are very good," I answered, stiffly.

"Of course I am," he went on saying, perfectly unabashed; so much so, that I doubted if he was aware of my reproof, and regretted that I was not sufficiently at myself to compose a very severe remark, in Queen Elizabeth's style. The best I could do, however, was to bend on him a portentous frown, black as midnight I hoped. I think it had some effect, for I saw him bite his lips, and the muscles around his mouth twitching; but he continued to say:

"Is your understanding clear, young lady, as to your situation, your position in the eye of the law? Larceny can be proven against you, grand larceny I think. Not one of these noble witnesses present, your father excepted, would hesitate to testify upon the most superficial glance, that—dress, do you call it?—was never yours in the world by honest practices. Are you not completely cut down, or does your confidence in me rise superior to all other considerations?"

"I do not doubt in the least," I answered, rather wearily, "that you are very witty, and that maybe it is all a good joke; but I never did what I considered a mean thing before, and I cannot very easily get over it."

A different kind of look came into his eyes, as he continued looking straight at me, and if he had been papa I would have thought he was going to kiss me; but he kept on about the dress:

"Larceny is punishable by fine or imprisonment, sometimes both, or transportation; flogging is abolished."

I laughed, I couldn't help it, quite gayly. It seemed to take everybody by surprise. Papa looked down at

me from his place at the table, and nodded approvingly. Even the earl's august gaze was directed towards me.

"That's right, Gerald," he called out. "I am glad that you are so entertaining. But you are leaving the young lady to starve," looking at my untouched plate.

"I am not caring for dinner," I said, and I gratefully reflected afterwards that I had not added, that I never did.

"I expect," said Grace in a sweet voice, "that sis fortified herself with a slice of bread and butter before leaving home."

I had eaten two, but I thought it was unkind of Grace to speak of it, and sat painfully silent, showing strong symptoms of tears, but promptly my self-constituted champion came to the rescue.

"I am fond of bread and butter too," he said, "and often trouble the housekeeper in that way."

I admired that speech, was grateful for it. I thought I could see a likeness in him to Julius Cæsar, and purposed telling him of it on some future occasion, and offering him my friendship for life.

All things earthly are bound to come to an end, so the dinner ended, that is, the ladies rising left the room, leaving the gentlemen to smoke and drink more wine. I thought so, because I saw the butler bringing in fresh bottles. I did not approve of drinking wine. I had once seen a man that was drunk. He was at a distance, but I immediately became a strong convert to the doctrine of temperance, and would like to have been born Father Matthew. I felt reluctant to trust myself with the ladies, and it needed a nod from papa to induce me to follow them.

## CHAPTER IV.

IN a timid, hesitating way, I entered the drawing-room. The ladies were all seated, and every one of them talking in such an animated, enjoying-themselves sort of way, that I at once got scared, and hid myself in the draperies of a window. I sat there feeling very tired and lonely, for a long time it seemed to me; a drowsy sensation crept over me, and I was fast sinking into what I have no doubt would have been a sound refreshing sleep, but for some noise the gentlemen made in leaving the dining-room and walking out upon the piazza,—the tones of an argument rising upon the breeze; and I could scarcely believe my ears, but they were actually discussing the point that papa and I were contending about the evening when I set out walking with Bob. It scarcely took a minute for me to understand that the earl was supporting my view; all the others, Mr. Gerald included, siding with papa. With the haste incidental to deep interest, I passed through the French window, and fearlessly ranged myself under the swaying banner of the earl—an unexpected auxiliary—and fluently bringing to bear so many reasons, demonstrating them by comparison, analogy, and deduction, until papa himself was convinced, and had to abdicate the untenable position, asking, in evident surprise,—

“Why, pussy, with all these good grounds for belief, why did you run away with Bob, leaving me to think that you had fled the field, out of powder?”

“I’ll tell you,” spoke up the ever-ready Gerald, “it was the voice of a sister grimalkin in distress. I was so happy as to witness the rescue, and was charmed with the young lady’s fighting qualities. Did you have on brass knuckles, Miss Susette?”

Mr. Fitzhugh was falling in my esteem, and I did not hesitate to turn my back upon him, as I answered papa that I had been looking up authorities: I had gained the victory; but there was nothing to be proud of in the matter. The gentlemen, foiled in the arbitrary rendering of a Greek word, looked as men will look, suddenly stopped, careering gallantly, by an inconceivably small object.

The earl himself seemed disconcerted at the smallness of his ally. I think he would not have been more surprised, if a tomtit had flown to his assistance; but he faced the situation gracefully, exclaiming:

“Bravo, young lady! We have defeated all these doctors of learning, papa at the head: single-handed I should have failed; but they could not stand your big guns.”

I thought afterwards that this would have been an appropriate time to have delivered a brilliant remark; but seeing so many looking at me, I instantly got frightened, and took refuge with papa. And when the proposition was made for a visit to the Cashmere goats, seeing that it was not expected for me to accompany them, I formed a rapid plan of escape, which was to let them get out of sight, and seize that moment for starting to walk

home; and I announced to myself that no circumstance, or concatenation of circumstances, would in the future entice me from that retreat. I have an idea that Mr. Gerald suspected my intention, and adopted a ruse to prevent it.

"Come," said he, "I will get you some engravings to look at."

I did not go willingly; but I went, feeling it useless to contend with destiny. In a room adjoining where the gay ladies were chatting so pleasantly, he got out a huge portfolio, and placed it on a table so that I could turn the leaves conveniently.

"These views are all very fine," he said, "and it will be entertaining to go over them. Can I do anything more for you?"

"No," I answered, looking after him as he went out.

Faithfully I set to work to amuse myself, but with little or no success. Had the pictures been colored, I should have liked them better; but the dull, dark outlines wearied my eye, and gave to the mind within no pleasurable sensations. I was very tired, and utterly without comfort. I could not call to mind a single person, in ancient or even tolerably modern history, that had been similarly situated. Glancing around wearily, my gaze fell upon an open grand piano. The magnificence of the instrument almost took away my breath. Music, the concord of sweet sounds, was a passion with me; and I had a voice of more than common sweetness, volume and flexibility, which had been carefully trained by my father, who was an accomplished musician. The choicest gems of opera had been my

nursery songs; matchless melody from the old masters had hushed me to sleep. Our piano was old and rickety and squeaky, and could emit but little music. But then I had never seen another, and, in blissful ignorance of anything better, had obtained infinite content, drawn out from its yellow, time-worn keys.

What wonder, then, that this splendid instrument, with its glittering key-board, should almost make me wild, frantic to hear its sound? Furtively I glanced towards the slightly ajar door, where the hum of lively conversation was still going on. I do think that if I had been attacked by a huge tom-cat, done for in the fight, and my unlucky remains dragged into the drawing-room with a triumphant purr from the victor, a question of identification would have arisen, so far was I removed from any of their thoughts. I do not mean to apply this to Grace; she would never have left me so completely to my own devices, but for the opinion that, with a characteristic recklessness of mundane surroundings, I had tied myself into an impossible hard-knot, to the skirts of papa's coat, and was at that moment in the enjoyment of his protection and the possession of his society. But such was not the case. I was there alone, tempted with a terrible longing. I knew that it was not at all proper to play on that piano uninvited; that it was not even commonly modest to do so; but then I was hungry and aching for a touch. I'll put my foot on the soft pedal and play low to myself, nobody will be annoyed, was my reflection, and such was my intention; but at the first burst of glorious melody, slumbering in those little pieces of black and white ivory, I forgot myself. My

soul spread its wings and sailed away to the realms of harmony. Time in its unheeded flight passed by. I was lost in the rise and fall of those wondrous notes, which still live when the fingers which have written them have long since crumbled into dust; the creation of the mighty minds which, ages ago, fled to the bright unknown world, tuning their harps to yet nobler songs for the Maker's praise.

"Mozart never composed anything finer than that," I hear papa say. "Beautiful," says one; "most beautiful," says another; "divine," says somebody else.

I started up in affrighted haste, upsetting the music-stool, stumbling in my, or rather Grace's, long skirt, narrowly escaping a fall, as I sprang towards papa, my face burning with blushes.

"I beg pardon," I stammered; "I did not mean to disturb anybody."

"Young lady," kindly said the earl, coming forward, "you have given us all a treat that we do not often enjoy. Your proficiency in music," he added, with a smile, "is commensurate with your knowledge of Greek."

I had not the faintest idea what reply to make, and looked beseechingly at papa, who said, as he patted the dark head nestling against his shoulder:

"My little girl must be excused for not knowing how to make a suitable reply. She has lived all her life, not knowing anybody but myself and a few of my old friends, who have been dead some two or three thousand years."

"I think," said the earl, "that my wife will in the future endeavor to force an entrée into that respectable

circle of acquaintances, judging from her intense appreciation of Miss Susette's powers. I declare, she is spell-bound yet!"

We all looked towards the lady still leaning over the piano, her pale, sweet face still bearing the impress of the music tones yet lingering in her ear. She slightly started, taking me by the hand in her graceful, winning way, leading me to a seat beside herself, saying,

"I know that we shall be friends, dear."

But the dear was by far too timid and shy to make any progress worth speaking of towards the proposed friendship. Gently she tried to engage me in conversation, and actually succeeded in obtaining from me a few remarks, to wit, I informed her that it was "very cold;" but after some reflection amended the proposition by saying, "yes, it is quite warm;" then I told her that "the weather had been very dry during the last rain."

After I got home, all this flashed upon me with startling distinctness, and I would not have blamed her if she had laughed outright; but she did nothing of the sort. An undeniably kind, sweet interest marked her manner towards me; but I was wretchedly at ease, absolutely in tortures, and could have hugged papa when he proposed returning home.

## CHAPTER V.

EARLY on the following morning I made a careful bundle of the luckless green silk gown, and knocking humbly at Grace's door, awaited permission to enter.

"Sister Grace," I said, depositing the bundle on her dressing-table, "I have come to apologize, and to tell you how much ashamed I feel."

"There is nothing to apologize about," she answered; "it made not the slightest difference to me. I am only sorry that you should worry over it."

"Oh, sister Grace," I burst forth in all the joy of a guilty conscience cleansed by confession and forgiveness, "you are so good." But then I added, gazing at her in honest admiration, "you are so handsome."

She blushed a little under the genuineness of the compliment, and answered,

"Oh, I am well enough; but you, little sis, are beautiful."

I looked at her reproachfully, thinking that she was making sport of me; burst into tears, and rushed headlong to my own room, where I blubbered and cried in great distress, until an idea struck me to look into the glass, that maybe after all I might not be so ugly. Accordingly I did look into the glass, and my worst fears in regard to my appearance were more than real-

ized. My hair had about as much gloss and smoothness as a much-worn door-mat, and my eyes looked for all the world like a couple of chestnuts in a high state of inflammation, and my complexion lavishly diversified with blue and green streaks. I had been crying over a calico apron, not of fast colors. I was convinced there was not such another fright alive, "but it can't be helped," I said, wiping my eyes, "and there is no use in grieving forever about it." The loss of yesterday's dinner was telling on me. I wanted breakfast. That meal was a silent one. Papa was thoughtful; so was Grace; and I was hungry.

In a few days Grace went back to London. Partings are never very cheerful affairs. Papa was always very grave on these occasions of his eldest daughter's departures, and I always made an uproarious hubbub. Our old life, books, music and rambles—sometimes with Bob and sometimes without him—went on.

But it was not long until Earl Huntington's carriage again stood at our door. Mr. Fitzhugh came for papa and me "to pass the day." His "aunt was waiting to hear me sing." Flatly I refused to go. I had lost my taste for society, and meant to cling to the shadow of our own roof-tree until the end of time. I was deaf to all persuasions, and ordered papa to go without me.

"Well, pussy, I suppose I must, if you are so resolute about not going," said papa, going for the purpose of changing his coat.

"Miss Susette," said Gerald, "there is not a soul at home but aunt Margaret and uncle;" and he added artfully, "the piano has just been tuned."

This was enough.

"Yes, I'll go," I said, bounding away, but returned to put the question categorically to him about there being no company. I felt inclined to get a Bible and put him to the test of an oath, or an affirmation, for I was not clear as to the propriety of swearing under any circumstances. The allusion to brass knuckles had impaired my confidence in him, and I had withdrawn the proposition of offering him my friendship.

With a clean gingham on, I was ready. Grace could have intrusted me with her entire wardrobe now with impunity. The ride was as pleasant as the first one was miserable. I chattered like a magpie, in great spirits. Mr. Gerald's behavior was irreproachable. It is a pity he is so young, I thought, feeling that if he was older he would be more suitable company for papa and myself. He was about twenty-five years old.

I think that the earl and Lady Margaret (she was so called by her intimate friends instead of her more formal title of Countess of Huntington) were surprised to find that the awkward, blundering simpleton was only a gay, pleasant child. We dined in a small dining-room. I sat by Lady Margaret, who showed such a tender anxiety about the satisfying my appetite, that I ate rather more than I wanted, in order to oblige her.

After dinner I played and sang, of course sending myself up to the seventh heaven.

Papa and the earl discussed the feasibility of a railway under the British channel. At another time I would have been interested in the international enterprise, and would have given them the benefit of my views on the engineering necessary.

Gerald sat on a sofa by Lady Margaret, with his arm around her, and holding her hands, seeming so altogether fond of her that he again rose in my esteem, in despite of his youth.

"There is no necessity to take the trouble of going back with us," said papa, as he saw Mr. Gerald getting his hat, when we were about starting for home.

Mr. Gerald "did not mind the ride; would just as lief go as not."

"Yes, let him go," said the earl, looking at Lady Margaret, and they both laughed.

Mr. Gerald's face got a little red; but he went. It occurred to me that he must have palpitation of the heart; papa was quite subject to them, and his face always flushed suddenly at every recurrence.

## CHAPTER VI.

PAPA and I were often at the earl's. Lady Margaret had not been strong for a long time, and had now become more and more of an invalid. She had fancied strangely the daughter of her husband's old friend, and was always glad to have me with her. The sweet lady loved music with a passion almost as great as my own; and, reclining on a sofa, would listen for hours and hours as I played for her; and on days when she was too ill to leave her apartment, I would hover over, quick as a bird to anticipate any little want; and then again, when the heavy eyes ached for sleep that would not come to them, I would lay my head on her pillow, and gently stroke cheek, hair, and eyes until her regular breathing would announce the presence of "tired nature's sweet restorer." Waking up from a refreshing sleep, she would look at me with grateful eyes, and say, "My Susette, I wish that Heaven had given you to me for a daughter." I loved her a great deal, and was losing my interest in a great many scientific questions and experiments. I began not to care whether the Dead Sea had any outlet or not, and lost my wish to ascertain the exact controlling influence of the Gulf Stream, and did not even desire to go down to the bed of the ocean in a diving-bell, on a submarine geological discovery. Even the heroes and dames of past ages had lost their weight with me.

She had been married twenty years, and was childless; but Gerald, her husband's nephew, had been adopted by them, and they both loved him so well that there was scarce a regret that there was no son of their own, to inherit the wealth and title which would descend to him. And well he merited the bright smiles of fortune, or rather of kind Providence, who had made him rich in all the essential attributes that "make a man among men."

The earl himself, at this period, was slightly beyond middle age, and was a noble, handsome-looking man. His grave, reserved manners were infinitely attractive to me; and I stood in awe of him, and never spoke to him in the bantering, ordering way that it was my habit to use towards papa and Mr. Gerald.

"Mr. Lenox, there is a letter for you," Gerald said, distributing the mail he had brought from the post.

"It's from Grace," says papa, breaking the seal. Its contents were telling him of her approaching marriage with some duke, with names, titles, orders, and honors of an appalling length, and urging papa to sanction with his presence the wedding of his first daughter.

"Of course you'll go," observed Lady Margaret. "Leave Susette with me."

"Yes," said the earl, "the child will be better with us."

"Yes, yes," answered papa. "The great hot-house of London society is no place for my wild rosebud;" and he added thoughtfully, "perhaps it was not well to have raised her so secluded from the world as she has been, but Heaven is my witness, I meant for the best. The great resemblance to her mother has made me fear

that she inherited delicacy of constitution. This I hoped to overcome, by encouraging an active out-door life; and who would not be reluctant to toss out a rare pearl amid the shoals and quicksands with which the world abounds?"

"Hear, hear," cries Mr. Gerald. "I should not wonder if our little pearl will get some notion of setting up for a diamond, of the very first water too."

"There is no danger of that," observed papa, looking fondly at me. "Susette is not vain!"

"How partial we fathers are," was the reply, "always thinking the best of our offspring, but perhaps we had better not claim too much about the absence of vanity. It is in my power to bring forward damaging testimony on that head; but I'm open for a bribe. Come, Miss Susette, what will you give me to suppress my evidence?"

"*Et tu, Brute!*" I murmured blushing.

"I'm vanquished, Miss Susette; gone into cover: tortures would not force the truth from my lips; an interesting episode of your life is forever lost to the world. But are you not mightily elated at the idea of being sister to a live duchess?"

"I think not. Grace could be a queen without any trouble."

This was not the truth in the strictest sense, for I felt the uprisings of sundry inward rejoicings.

The eventful time drew near. My anxiety was so great for papa's respectability of appearance, that I gave myself up entirely to the duty of getting him ready, and so many were the injunctions and cautions that I gave to Peggy on the subject of papa's linen, that she got

infuriated, and drove me from her presence, without in the least considering the respect due me as the sister of the future duchess. I felt indignant, and would have made some severe remark, but I was afraid. A long acquaintance with Peggy had taught me to value the virtue of prudence. But I was bent on helping in some way, my energies being fairly aroused. I got papa's Sunday hat out of the box, and brushed it, and did not desist from brushing it until the nap started to come off.

It befell the dress coat next to fall into my hands, and I was not lucky with it. The cloth was fine, and the garment not new, and succumbed ignobly in my faithful efforts to remove a spot that would have been perfectly visible to even a bad pair of eyes. I heard a crack. I turned away my head, getting pale, for I was fearfully conscious what the sound portended; but it was of no use not to see it. There lay the gaping wound, fully two inches in length. I wept. I don't know but what I prayed over it, but no miraculous aid came to close up the rent. Remorsefully, I carried it to papa, and with sighs and sobs explained the disaster. Papa seemed to think it a small matter, but I did not, and was inconsolable.

"Can't you stitch it up, daughter?" he asked with a kindly view of softening my grief.

"No, papa," I blubbered. "I can't sew hardly at all. I hemmed some dish-towels for Peggy, and she undid it every bit." And with the recollection of the disparaging remarks made by Peggy on that occasion, my lamentations broke out afresh: "but, papa," I exclaimed as a useful idea flashed up, "would you mind

to let a corner of your pocket-handkerchief hang over?"

The tear was conveniently near, and quite susceptible of being hid by a piece of diplomacy of this kind. Papa declared that he was perfectly willing to resort to the subterfuge. I was relieved, but my zeal had received a wholesome check.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE day had arrived when papa was to start for London. We were at the earl's, whither we had gone the day before. At peep of day I invaded papa's room, to prolong the moments yet to be with him. When the summons came for the early breakfast he was to have, so as to catch the train, arm-and-arm we came forth with red eyes; we both had been weeping. Not merely under the same roof, but in adjoining rooms, had we slept all the nights of my life until now; and this first separation was heavy alike to father and daughter.

We found all of the family assembled in honor of the departure. Mr. Gerald immediately commenced his raillery, and actually forced us to join in the general smiles.

"Miss Susette," he said, "if I was to ask you what London was, and where it is situated, you would doubtless make the answer set down in your geography; that it is situated distant one hundred miles, and is the metropolis of the British nation. Yet I assure you that this would but faintly typify the actuality. I've been there," he said, lowering his voice to an awe-stricken tone, "and know that it is a large district of country, peopled with monstrous beasts—ogres—who lay pitfalls, and ingenious snares to entrap the unwary;

and they are peculiarly inimical to quiet country gentlemen, who rarely fail falling into their relentless clutches; and with a quickness that one trembles to think of, the hair of the head is converted into a glossy wig, the teeth disposed of to a merchant in that line, and the attire, all and every article of it, ornamenting the windows of an Israelitish vender of second-hand clothing. And now, Miss Susette, the horrible end is coming. Imagine papa, handsomely arranged in festoons—Bologna sausages—so many shillings a yard.”

I was smiling quite gaily, and making up an enticing little luncheon for papa, when wheels rattled up, and papa arose to make his adieus.

The first real grief I had ever known was now. What were Grace, dukes, duchesses, the world, to me? Papa was going away. I clung around his neck, sobbing, feeling that my heart would break.

“Don’t cry, pet; I’m coming back the day after to-morrow,” says papa, almost at the point of not going.

“Come, Mr. Lenox,” says Gerald, “it won’t do to disappoint Madame la duchesse, and we must be off. I am going to see you in the train myself,” and taking papa’s arm, shouting as he hurried him along, “cheer up, Miss Susette, I am going to use my influence with Monsieur Lenox to bring you back a green silk gown.”

I rushed out after them, and watched the vehicle until it disappeared from sight; watched after it until the cloud of dust following the wheels had long subsided, and stood there watching the way papa had

gone, until the carriage came back, and Mr. Gerald in it alone.

“Miss Susette,” he began, “I have the honor to inform you that I obtained a comfortable carriage for your esteemed relative, and left him in the undisputed enjoyment thereof after the bestowal of my parting benediction, and stood off on the platform, in order to wave a graceful adieu as the train should glide past; and I regret that it is my painful duty to inform you, that at the very instant my arm was raised aloft, and my lips arranged to form an encouraging smile, I had the horror to discover Monsieur Lenox taken possession of by a British matron, built on a model of stoutish architecture, and two of the most industriously active young ones I ever beheld, almost in the twinkle of an eye. They dived into his pockets, and your charming luncheon was ruthlessly abstracted. A chicken-wing filled the paws of one, the other cramming that lovely little cream-tart. I am not given to weeping, Miss Susette; but I did shed tears over the fate of that unlucky confection.”

“The atrocious little hounds!” I said, vehemently.

“Yes, Miss Susette, and I would give a great deal to see them undergoing the condign at your hands this minute; but in this world we often fail in our desires, and have to impose a curb on the gratification of our pleasures; therefore we must yield to the fate which cruelly removes the guilty party from your just vengeance.

“Now, if you would allow me to suggest that you retire to the house, wash your face, which presents a soiled appearance, and return to me here, I will show

you a bijou of miniature steeds, and teach you to ride. Now, don't embrace me, Miss Susette, in your gratitude; but go like Mazeppa, and go to return."

"Make haste, Susette," said Lady Margaret, "the earl and I have come out to witness your skill."

I could scarcely suppress a scream of admiration as the beautiful little Shetland pony, with a side-saddle, was led up; but I was doubtful about being mounted, indeed I preferred not. Considerable persuasion was used before I was seated in the saddle, pale and fearful. And at the first step the pony made, my head was swimming and everything turning around. To save myself from falling, I leaned forward, clutching desperately the pony's ears. Pony did not like this, and brought up a dead halt. Mr. Gerald came up laughing, but resolutely combated my determination to dismount, and walked by my side until I became familiarized with the movements of the animal, which I shortly did; and no words can express my delight at a short gallop the pony made, and I found myself not to be frightened. My instructor announced himself satisfied with my progress, and pronounced the lesson at an end, hoping that he should not be called upon to prevent cruelty to animals, in behalf of this pony, resulting from my hard riding.

The day passed less drearily than I expected it would; but still it seemed long, and every little while I was inquiring the probable whereabouts of papa, and at dinner had quite a discussion with the earl as to whether papa would go to his hotel first, or proceed directly to Grace. I was sure of the latter, but the earl was in-

sisting that he would make a relay, to get rid of the dust that no estate of quality was exempt from in traveling.

The next day, it is a long time to live through it until night, I thought, as I was waking up; but at breakfast Lady Margaret mentioned a wild root that she desired to make a tea of, and ordered Gerald and myself off to the woods to search for it. Heaven bless the Lady Margaret! thy kind heart was devising amusement for the still unweaned child. I put on a stout pair of shoes, and tying on my hat announced myself ready for the expedition.

"Not so fast, young lady," cried Gerald, "you've got a basket to carry; I'll take a sack. I am going to do my whole duty by aunt Margaret in this matter, and get her a plenty of that valuable root."

"Are you provided with a spade and pick?" I asked.

"Well, no," he answered. "I think those tools too complicated for our use; but I've got these," showing a couple of pocket-knives. "One of them is for you."

Lady Margaret laughed and said, "Well, if those fail, you've got tooth and toe-nail to fall back upon."

"Just so," nodded Gerald. "Come on, Miss Susette; I command this party, and I am not going to have any idling."

"I would not be too exacting, Gerald," suggested the earl. "She's such a little mite, she is not bigger than a minute."

"Yes, she is undersized; but there is a good deal of vim. *Allons.*"

The day was lovely, the exhilarating autumn air added to the exercise gave a buoyancy to my spirits. I skipped, laughed, and danced, and wanted to run.

"Stop, Miss Susette," cried Gerald, "I am not going to allow my men to fatigue themselves before going into battle. There is no knowing what labors, dangers, and difficulties may be in store for us, before we are again permitted to greet our anxious friends."

The root we were in quest of seemed gone from the face of the earth. We prowled around trees, poked our noses into thickets, looked up to the sky for a divination which was not furnished. I was a good walker, but at last got tired and sat down on a rock, flushed and panting, expressing the conviction that there was no such herb on this part of the globe.

"Yes, there is," joyfully cried Gerald.

I jumped up and ran to where he was digging into the ground with his knife, with a vigor that was satisfactory to even my energy.

"Just look here, there's a garden of it."

In a few minutes we had procured as much as was wanting.

"Now for home," he said, triumphantly. "But Rob Roy made a statement that the wise man never travels over the same route on the return. So, in imitation of that worthy, we will strike out for a new path."

"And maybe get lost," I sapiently observed.

"What if we did?" he asked, in a satisfied tone.

"We would wander about like the babes in the woods, subsisting in a frugal manner on berries, roots, etc., until we got tired, then we'd lay us down and die, and

the robin red-breasts would scatter leaves over us, and then hop on a tree close by, and go to singing about it."

"I don't believe it," I said positively. "I think the horrid crows would pick our eyes out, and then eat us."

"What an unromantic little body you are," he laughed.

We plodded on in silence, for we were both getting fagged.

"Oh, Mr. Gerald!"

"What is the excitement?" he demanded.

"Just look over there! see those lovely grapes. Lady Margaret likes wild grapes, I heard her say so."

Gerald's gaze followed my pointing finger, and calmly rested upon the purple fruit.

"The grapes are high," he observed, "and the tree defended by a net-work of brambles, a bristling chevaux-de-frise that I shudder to encounter; and, Miss Susette, excellent as I am in most respects, I am not an adept at climbing. So, upon the whole, I think Lady Margaret will have to forego the grapes."

"Well, I declare!" I exclaimed hotly. "Who cares for brambles? And I do believe I could climb that tree myself."

"Perhaps you could," was coolly replied; "you are a young lady of such varied and extraordinary accomplishments. But if you insist upon it, lead the way, and I'll follow; or no, I'll lead the way, and you follow. Attention, company—fall into line—march."

Which I immediately did, keeping step, humming

the rataplan, quite enlivened. But on getting among the briers, the "dead march" very slowly played would have been too fast for our progress; and, notwithstanding all the care we could use, we did not reach the goal unscathed.

As Gerald grasped one of the lower limbs, placing a foot on the trunk preparatory to the ascent, he paused.

"Miss Susette," he laughed, "you are sending me to almost certain destruction; reflect on the danger. Suppose I should fall and break my neck?"

"In that event," I answered gaily, "I'll follow the funeral cortege as chief mourner, and papa himself shall write the most touching obituary—everything in it; about the whole community being thrown into the most irrecoverable shock; estimable young man, destined, but for the untoward accident, to add glory and lustre to a long line of illustrious ancestors."

"A painful satisfaction," he dryly remarked; "but here goes," and he swung himself up among the branches. "I am fairly embarked in the enterprise," he called down. "Let me ask your good wishes for luck; but do not throw an old shoe; I am not now in a situation to dodge it."

With my usual propensity for having a finger in the pie, I called out, "Mr. Gerald, please put your foot on that limb, and press it down so that I can catch it, and get the grapes clustering on the end."

"Exactly," he answered, suiting the action to the word. "There,—have you got it?"

"No," said I, vainly tip-toeing. "Bend just a little more. That will do. I've got it."

"Hold on tight, then," he cautioned.

I did hold on tight, too tight; for when the heavy pressure was removed, up straightened the limb, I clinging to it.

"Oh, me!" I gasped, dangling in mid-air.

At a glance my companion took in the situation. "Don't let go," he shouted, "until I force the limb back!"

The advice was good, but I could not follow it, for my hands, with some leaves in them, slipped off, and down I lay among the brambles.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, in alarm.

My answer was never given; for just at that instant, losing his hold, or his footing, or something, down he came, crashing through the branches, in close imitation of the manner Mr. Bruin descends a tree.

"Are you hurt?" I inquired, as he landed, with what appeared to me unpleasant suddenness, about two yards from where I was sitting, for I had not had time to more than half rise, although not hurt.

"I'll report directly," he replied. "I cannot answer an important question like that on the spur of the moment." One arm was stretched forth, and pronounced sound; the other, after the same test, was also declared uninjured; the right foot stamped, then the left. "Limbs all in a satisfactory condition as to breakages," he said, looking quizzically at me; "but clothing damaged irretrievably," he laughed, looking at his rent and torn garments.

I smiled, and remarked that he "certainly did not present a very respectable appearance."

"Remarks on that subject from you," he answered,

"are invidious. Your own attire is not in a presentable condition; the brambles have been cruel to you, *Miss Susan*, for Susan you were christened, I gravely suspect."

"It is no such thing!" I snapped.

"Do not get belligerent, Miss Susan, or Susette. I am not a fighting man, and retract the offensive expression."

I was not mollified, and remarked, with asperity, "I suppose you do not intend returning without the grapes?"

"How merciless you are, Miss *Susan*!" he added, springing up in the tree.

As I made no efforts at assistance, the grapes were soon collected, and thrown down. The herbs we put into the sack, the grapes went into the basket.

Gerald flung the sack across his shoulder. "Miss Su—sette," he inquired, "is it your intention to carry the grapes, or do you propose to impose the undivided cargo upon me?"

In reply, I placed the basket upon my head, and began picking my way out of the thorn bushes.

"I never saw a more charming picture," said Gerald; "that is, would be if you were not so ragged."

"Take care," I returned, feeling disposed to quarrel.

"No offense!" he answered. "But it would be a pretty go if the servants should take us for a pair of beggars, and not let us approach the house."

Our appearance there was hailed by peals of laughter from the earl and Lady Margaret; the former raising his stick, and making a feint of driving us off.

"I am in a bad plight, I know," drawled Gerald;

"but keeping bad company is the cause of it. This young lady would lead me into trouble, although I begged her, with tears in my eyes, not to do so. Uncle, can't you let me have two of the able-bodied laborers to attend me as a body-guard whilst this arch-enemy remains? I dread becoming the subject of a coroner's inquest,"

"Go away, Gerald," smiled Lady Margaret, taking the basket of grapes. "I'll look after the arch-enemy myself."

"Very well," was the reply. "But if anything ugly does happen to me, I hope that my executors will hold somebody responsible. But I go, I go," he said, bowing elaborately, "to attend the duties of the bath and toilette," and disappeared through the doorway, only to put back his head, in order to say, "My conscience urges me to recommend that you employ yourself similarly, Miss Susette."

Lady Margaret looking fondly after him, "Dear boy," she murmured, "how pleasant he makes the house! Go, love," she said, kissing me, "get ready for dinner."

At that meal our morning's adventure furnished the theme of much mirth. Mr. Gerald's serio-comic manner of relating it was very diverting.

Feeling fatigued, I retired early.

How bright was the next day, as I sprang out of bed, throwing open the window, to see what sort of weather papa would have for his return! "How beautiful our world is!" I said, with a happy smile, closing the window. When I descended to breakfast, the great joy dwelling in my heart proclaimed its pres-

ence by a thousand signs of word and look. The atmosphere was rarefied, my feet scarce seemed to need a foot-hold, a thrill from the expected pleasure quickened my pulse, deepened the bloom on my cheek, and spoke out from my eyes in sparkling glances. Such moments are prefigurations of the pure elysium. Oh, who has not felt them?

Restless as a bird, I darted from place to place, consulting the hall-clock with faithful assiduity. I was even tempted to tamper with the hands, hoping thereby to hurry the hours. At last, at last, the carriage drives up. Mr. Gerald gets in, calling out, "Do not fly away, Miss Susette, while I am gone to fetch papa." The time seemed long; it was long; the carriage ought to have been back. The earl had come out, and was standing by me.

"It is past time," he remarked; "but I have not heard the whistle. Something must be keeping the train."

"It has come!" I cried, joyfully, pointing to the carriage now in sight.

"So it has," said the earl. "Now for papa."

As the vehicle neared, we could see only Gerald in it. He put out his head, and apparently called a halt, for the coachman pulled up, and Gerald got out, standing whilst he beckoned to his uncle. I gazed aghast! What could it mean? a horrible fear was stealing over me. I could see that Gerald was making some communication,—it was short,—and re-entering the carriage, which was driven rapidly back the way it had come. The earl's footsteps seemed to stagger, as slowly he came back to me, his face white with horror.

"Go in to Lady Margaret, my child," he spoke. "An accident has happened."

There was no need to say more. The awful truth flashed upon me; I knew that I stood there, fatherless. Clutching vainly in the empty air, I fell at his feet senseless.

## CHAPTER VIII.

WITH an effort I opened my eyes, the lids trembling from weakness. The chamber was darkened, with its paraphernalia of small phials, more or less empty. Raising my bird-claw of a hand to my head, which was throbbing with a dull, heavy ache—the hair had been cut short, and towels with powdered ice lay around it—Lady Margaret was sitting by, watching with an anxious look.

"Be still, love!" she whispered, gently bending over me.

"How long has it been," I asked, "since——?"

"Three weeks," she almost sobbed, knowing to what I alluded.

"Tell me how it happened," I inquired.

"Not now, love," she pleaded. "Another time."

"I had rather know," was the faint answer.

In sad, low tones I was told how the train had almost reached the station. Gerald recognized papa, who, putting out his head, bowed and smiled. At that instant, from what cause unknown, the driver losing control of the engine, it started off at frightful speed, dragging the carriages with it; leaving the track, coursing madly down an embankment, standing still only when brought to bay by ledges of solid rock, against which it hurled itself with violence, crushed

and disabled, this monster of steam and iron, panting and hissing like a demon gloating over its infernal work.

The large crowd quickly assembled were soon busy among the wreck of carriages, taking out the dead and dying, in all stages of mutilation that human bodies are susceptible of. Between two and three hundred passengers composed the ghastly array. Gerald proceeded at once to where he knew papa was, who was still breathing. A blow on the chest was causing an internal hemorrhage, and rapidly he was dying; but a smile broke over his face as he saw Gerald, and his lips moved with an effort at utterance. Gerald bent down his ear. "Susette to Lady Margaret," was all he could distinguish ere the lips stilled forever in death. Gerald bore the body into a house near by, and coming home to impart the tidings, he returned again, nor left papa until he was laid to rest beside mamma. As she ceased speaking, I turned away my face and prayed to die. Lady Margaret bowed her head, and cried stilly.

Grief does not kill; I was too young and strong for that; returning health would come back, though Heaven knows it was no boon to me. The only wish I had in the world was to leave it. And when I arose from that sick-bed I was old and worn, weary of life, and scarcely sixteen years of age. Heavy and dull I sat the livelong day, supporting the head that never would leave off the old pain that was now a part of it. Still and quiet I always was. I could not moan; the moans perished in my heart, and made a charnel-house of it. Nor had I power to weep; my eye-balls were hot and glazed, as if seared with a red-hot iron.

One day Peggy came to see me, and brought Bob with her. Faithful Peggy! Honest and true was her grief for the kind master and friend snatched away. I do not doubt but that on her way she had composed something to say, that she considered would be soothing; but if so, the sight of me drove it from her mind. Falling at my feet, she covered her face and wept. My woe-begone face, or it might have been my black dress, excited Bob's displeasure, for he snapped at me, and wanted to bite.

"Poor creeter," said Peggy, compassionate in her grief, even to Bob, "he ain't aknowing what he's doin'; but I brought him along, thinking that maybe you would like to see him, Miss Susette."

"You are very kind I know, Peggy, but somehow I do not like to see old things, and I had rather you would not bring him any more, or come yourself."

Peggy's tears, which had for an instant ceased to flow, now began afresh.

"I don't know what I've done," she blurted out, "that you should turn agin me, just as if I did not have trouble enough."

The stony gaze, which had become habitual to my face, rested upon her.

"Dear Peggy," I began, "don't view it in that light; I——" But the sheer inability of making her understand my feelings stopped my tongue. How should she, how could any one, understand what a desolated, hunted thing I felt,—how that I should like to crawl into a hole, to creep off of the face of the earth, to hide myself from sight?

Peggy's little burst of impatience spent itself in the

few words of its utterance. She was thoroughly attached to the child grown up under her eyes, and genuinely kind-hearted at bottom. Something in that kind heart instinctively told her that my grief was not like hers, and that she had no line and plummet to take its soundings.

"Never mind, honey," she said, taking one of my hands, pressing and crumpling it as if kneading dough. "I won't pester you until, maybe, sich a time will come when you'll want to see old Peggy. I shall allus love and pray for the baby I've helped to nuss and the child I've seed brung up. Come along, Bob!—wher's that Bob?" she ejaculated, visions of his capabilities in the way of mischief rising up before her as she started off.

The precipitancy of her movements nearly resulted in bodily harm to Lady Margaret, who by chance was coming up the hall. Serious consequences were averted by the lady hastily stepping aside. Peggy, in consternation, checked herself so suddenly as to reel backwards; her desperate hands, stretched out for something to stay her fall, grappled James the footman, whose evil star had led him to the spot. After some shuffling (she stood secure in her shoes), her first act was to shake the miserable James until every tooth in his head chattered. "How dare you?" she exclaimed. I suppose it will remain a mystery to that functionary, to his dying day, of what he dared, for he had not the temerity to inquire; the instant he was released he flew below to the servants' apartments.

"I beg your ladyship's parding, I'm sure," said Peggy, with a violent effort at composure; "but nothing

makes me madder than to see servants misbehave." Giving a dexterous turn to her speech, she continued: "Miss Susette is cut down terrible,—but no wonder; I never seed the like as the store she and her par sot by one another. She that was Miss Grace was hardly counted nothing; and a more properer young lady I never set my eyes on than she that was Miss Grace; the very last time—no, it was the time before the last (correcting herself in order to be accurate)—that she were down, she hemmed a whole set of pocket-handkerchers for her par,—and the beautifulest stitches! every one on 'em the same size, and sot down exactly wher they belonged. This one," nodding her head towards me, "don't know one yearthly thing. Why she couldn't no more wash you three dishes without breakin' four than nothin' in the world. Shiftless!" she sighed; "but then her par spiled her so. I don't mean to say but what he was as fond as could be of she that was Miss Grace, but then he was wrapped up in this one, who was allus in his sight.

"I beg your ladyship's parding for talking so much, but I've lost a kind master, madam, and it is hard to git over it. I hain't been rightly at myself sence the day when the yearl rid over and told me that Mr. Lenox wasn't never coming back no more. I couldn't help it, madam; I tried all I could to conduct respectful like before the yearl, but I had to bust right out; I'd a' done it, if he had been the queen of Rooshy, but he didn't take no offense tho', and told me that the place was Miss Susette's now, and I must jest stay ther and take keer of things, and it's mighty lonesome ther now, your ladyship, tho' I've worked hard enough

to keep things tidy and straight. You may not think it, madam, but it's gospel truth; I've sot the table every singly time, and washed the dishes that had not been used, trying to make believe that things was as they use to was, and nobody gone; but it's no use, madam! When night comes, everything so still and quiet, not a soul but Bob to have speech with, it's too hard!"—a corner of her apron went up to wipe away the tears that were rolling down. "So, madam, if your ladyship would have the goodness to speak to the yearl, and git his consent for me to git my niece, who hain't living anywhere in particular now,—not but what she's got a good character, madam!—she's one of the best of young women, but then she left service to nuss her mother, who was then, at that time, in poor health like, but she's well now, bin well this fortnight; but my niece—Elmiry is her name, madam!—hain't never yet got no permanent home agin, but jest living round among the neighbors doing chore work; I'll git her, and atween us we could keep up the garding and tend market."

Lady Margaret said that "she would mention it to the earl, and give her notice."

"Thankee kindly, madam; and, madam,"—she hesitated,—“would it be asking too much for you to send one of the servants over to git me word, at sich a time when it won't go agin Miss Susette to see me. I've lived so long in the family, madam; I lived there in master's wife, Miss Susette's mother's, time, and I couldn't be a fonder of her darter if she was my own little gal. Good-morning, madam!"

Peggy's large, ill-fitting shoes clanking as she walked

off, "Get out of that, you Bob!" echoed shrilly above, and a prolonged howling from that irrepressible dog was evidence that he was receiving punishment for misdeeds. Alas, how short a time since, when I would have flown to his rescue! But I had now lost sympathy with all the living. Beyond the grave my thoughts were ever turning.

Imagine a miser stand watching a good ship, nearing port,—brave and trim,—laden with all his store of hoarded gold, and, when almost at anchor, go down, down deep in the awful water, leaving him poor, poor, poor! I was that wretch. Imagine the possessor of a rich domain reviewing his possessions with a happy heart, when the blast, a rushing tornado, sweeps over, leaving naught but desolation,—the beautiful landscape turned to blackness and ruin! I am that most miserable being. Months passed! How can I speak of, how can I ever be sufficiently grateful for, the gentle kindness shown me by this lovely family? And no stock or stone was ever more insensible. Thankless and silent, I rejected all artifices to draw me from a grief, morbid and selfish, the tendency of which was insanity or death. The whole earth was dark; I was hopeless for this world, and apathetic for the next.

## CHAPTER IX.

SILENT, always silent, I sat by a window, my drooping head resting on my thin arm. A low groan reached me, a groan that told so well of smothered pain that my dead heart answered to it, and, turning my head, I beheld Lady Margaret prostrate on a sofa, spasms convulsing her pale features. Screaming for help, I was at her side, using the restoratives at hand,—salts and cold water,—and had gotten her nearly recovered, quickly as the husband and nephew rushed in. Engrossed in my own selfish sorrow, I had failed to remark how rapid were the strides disease was making in that gentle form, and a pang smote me as I gazed upon the pinched and suffering face. Tears of remorse gushed forth, as I pillowed my head beside hers, throwing my arms around her.

"Forgive me, Lady Margaret!" I sobbed; "I did not know how ill you were."

"My daughter!" she said, gently.

How I blessed her for the words! They seemed an echo from the dear parent who was to call me "my daughter" never, never more in all this world. Eagerly I promised a daughter's love, a daughter's care,—and well was the promise kept!

Incessantly I hung over her. It was my hand that handed her the cooling drinks, and chafed the fevered

brow; and I sang for her the songs she still loved to hear. This last was hard. To sing when thickened afflictions are heavy and sore is the acme of human woe. Is it not thus described in Holy Writ? "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion; *they that carried us away captive required of us a song.*" Resolutely I put aside poor Susette Lenox and her sorrow, and though the lips quivered as they sang the old songs papa used to like, I sang on as long and whenever Lady Margaret pleased. Self-abnegation! O beautiful virtue! When did it fail to bring its own great reward? When did it fail to blot out sad memories, and come like a gentle dove, bearing healing on its wings for a mind diseased? By degrees I came back within my old self; the bitter spirit that darkly brooded was exorcised by the sweet influence of Lady Margaret; the spell she used was the potent one belonging to those who walk humbly in the footsteps of the Sinless One who died for us miserable sinners.

Many days, when we were alone, she would talk to me of my dead papa; telling me of things I never knew before. "You were not old enough, Susette," she would say, "to appreciate the rare excellency of his character,—to understand the harmonious blending of his giant mind, with the unaffected simplicity of a thorough Christian: expressions of piety rarely fell from his lips, but what an eloquent dissertation on the beauty of holiness was his walk through life! Our God, my child, is not a hard task-master, but a loving Father; and when his children finish well their allotted work on earth, he takes them to himself and gives them eternal rest.

"Your father's life was one of self-sacrifice, and there are few who knew the depth of his noble nature,—how in his generosity, in his early manhood, he married his cousin, who was the mother of Grace, because it came to his knowledge that she loved him.

"Gentle and kind was he ever, and the wife died, not knowing that pity, not love, was the tie that bound her to her husband. She was delicate, and early sank into a decline; almost heart-breaking was her mother's grief, for she was an only and a much-loved child, when the eminent physicians called in pronounced her recovery impossible. To assuage her mother's sorrow, she was promised the little Grace. 'What could you do, Roger, with a poor little girl?' asked the dying wife of the husband, who said it should be as she wished. Thus it was, Susette, that your sister was virtually separated from her father, for when the death came he surrendered the child to her grandmother, making over to her the whole of the fortune that was her mother's, retaining only his own small patrimony for himself. His rare attainments would have made him distinguished in the world, but he seemed to have lost all relish for social intercourse, and gave himself up wholly to books, until by chance he met your mother, whose living picture you are; for the first time he loved, with an intensity few can understand, that pure, beautiful girl. For one little year he called her wife; she then went to heaven, leaving with him her baby.

"I was childless, and your mother had been a dear friend of mine. I begged for the care of the little one, but 'no,' said the sorrowing man, 'I cannot give up

my Susette's child. Mine must be the task to mould her in character resembling her mother. To cherish well my Susette's legacy will be the task of my lonely life.'

"Faithfully and lovingly was the task performed; well-tilled, and planted with good seeds, was the garden of your mind. Yours, my child, was fruitful ground; and had an enemy crept in and sown tares, noxious and rank would have been the growth, baneful in the extreme the beautiful form and face, your heritage from your mother. So careful was Mr. Lenox of the work he was fashioning, that he raised you in the strictest seclusion. He wanted his model completed, perfect in all its parts, and strong to resist the pernicious influences that we all have to contend with, more or less, from the time of entering even the best-regulated society."

"Lady Margaret," I said, after some minutes of thought, "do you know that I sometimes think that papa purposely left me so much to myself the first day I came here?"

"You are right, Susette," was answered, "and we all loved you for the way in which you received the test."

"Indeed," I remarked, "I have often wondered why you were not disgusted with the uncouth little monkey turned loose upon you."

"I think it highly probable, love, that when you have passed twenty years in fashionable life, you will admire a bit of nature yourself."

## CHAPTER X.

WEAKER and weaker each day grew Lady Margaret, and my heart ached with many a bitter pang, for I knew that surely she was dying,—and her life was now so precious to me, all that I had to cling to. Grace had gone abroad with her husband immediately after her marriage, and would not return to England for years. Papa had seen her on board the steamer, kissed and blessed her; thus they parted—forever. Oh, papa! papa!

It seemed so hard to have found a mother only to resign her. The end was so near, that the earl and Gerald could not shut their eyes to it, and perpetually hovered over her, filled with gloomy apprehensions. She, the innocent cause of all this trouble, was the only one undisturbed. Calmly and peacefully she put her house in order, to be ready when the summons came.

"Susette," she said to me one day, "I have obtained the promise from a distant kinswoman of mine that she will take up her residence here. She is not emotional, and perhaps you will not love her very much; but she is kind and lady-like, and it will be for your advantage to have a female companion when I shall be no more."

I could only bow my head and weep.

"Do not cry, pet," she said, caressingly; "we must

all die ; the only question is, to have our lamps trimmed and burning."

"Yours will shine brightly," I said.

"My trust is strong," she answered, meekly ; "but the heart will yearn after its earthly idols. Twenty years of happy wedded life make it hard for me to leave the earl, and he will be very lonely ; but you must comfort him, Susette, you and Gerald. You will miss me, too, my poor children ; but it will not be for long, only a little while. You cannot imagine how short the longest life seems to me, as I lie here dying, so near the great ocean that begins its roll at life's divide that I can almost hear the splash of its waves."

In due time Miss Ainsworth arrived. She was *slightly not young*, and was a pattern of propriety in black silk gown and blue bows. She had always just the exact word, on the tip of her tongue, suited to the occasion ; and as for surprises, mints of money would not have betrayed her into one. It was not *la mode*.

Sometimes I found myself looking at her, and wondering if she ever had been an infant ; and, if she had, was it possible that her mother had ever taken the liberty to dress her in long clothes and bibs, and what had been done about rocking her to sleep and dosing her for colic ? But ill-natured she was not,—nobody could ever call her that ; and I exerted myself towards getting up an attachment for her, but it was up-hill work. I was afraid it might take me a hundred years.

## CHAPTER XI.

LADY MARGARET is dying, the westerly windows of her chamber are wide open, and the fast-setting sun is shining brightly, throwing great broad streaks of light, a halo around the head, so soon to wear an immortal crown, so soon to shine among the angels. We were all there, with the addition of the clergyman. The earl and Gerald were struggling mightily with their grief,—wrestling to keep it back,—not to mar the peace, in these last moments, of her they loved so well.

I had never before witnessed a bed of death ; and my attention, without consent of the will, seemed to rivet itself in intensity of admiration for the great beauty, the transcendent loveliness so vividly pictured. The whole face was lighted up, a smile of ineffable happiness playing about the mouth, her eyes straining with a look of longing, as if through an open vista she already saw the portals of the house not made with hands. "Oh, husband," she exclaimed, turning her glance toward the earl, who was white with anguish as he bent over her, "when we come to die, 'tis then we know for what we have lived, and it is not hard to die ! When standing at the brink, Jordan's stream is not so dark, nor its waves so very high, and 'tis a beautiful land on the other side,"—relapsing into silence, as fixedly she gazed afar off.

Miss Ainsworth had lost her composure, trembled, and seemed frightened, and turning towards the clergyman, asked if he "could say anything."

"No," he answered, briefly; "a greater than I is here; and when God speaks let all the earth be silent; and his voice is audible in the tones of this his saint."

"The Prince of Peace is not here," murmured the dying lady, in low but distinct words, "but his angels are. They come for me, and I am almost ready." With an effort her lips turned towards the earl, who, understanding the mute appeal, bent lower for that last embrace. One *little* hand passed lovingly around his neck, the other stretching upwards as if to join the heavenly host sent to bear her into the immediate presence of the immortal God she had served on earth. The extended hand fell pulseless. Lady Margaret had shaken hands with papa in eternity.

The grief of the stricken man burst forth. Its violence could not disturb the dead. In vain Gerald and the clergyman attempted to lead him from the room. Roughly he shook them off. I cannot tell whence the courage came; but with no fear of repulse, I quitted my place and stood beside the earl, and, gently taking his arm, whispered, "Won't you come with me?"

Leaning on the frail support, which almost bent under the heavy pressure unconsciously borne upon it, he left the room with me. I conducted him to the library, where he sank upon a sofa. I sat beside him, gently chafing the temples, throbbing with the inexpressible pain I knew of alas! so well. I said to him: "It is a bitter path you are treading; but I, too, have walked it."

"Oh, little Susette," he cried, seizing my hands, and almost crushing them in his fierce grief, "*how she loved you!*"

"We will go to see her, after a little," I said; "but try to get some rest now,—try to go to sleep."

"What have I to do with sleep," he cried, wildly starting up, "*and she dead? Oh, Margaret! Oh, Margaret!*"

With gentle force I thrust him back. "Be a man," I said.

"I am a man," he answered. "I would be less than a man did I not grieve for that dead angel."

In low tones I spoke of the heaven to which Lady Margaret had gone, of the loving Saviour who had released her from a life of pain and called her to a perfect rest, where she was now awaiting the coming of her earthly spouse.

"Oh, Susette, my comforter!" he murmured, pressing his cheek against the hand still busy with his damp locks. As his agitation subsided exhausted nature asserted her rights, and sleep stole over the lids that had lately been sleeping only by snatches.

Quiet, I sat watching him as he slept, a great compassion filling my heart. O grief! thou art a mighty leveler, bowing down the strong man even as me, the poor, weak girl, whose heart is still sore under that most bitter blow. Oh, papa, e'en at this moment my soul rises up and makes vain efforts to overleap the rugged heights of God's providences, and impiously dares question the divine right to desolate the fertile spot in my young life, where had bloomed the bright flowers inspired by hope and love; and then again when the

bruised tendrils were fastening around a new object, trying to cover the scars of a festering wound, again must I lose all! The words of comfort that I had just now spoken to that sleeping man, and not yet cold from my lips, rushed back and mocked me. "Oh, God in heaven," I cried, terrified at my own wickedness, "pity me, a poor, sinful child! Oh, come and save me from myself!—other defenses have I none."

Never, never yet, has the heart's sad cry been rejected by him who died that we might live. The blind man who sat by the wayside, lifting up his voice, crying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me," received his sight. So to me, a poor insect, in the sight of the awful majesty who rules over countless worlds, did his boundless mercy flow. I bowed my abashed head, murmuring, "Henceforth I will lead a new life, and shrink not from my ordered walk through the arid stretch of duty; and though the noonday sun beats pitilessly, and my blistering feet totter, and no palm-tree appears in sight for refreshment by the wayside, yet looking to the goal which may be reached at last, I will toil on to the end, Heaven helping me."

"Amen, amen!" I heard articulated, and the tones were those of Lady Margaret and papa. Swiftly glancing around, I wondered if it could be. But no; I could only bless the invisible presence that for me had hovered near on angels' wing from the two who had loved me best. Thankful and almost happy, I was lost in my own communings; hour succeeded hour,—my head drooped upon the arm of the sofa,—my eyes closed in slumber.

The hall-clock was striking three. I aroused with

a start. The earl was sitting up, and had been watching me. "Poor child!" he said, "you were worn out."

"We may go see her now," was my answer, rising.

Instantly he was on his feet, and together we went to the room where Miss Ainsworth and Gerald sat watching Lady Margaret, already dressed for the grave. White and still she lay, in all her matchless beauty. What in life could compare with this wondrous loveliness, the irrefragable signet impressed by a happy soul ere winging its flight to join kindred spirits above?

Fascinated, I gazed. "Death is not always terrible," I murmured. "He doeth all things well."

Reverently the earl bowed his head, and suffered his nephew to lead him from the room.

## CHAPTER XII.

LADY MARGARET is buried. My sufferings were very acute when I saw them put her in the coffin. It seemed horrible to put her under the ground. I trembled excessively, and thought I should faint, as sitting in the little church I realized how short would be the time ere she was forever hid from sight; and yet, sitting as I was, so full of woe, I was destined to feel a new and sudden anxiety.

Raising my eyes for an instant during the funeral discourse, they fell upon Peggy, in the servants' gallery; and as the minister spoke in laudatory terms of the departed, she nodded her head in approval of every word of praise. I shuddered,—a cold perspiration spread over me. I knew that Peggy was fully capable, as her earnestness deepened, of indorsing the commendations by word of mouth. Apprehensions on the score of indecorous interruptions took possession of me, and I could think of nothing else, even when the dear lady was taken out and I saw the clods filling her grave. "Oh, Peggy!"—passed through my mind,—“why must you come here, at such a time, to torture me?”

Filled with Peggy, I managed to detain our party until I thought the churchyard was empty and she gone home. A sigh of relief escaped me as Miss Ainsworth got into the carriage and the earl was about following.

“We have escaped Peggy,” I concluded. But not so: that indomitable woman had but bided her time, and there she was.

Curtsying deeply, she accosted the earl, offering him her respectful service, and saying that she was only a poor servant, but she knew her who was gone, and she thought well of her; and that maybe it was not exactly the occasion, but business was business, and the time was as good as any to settle about the matter of five pounds,—butter-money. It wasn't much, to be sure, but then the grass was short, and the cows only strippers; but just to wait until her ingans came on; she would have a fine chance of yearly peas, but her main reliance was in the ingans. She felt bad about not settling about the butter before, but the truth was, Farmer Sutton's wife was owing her one and sixpence that she had had difficulty in collecting. She had to tell the farmer's wife that folks ought not to eat butter unless they could pay for butter; and that was the reason she had been so backward herself about settling.

The earl gazed at her bewildered. Peggy had no place in his memory then; he could not place her, and had not understood the drift of one word she had been saying.

Peggy was not pleased at the way her highly correct account had been received, and with heightened color and somewhat raised voice stated that it was just exactly as she had been saying, and that nobody had ever doubted her honesty afore, and people was onreasonable to expect much,—grass so short too, and bran sixpence a bushel.

The idea striking the earl that this was an escaped

lunatic stopping his way, he was about motioning the footman to remove her. I cast an imploring look at Gerald, which he at once understood.

"Wait a minute," he said to her. "I want to see you about putting up some pickles for a friend of mine at college——"

"If cowcubers will do," she said, falling at once into the trap, "I've got plenty, as good as ever was growed."

Taking immediate advantage of the diversion, I almost shoved the earl into the carriage, quickly following myself, Gerald springing in after us; Peggy shouting as the carriage drove off, "I didn't understand how many of the cowcubers you wanted."

### CHAPTER XIII.

If other proof of Lady Margaret's affection for me was wanted, which it never could have been, it was found when her will was opened. After an affecting tribute to the earl, and some keepsakes that she wished him to keep, her private fortune, which was large, was bequeathed, equally divided, between Gerald and myself, the children of her adoption,—only asking of us to comfort and cling to him who was her husband when he should be made desolate. Miss Ainsworth also received some remembrance, and was asked not to neglect the promise that had been made, that she would extend a woman's protecting care to the orphan girl she was leaving behind, so long as that protection was needed.

The house was very lonely now. Lady Margaret had for so long occupied our time, that now it seemed as if there was nothing at all left to do. Gerald would wander off, sometimes for whole days, not being able to endure the depressing atmosphere within. The earl, shutting himself up in the library, passed his time in writing,—melancholy, beyond measure, when circumstances compelled his appearance. In the hope of doing something to dissipate the unwholesome state of things, I carried a volume of Herodotus one day, and knocked at the closed library-door. The door was opened by the earl, who looked at me in some surprise.

"May I come in?" I asked, shyly: "if it is not too much trouble, I would like you to help me about a word or two."

"Come in," he answered, kindly, "if you are not frightened at the gloom." Taking the book from my hand, "Ah!" he continued, "just what I was going to recommend to you,—to resume your studies."

"Yes," I replied, "papa considered Greek very useful, as a discipline for the mind; that was the reason he urged it upon me."

"And yet," he remarked, "few ladies resort to such an expedient."

"Perhaps they have not generally so much imagination to tone down; and, at any rate, few are blessed with the kind instructor that I had," was my reply, as I seated myself, ready to commence the reading. "Will it offend you," I inquired, "if I adhere to my own views, and differ with you, as I used to do with papa?"

"By no means; we will be sworn allies, and wink at each other's little failings; if you are obstinate, so am I."

"What is the subject under consideration between two such high powers?" inquired Gerald, coming in, evidently much pleased by the break into the usual sadness; "my valuable services may be secured, if you wish a treaty, ordinary or extraordinary, drawn up."

"You are not wanted for any such purpose; but if you wish to improve your mind," answered the earl, smiling slightly, "you are at liberty to remain the hour that Miss Susette and I propose devoting to Herodotus."

"Not at all," replied Gerald, hastily; "I had rather

face a phalanx of the old Grecians, with their slings, javelins, war-clubs, and various other barbarous missiles of war, than their uncouth literature. Many thanks, though,—all the same!"

"Oh, what a degenerate boy!" said the earl.

"Oh, what an ignoramus!" cried I.

"Adieu!" said Gerald, blandly. "Although compelled to withdraw the encouragement of my presence, yet your unmerited reproaches will not prevent my leaving you my blessing. I go, Miss Susette, to bask in the smile of Miss Ainsworth."

"While you are in the arctic region," I said, "look about you for the missing ships, the Terror and the Erebus."

"Hold, Miss Susette! Do not excite my indignation. I stand here the champion of my fair kinswoman by virtue of marriage, and only seven times removed. But might I inquire if that *bon mot* was original, or was it the reproduction of a Greek sage,—Socrates, for instance, whose unhappy domestic relations might have tended to an acerbity of feeling towards ladies?"

"Could I not have learned the use of repartee from a more modern source,—yourself, for instance? Rays from the sun are sometimes retained and reflected by very insignificant objects."

"Miss Susette, the scintillations of your wit are positively annihilating. I'll depart before I expire. Mademoiselle, pray excuse me."

"With pleasure," I returned, promptly.

"Look to your ward, most noble earl. If her unruly tongue is not timely checked she will compromise the peace and dignity of this inoffensive family, by falling

under an attainder of high treason. I believe her fully capable of not only commenting freely upon, but of casting aspersions on, the sacred rights and prerogatives of our anointed sovereign."

The earl's eye lingered upon the retreating form of his nephew, as he said, "I promise myself great things for Gerald one of these days."

"Yes," I answered; and adding, with my accustomed candor, "but it is a pity he is wasting his time so."

"He is not wasting his time," rejoined the uncle; "he is qualifying himself to be a statesman. Statecraft is not learned in a day. The laborious ordeal of a course of law was not to make a lawyer of him, but to give a practical insight into the workings of the laws which he will help to supervise and regulate when in parliament. He had just returned from abroad when you first met him here, and"—his voice faltered—"it was no waste of time to linger with her who loved him as a son, to the close, which we all knew must soon come; and I cannot spare him now, my noble boy."

The tears glistened in my eyes.

"I am always so long-tongued, speaking without thinking," I said, remorsefully.

"Never mind, Miss Susette," he answered, kindly.

"Would you be so good as to call me Susette?" I asked. "Papa always did," I suggested.

"Very well, Susette," was the answer delivered, with a smile, "if papa took such a liberty, I suppose I may. But, come, our reading must commence. Begin there," he pointed, opening the book.

Instantly I commenced, and after reading some

minutes I paused, raising my eyes to his, expecting corrections or criticisms.

"Go on," he said.

Again I read page after page of the difficult tongue.

"How old are you?" he asked, at length.

"I am just sixteen," was the answer.

"So young," he mused. "I have never heard such fluency from one of our professors."

"You must recollect," I replied, "what a scholar papa was." And my mind went back to the time when he was teaching me Greek words, when most children are learning their a b c's.

"Do you know any other languages?"

"French and German pretty well, but I like dear old Greek the best, because papa did."

"Yet," he answered, "French or German will be of the most use to you. You can go now; but is my little girl coming to me again to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes," I answered.

"Can you sew?" And I thought I detected a twinkle in his eye.

"Not much," I answered, blushing; "but Miss Ainsworth has promised to teach me."

"Learn by all means," he recommended, as I left the room.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE day was fine; and Miss Ainsworth, the earl, and I were sitting in the front porch enjoying it.

"Susette," said the earl, "suppose that you and Miss Ainsworth play at croquet. I'll look on and count your games."

"Miss Ainsworth won't play with me," I answered, in confusion. "The last time I played with her one of my disagreeable balls took it into its ill-natured old head to rebound and strike her."

"Perhaps if you will promise that the offense will not occur again, and I go your bail, Miss Ainsworth may be induced to give you another trial," remarked the earl, looking at that lady.

"No, indeed," answered Miss Ainsworth, promptly. "I have no desire to become a subject for surgical treatment: a harmless croquet-ball, when in the hands of Miss Lenox, becomes a terrible weapon; but I will play with you, and Miss Susette may keep the score."

"Very well," was the answer; "if you will instruct me a little, perhaps I can play. I have some recollection of nine-pins, which I used to play in my youth."

"What a memory you must have!" I observed, getting pencil and paper.

Neither Miss Ainsworth, or the earl, paid the slightest attention to my observation, but each taking a mallet

commenced the game,—the earl's recollection of the bowling-alley helping him out wonderfully. And Miss Ainsworth's skill would have commanded attention and respect anywhere; apparently without effort she would inflict a lazy little tap on her ball, and it would instantly start off, go through one wicket, keep on and go through another, come back and hit the earl's ball, start off anew on an altogether different course, and wind in and out of the wickets like a thing of life endowed with intelligence. It was astonishing; I could not see how pieces of painted wood could be brought under such subjection. They behaved so differently with me, notwithstanding I gave up my entire mind and strength to the game whenever I played it.

"What have you been doing, Miss Susette, that you are left out?" inquired Gerald, coming up. "Well, you can play marbles,—hold your apron." So saying, he poured into the improvised receptacle a handful of small, green apples.

"I had no idea that they were so large," I said, nibbling at one.

"Do not eat them, Miss Susette," said Gerald, "they will make you ill."

"You must not eat them, Susette," remarked the earl, going into the house.

Miss Ainsworth also went in, after asking Gerald "if it was not the ostrich that ate nails?"

"I'll just eat one," I said,—“and just one more,—and just another,” I continued, taking up the third.

"Miss Susette, if you do not stop I shall have to interfere."

Any assumption of authority from Gerald always

rendered me indignant, and prone to tart replies at such times when I could deliver them; so I elevated my head, and called Mr. Gerald's attention to the circumstance that I had shortly before been reading some memoirs of the transatlantic statesmen, and had seen where General Andrew Jackson told one James Buchanan of a man, who dwelt in Kentucky, who had made a fortune by minding his own business.

"Indeed!" remarked Gerald; "and, Miss Susette, if your curiosity had led you into any lengthy research into the character of 'Old Hickory,' you would have learned that he could, on occasion, 'take the responsibility,' as I am doing now." So saying, he gathered up the apples, and threw them away.

"I'll never speak to you again!" I said, stamping my foot.

"When you are older, Miss Susette," continued Gerald, patronizingly, "you will have learned not to indulge in ill-considered expressions. I do not doubt but that you will speak to me again, very frequently."

I was exceedingly angry, but, unluckily, on many such occasions I had a strong tendency to tears, and, in the great effort I was now making to suppress them, I could not articulate one word of reply, but stood there, making grimaces, like a born simpleton.

Gerald did not laugh, but said, in a grave, kind sort of way,—

"You must not mind about my taking the apples away from you, for I declare that I would look on and see you eat a bushel, if there was no after-consideration of the matter, or if I might substitute myself as to the penalty for the indiscretion. Uncle William,"

he called out, "Davis is going to test the steam plow, would you like to witness the trial?"

"Yes, certainly," answered the earl, coming forth, hat in hand.

"Let us invite the ladies," suggested Gerald, "perhaps they would like to see what sort of work the big plowman is going to make."

"I hardly think that Miss Ainsworth would care to go," remarked the earl.

"I'll see, at any rate," replied the nephew, going in; and shortly he reappeared, accompanied by the lady. "Miss Ainsworth was very willing to go," he remarked; "and in order to make the trial interesting, you had better explain to her the mechanism of the invention, uncle,—you understand such things better than I do,—and I will take charge of the small party, and burden myself with the responsibility of getting her home with whole bones."

The earl and Miss Ainsworth moved on, Gerald and I coming on after them,—Gerald whiling away the time by a dissertation on the labor question,—the strikes among the operatives,—the scarcity and unreliability of laborers that pervaded every department of service, and which would eventually lead to lamentable results, and recoil with terrible force upon the originators of the troubles themselves. "Their conduct," he continued, "has started the human mind, with the alertness that springs from interest powerfully supported by capitalists, upon a broad field of inventions, endeavoring to make cogs and wheels do the work of men,—who will yet find a hard time in the competition that must come, between the sinews incorporated

in flesh, that need to be clothed, and fed, and grow tired, and those of iron, that neither eat, nor sleep, nor require rest. I regret this," he added, thoughtfully, "for, to my thinking, a prosperous, contented peasantry constitutes the true greatness of a nation."

I thought this also. "And so did Dr. Johnson," I said, "or he never would have written *Rasselas*."

"True," he answered, "but the march of time will not stop,—the age of progress will not rest contented even in the 'happy valley.'"

I felt a great number of ideas rising up within me on this subject, and, stopping quite still, was going to make a speech.

"Wait until you get home, Miss Susette," suggested Gerald, "and I will listen to your oration with pleasure, but I think your present auditory rather large, and promiscuous."

That was so. I had been led away into an abstract view of the theme, and had lost sight of the steam plow as a reality. And we now joined the earl and his companion, who were standing slightly apart from the crowd assembled around the novel agriculturist that proposed the cultivation of the soil for them,—and which was smoking, and seemed actually panting to be off,—and after a short delay it was off, and did tear up the ground in a wonderful manner. I was immeasurably delighted, and questioned Gerald as to the probable cost of the thing, with a view of purchasing one for Peggy, to subsoil her garden.

The trial was over, and the machine had undeniably conducted itself in a way that was gratifying to land-owners,—and was giving rise to murmurs of discontent

from those born under the full force of the edict, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."

"It will take the bread out of the poor man's mouth," remarked one of the malcontents.

"Yes," answered another, "*but then it can't vote!*"

We set out home, all walking abreast, so as to give the earl and Gerald an opportunity of discussing the novelty. I was a good deal interested, and entered with spirit into the discussion, but my animation became by degrees less, and finally subsided altogether. I began to feel uncomfortable, and to wish, mentally, that I had not eaten the apples, but I thought of the Spartan boy and his goose, and bore up bravely; and the pangs did cease, and I passed the remainder of the day appearing as usual, and at the usual time retired, and went immediately to sleep, as I always did; but a few minutes before one o'clock I awakened,—I am certain as to the time, for I heard the house-clock strike the hour. Well, I awakened in a rack of pain, feeling as if two dozen knives, recently whetted, were in full operation in my system.

I turned over and over, trying to find a posture that would afford relief, but in vain. I then asked myself the question, what were my sufferings, compared with those of St. Lawrence, roasting on the gridiron? but not the slightest alleviation came of the query. My agony continued with unabated vigor. "Oh, if I had only something to take!" I groaned.

Then I thought of a bottle of some sort of elixir I had seen on Miss Ainsworth's table, and, driven to extremities, I formed the daring plan of penetrating her apartment burglariously, and possessing myself of the

antidote. "I wonder if she locks her door?" I said, pursuing my freebooting way. I was not very heavy, and was unshod, and was trying to glide noiselessly along, though every pit-pat of the untrammelled toes produced a sound that made me tremble; but I reached the door of the room unchallenged, and, by a piece of good luck, it was not locked, and creaked only very slightly as I opened it. I groped along in the dark until the table was reached, but an unthought-of dilemma presented itself, there were several bottles, and, in order to get the right one, I knew that I should have to carry them all away.

Cautiously, I grasped one with my right hand, and safely transferred it to my left, when it occurred to me that less time would be consumed if I gathered them up two at a time. This was not a fortunate idea, for, not satisfied with two, I endeavored to lay hold of three, and, slipping from my hand, they rolled on the table, breaking, breaking, and the one held in my left hand fell on the floor with a crash that sounded to me like the last trumpet.

"Who is there?" demanded Miss Ainsworth. "Thieves!" she cried, in a long, loud musical squeal. Terror lent wings to my feet and banished all remembrance of my indisposition. In an instant I was out, speeding down the hall. One-third of the distance was accomplished, when, lo, one of my arms was suddenly caught by the earl, and the other snatched by Gerald.

"Stop!" said Gerald.

"Lights!" ordered the earl, in a voice pitched on a key that could not fail to produce immediate response.

I knew that it was not honorable,—I do not defend the act now,—but I was desperate to get away unrecognized; so I bit Gerald's hand, and knocked the earl violently with my elbow, simultaneously. The earl recoiled, giving up his hold, but cried, "Hold fast to the villain, Gerald!"

"Yes, I will," answered his nephew, after he had whispered, "Don't bite so hard, Miss Susette."

"Let me go, *please*," I entreated.

"You will not have time to get away," was the low answer.

It was so. Servants bringing lights were already arriving, and this was the tableau revealed. The earl in dressing-robe, revolver in hand, stood panting slightly. The blow I had given him had affected his breathing, and there was Miss Ainsworth, the freshness of her night attire not detracting from her remarkably presentable appearance. Gerald had draped himself in the graceful enfoldings of a sheet, and did closely resemble a Roman senator when they wore togas.

"I might have shot the child!" said the earl, turning pale, and laying down the pistol.

"And the child might have eaten me up," said Gerald, viewing his hand, where the impress of two sets of cutters and a couple of pair of pointers were plainly visible. "I say, Miss Susette, where did you learn cannibal habits?"

"What were you doing out of your room at this hour of the night, Susette?" asked the earl, evidently going to sift the matter. The explanation was delicate, and I did not know how to make it, so I stood still and was silent.

"I understand," spoke Gerald. "It is the story of the forbidden fruit over again. Miss Susette, like her prototype Eve, has eaten of the apples that were prohibited; and in my superior age and wisdom I warned her not. But what is the matter with your hand?" he asked.

My mind, not possessing the quality of grasping a variety of topics at once, was now drawn to the fact that my hand, still clutching a broken cologne bottle, was dripping drops of blood on the floor.

"Oh! oh!" I sobbed, "I've cut myself, and glass is poisonous! I may have to lose my hand, and maybe my arm too."

"Let me look," said Gerald, "how much it is cut."

"Go into my room, Miss Lenox," commanded Miss Ainsworth, "and get something to put around you."

I darted in the room, and quickly reappeared, making frantic efforts to wrap Miss Ainsworth's hoops around my shoulders.

"I think that you will find this shawl more comfortable," said Gerald, putting a shepherd's plaid around me.

I might have looked for that shawl whole days and not found it, and it apparently just walked itself right into his hands.

"Is this *creature* a seine, Miss Ainsworth?" he asked, looking curiously at the best Paris made hoops.

"I had not imagined that you were addicted to piscatorial sport."

"Miss Lenox, have your hand examined, and do not keep the family out of their beds any longer," ordered Miss Ainsworth.

"Do you want any help from me?" asked the earl.

"Oh, no," answered Gerald. "I had rooms in sight of a large hospital for two years, and of course acquired a great deal of surgical knowledge from a daily contemplation of its walls. And besides, I frequently had to administer to the casualties of Harry Ingles, one of my classmates. Not twenty-four hours passed that I did not have to mend a fracture for him. I used a hundred and fourteen boxes of Coffeen's liniment in plastering up his head alone, not to mention the other members of his body. Why, even the feet that he walked on would get into trouble with old nails and door-scrappers."

"Well," said the earl, "I will retire, since you are so competent; but if I should be needed, you can call."

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "Come, Miss Susette, I will look into your wounds. Will you allow me the liberty of your room for a few minutes, Miss Ainsworth?" And without waiting for the permission he walked straight in.

The hand was bathed, and found to have received only a few slight scratches, which were carefully wrapped in linen.

"You will not have to submit to amputation this time, Miss Susette; but be advised by me, quit these midnight raids. Suppose you had made a mistake, and gotten into my room. I should just simply have died from fright."

"You are quite skillful, Gerald," remarked Miss Ainsworth.

"Yes," was the answer, "I have had a great deal of

this kind of thing to do. Besides my classmate, I have had my own son to care for."

"What!" exclaimed Miss Ainsworth, unpleasantly, dubious as to whether her ears had deceived her, or whether he had made an unguarded admission. "I did not know that you were married. A Leicester, perhaps."

"I have no wife locked up," he answered, calmly. "I should most likely be that unhappy person, on the wrong side of the bolt myself. No, there is no partner as yet to my joys and sorrows, my feelings and my fame. But there is a boy who has the honor and felicity to call me father."

"Sir!" said the indignant lady.

"Yes," continued the unabashed Gerald, "it is now five years ago, when, in a fit of abstraction that sometimes comes over the mightiest of intellects, I wandered into an obscure alley of the city of London, and chanced upon a drunken brute beating a little chap unmercifully. I felt called upon to remonstrate, and obtained for an answer that 'when a free-born Briton could not flog his child without interference, there was an end of all liberty. Why, you might as well tell me,' he added, fiercely, 'that a man can't whip his own wife.'

"'I did not say that,' I replied, 'although there is something in the statutes which might be construed to oppose it; but I am perfectly aware that all the legislation in the world could not stop a man from whipping his wife, or his wife from whipping him, as he or she might be inclined. But there is nothing whatever in our English code inhibitory of a great deal of punishment of a child; a large degree of lati-

tude may be taken by a parent; a child may even for a term of years be sold, and I will give you fifty pounds for yours.'

"'Stranger, hain't you jokin'?' asked the inebriate, with trembling eagerness.

"I answered that the offer had been made, and that I stood on the platform of no taking back.

"'Then it is a trade,' he said, holding out his hand. 'Fork over the rhino.'

"'Presently,' I remarked. 'Just go with me to a law-office, and, after you sign a bill of sale, the legal tender shall be forthcoming.' And in ten minutes more he had the fifty pounds, and I had the boy,—a legitimately conveyed son."

"It was certainly kind of you," replied Miss Ainsworth, "but there was a great bother entailed."

"Not at all," rejoined Gerald. "He turned out to be a bright, engaging youngster, and I put him to school, and it was quite a pleasure having him come to me at my rooms Friday afternoons, bringing his merit-card, and staying until I would huddle him out of bed early Monday mornings, to send him back. I am fond of little boys," he added, "and little girls too, until they get some size, then I am afraid of them. I am bashful, Miss Ainsworth; you have observed that?"

"I never did," answered the lady.

"What is his name?" was faintly questioned by myself.

"I have bestowed my own patronymic upon him."

"I do not see how you could have brought yourself to do a thing of that kind," remarked Miss Ainsworth, in tones of displeasure.

"I most assuredly should not have done so had it been my purpose to have made a bootblack of him, or to have abandoned him when the whim grew old. Neither would I educate him for a gentleman, as I am going to do, in order that he might realize more acutely a return to the degradation from which I do hope that I have permanently rescued one unfortunate child."

"I presume that you are best acquainted with your own affairs, Gerald; but I consider it a thankless office to endeavor to effect such a change. I have no sympathy with ultra-libertyism."

"Neither am I a democrat, Miss Ainsworth. I consider being born a gentleman has much to do with being one; but I also think it possible that education, habits, and association may, on an emergency, make one; as I doubt not will be shown in the case of my little *protégé*. I am using my honest efforts, looking to the end,—the making a useful and respectable member of good society; and so far William, as I have had him christened, in honor of my uncle, although I do call him Billy on occasions of familiar intercourse between us two, gives me a very fair promise."

I was listening, but not a very interested auditor. At another time I would probably have been carried away with the subject, and would have wanted to become a father to a Billy myself, but my sympathies were now all of a personal nature.

"I think I will go," I said, "if Miss Ainsworth will be so good as to give me some drops."

"You will have to wring the table-cover, then," returned the lady, looking at the broken bottles, weltering in their contents.

"I'll get you something," said Gerald. "Go to bed, and Miss Ainsworth, who will remain up a few minutes, will take it in to you."

Chilled through and through, my teeth chattering, I was feeling as wretchedly as ever. The lull of my pangs was only temporary,—they were back again, vicious to the last degree,—but suffering, and the ups and downs through which my mind had lately gone had not quite reduced me to imbecility yet; so I made an effort at self-control, and moaning only subduedly, retraced my steps with difficulty. I say with difficulty, for my spine or something seemed concerned in the demoralization, and I could not command the erectness of carriage with which I had walked all the days of my life, since I could recollect; but I made out to reach my bed, only to find the bolster, pillows, and covers, all in a heterogeneous mass, utterly denying a peaceful repossession of the same. I had left the candle lighted, but with the bad luck that seemed to be a handmaid to attend me, it had gone out, and I could not find any lucifers, although I invariably kept them on the left-hand corner of the candlestick.

Sorrowfully I groped my way to the mantel-piece, and felt slowly and carefully all over its surface, causing disasters, I knew, from the crashings; but I was elevated above caring for the fate of flower-vases and statues of heathen divinities now. My mind was concentrated on matches; but I could not find any, and it occurred to me that probably I had overturned them; so I knelt down, creeping all over the carpet, groaning and weeping, making a trip under the bed, and painful

journeys under the tables; knocking my head so frequently and violently against chairs as to give rise to a new source of anxiety; all these knocks, I said, will be sure to produce a concussion of the brain, and I shall never have good sense any more. Human sufferings have a limit,—endurance was at an end. Perfectly overcome, I sat still, and, lifting up my voice, wept aloud.

"Why, Miss Susette, what a baby you are!" said Miss Ainsworth, standing at the open door, with a light in her hand.

"Get up, Miss Susette, and go to bed," urged Gerald. "Why, I don't believe you can," he continued, glancing at the disarranged couch. "Your bed looks like forty-eleven people had been sleeping in it." And he began beating up pillows and straightening blankets.

"Stop, Gerald," said Miss Ainsworth; "I'll ring for Jane."

"It would be daylight before she would arrive," he replied, keeping on with his work. "Come, Miss Susette, your bed is ready. I only await to tuck you in and administer your draught," he said, without a smile.

If he had laughed, I would not have minded it. I was indifferent alike to all praise, blame, or ridicule. I did not care for anybody; unless indeed old Henry VIII. could resuscitate. He set so little store by female heads, that I could not get over an involuntary feeling of reverence for him. But I was glad to crawl into the bed and gulp down the offered potion out of a tumbler. I do not know what it was, but it did not taste badly, and it was neither antimonial wine nor castor oil.

"Be still awhile," recommended Gerald, "and I think that you will get comfortable. But if you do not, just make a little knock, and I will go for Miss Ainsworth. I am not sleepy, and will walk up and down the hall awhile."

I thanked him a great deal, only, as I recollected afterwards, I neglected to mention it to him. The effect of the fluid I had swallowed was magical. Almost immediately I fell into a dreamy, contented condition, and in listening to the marching footsteps outside I was asleep.

Waking in the morning, I had a heavy, languid feeling, and was far from being as good as new. But making an effort, I arose, dressed, and went below to breakfast. Miss Ainsworth and Gerald were still at the table, but had finished their repast. Gerald looked a little drowsy, but the lady was fresh and calm as a sweet May morning. Mentally, I formed the opinion that she was made of asbestos, and would successfully withstand the action of fire. The earl had not yet appeared. He believed in indemnifications.

"Good-morning, Miss Susette," was Gerald's salutation. "Are you right well again?"

"No," I answered, "my head aches."

"I have understood," was his reply, "that those persons are usually so affected who indulge in stiff brandy-toddy late at night."

"Do you really mean to say that you gave me that—that mixture?"

"Yes, Miss Susette; I acknowledge it with remorse. But there were extenuating circumstances, you know. It is difficult to be at one's honest, proper wits during

the horror of a night attack. But I intend to make provision for the future. I am on my way now to the hamlet, to get a package of Mrs. Winslow's soothing syrup, which I will deliver over to your custody. *Au revoir.*"

"I wish I was older," I sighed. "Gerald is always very kind, but at times he is hardly as respectful as I would like him."

"I think," observed the lady, "that you bring it on yourself by your own want of reserve. You are less reticent with him than towards either the earl or myself."

"I am very fond of Gerald," I mentioned, in explanation.

Miss Ainsworth satirically thanked me for my confidence as she arose to leave the room. I felt heavy-hearted and sad, and the tears escaping through my clasped fingers rolled down, and were absorbed by the untasted rusk that lay upon my plate.

## CHAPTER XV.

MISS AINSWORTH'S soul delighted in certain small feminine proclivities: one of them was to do up her own fine laces. Many times my admiring eye would watch the lily-white fingers deftly clapping and smoothing out gathers; and, when the warm iron had passed over the collars and cuffs, and they lay spread out in the open-worked willow basket there to receive them, they were lovely to behold. I had often begged the privilege of helping in the operation, but my services had not been accepted; but on one morning I was invited to assist in the amateur laundry labors, and was only too happy.

Out in the back piazza, in large china bowls, one of the housemaids bringing warm water, with our sleeves tucked up, we began the washing. Miss Ainsworth sorted the articles, and I observed, with a sigh, that she reserved most of the finest and most delicate for herself. I regretted this, for I felt so strong that I knew I should be able to rub them quite clean. But, without remark, I plunged the things into the bowl, and was soon absorbed, oblivious to everything but the duty of washing.

"Stop! stop! I beseech you! Stop, Miss Lenox!" exclaimed Miss Ainsworth.

"Did you speak to me?" I inquired, annoyed at the interruption.

"You are tearing everything to pieces!" said the proprietress of the articles, in a tone more nearly approaching to anger than I had ever previously heard her employ.

I paused, and surrendered the point-lace pocket-handkerchief I had been engaged upon to the hand extended to receive it; and, sure enough, there was a great hole in it, big enough to run my fist through, clearly revealed as the owner held it up to the light by two corners.

"O-o-o-h!" I prolonged, in accents of grief, gazing at the ruined bit of lace.

"I'll finish myself, thank you, Miss Lenox," communicated Miss Ainsworth, with severe politeness.

Struggling to keep back the tears, I left the puddle of suds, in which I had been standing, my garments dripping jets of water, marking my passage as if a watering-cart had passed along.

"Is it my privilege to see a naiad?" inquired Gerald, whom I nearly ran against in the hurry of getting to my apartment.

"No," was answered. "I've been trying to help Miss Ainsworth with her things, and, as usual, I have been doing mischief."

"I hope that she did not box your ears," he said, sympathizingly.

"I almost wish she had," I rejoined, still struggling with my feelings, which were getting too many for me.

"I am always doing something to somebody."

"You have not been doing anything to me,—that is,

for a long time, when you tried to sweep me off of the face of the earth."

"I think you might recollect more than that," I said, now getting consoled.

"Oh, certainly; but I have forgiven you everything else but that. And there is no denying," he continued, laughing, "that you are as handy a young person about getting into ill luck as one often meets. But I was hunting you just now to see if you would not ride over to see Peggy. She is a faithful creature, and deeply attached to you. Besides, I have some business with her myself: I have to see her about my pickles, you know."

"Well, I'll go," I answered, rather slowly; "but I almost hate to see the old place."

"I think it is unspeakable comfort," he said, "to revisit the haunts of those we have loved and who have gone before us to the better land. But be quick, get off your wet clothes; you'll catch cold, and annoy every inmate of this house with your barking."

"You are getting to ride very well," said Gerald, helping me on the little Shetland. "It would be right hard to tell if the pony was made for you, or you for the pony."

Chatting pleasantly, we passed over the distance and neared the house.

"Stop!" cried Gerald, catching hold of my bridle.

"What is the matter?" I asked, feeling afraid that an apparition, invisible to me, had started up and forbid farther progress.

"Don't you see," he said, "there are unmistakable symptoms of house-cleaning at high tide? Let us

make a retreat while we can do so gracefully, and not run the risk of fleeing ingloriously from a combined attack of pails and scouring-brushes."

It was certainly so; the horrors of a revolution were going on. Tables, chairs, beds, etc., were scattered around in wild confusion. Peggy and niece, with bare arms and shortened skirts, were rushing hither and thither in a state bordering on distraction, and Bob, not to be outdone, his tail high in the air, a vast amount of business on hand, was bestowing himself, with inconceivable rapidity, apparently in fifty places all at once.

"The time is unpropitious," I observed.

"I think, however," remarked Gerald, "that we can venture. I see signals of amity. There stands Peggy waving a table-cloth."

## CHAPTER XVI.

As we reached the door there stood Peggy, beaming with delight. Like a hawk she pounced upon me, bearing me in, leaving my companion to follow or not, just as he felt inclined.

"How glad I be to see you, honey! I dreamed about you last night. Didn't I?" appealing to the niece, who immediately testified as to the dream. "But for you to come and catch me on my clarin'-up day! But no matter about that. I allus keeps in yonder all right, jest like it use to be. Don't you want to look in ther, honey?" pointing to papa's room.

I went in, closing the door after me. The emotions I experienced were not sad,—almost joyful. There was the bed clean and fresh, papa's dressing-gown thrown across the foot, where he always liked it, for convenience, the slippers peeping out from under the table, where the well-worn chair was drawn up, and a book wide open, a pair of spectacles lying atop, just as I had seen a thousand times; one of the bureau drawers slightly open, as I had so often observed. I sat in his chair, shutting my eyes; and do not be startled, reader, but surely I felt his invisible presence, his light kiss almost touching my cheek, and, bowing my head, it seemed as if an invisible hand was laid

there in benediction. With unutterable longing, my arms stretched out to lay hold of the spirit-visitor, but, oh, in vain! Impenetrable is the veil which screens immortality from fleshly touch. Opening my eyes, with a sigh, I murmured, "Thou art near, and yet so far away, but, God willing, we will meet again at the last." Lovingly my glance rested again and again on every familiar object, and it was with regret that I arose to go.

Gerald and Peggy were having difficulty about the price of the pickles. I forget whether it was pounds or shillings that Peggy demanded per dozen; but there she stood, with a plate piled high up full, on exhibition as sample, and was in loud, wrathful tones descanting on their excellence, and expressing her determination not to abate in price, not even if she was entreated to do so by that creature of her imagination, the "Queen of Rooshy." Upon my appearance, Gerald appealed to me concerning the alleged extortion. But undaunted Peggy appropriated me at once as party to her suit.

"Look there, Miss Susette," she exclaimed, "jest look at them cowcubers! Jest taste 'em, and say if they ain't wurth all and every penny I ax for 'em."

Involuntarily I recoiled. The dish had been launched at me so furiously that I was afraid of a blow, and I never could bear pickles; they irritated my throat, and invariably set me to coughing. There was danger in tasting them, but there was also danger in refusing. But the latter was the greater; so I took as small a piece as I thought would at all satisfy Peggy and put it

into my mouth, and the strength of the pickles was immediately attested by a violent fit of coughing.

"She's choked!" cried Peggy, pounding me on the back.

"Jump her over this!" vociferated the niece, producing a broomstick.

"Throw some water in her face!" said Gerald, excitedly catching up a pail of suds.

The horrors of my situation were getting too complicated. With a sudden wrench I jerked from Peggy and darted out of the door. There was Bob, who gave a growl and rushed at me. Backwards I sprung, upsetting Peggy, who was hastening after me. Her fall involved the overthrow of Gerald, who fell heavily, bringing down the niece with him, who immediately screamed "murder!"

"Worse than murder!" shrieked Gerald.

High above all were Peggy's stern tones, demanding "What was the matter?"

A few seconds sufficed for each actor in this impromptu scene to scramble up. Peggy indignantly went to work, picking up the scattered pickles. Gerald, convulsed with laughter, remarked, "It was evidently decreed, Miss Susette, that you should do something to everybody this morning. But I hope that I have not injured this lady," he said, looking towards the niece, who was whimpering and slyly nursing her shin, scratched in the mêlée.

By a dexterous movement, Peggy straightened up, angrily declaring that she could not see the fun in overturning people in this way; and it was the first time such a thing had happened to her in her whole life.

As usual, I begged pardon all around. The pickle question now seemed easy of solution, and was soon arranged. Peggy was insulted, and made no effort to detain us, when Gerald remarked "it was time to get back." Grimly she stood in the doorway, dropping an almost imperceptible curtsy as we rode off.

## CHAPTER XVII.

WE rode on some minutes in silence, which was broken by Gerald remarking that Peggy was "a type of old family servants, fast becoming extinct: faithful, affectionate, and self-opinionated."

"So far as my memory goes back," I said, "her opinions have been uncontroverted. Papa had great respect for her sterling integrity, and treated her as a trusted friend. I do not remember of but one passage at arms between them, and then I was in fault."

"Of course," he assented; "but whose colors trailed in the dust when the battle ended?"

"Peggy was victorious, but then she was a generous conqueror, and did not twit us with our defeat. Being always of an energetic temperament, I early embarked in trade. I followed the mud-pie line. Peggy had given me a disabled crock to mix my batter in, and doing a moderate business, I was contented and happy, until, being shown the picture of an elephant by papa, I was so charmed by the personal beauties of that animal that I determined to immortalize them in the simile of a pie. The trunk gave me a world of trouble, but perseverance is generally the key to success; and at last the pasty, that appeared to me a remarkable likeness, was completed, and in triumph I conducted papa to view the *chef-d'œuvre*, and he praised it to my entire

satisfaction. But ambition was aroused, and when did that passion ever scruple as to means?

"I decided to open a large boarding-house, and surreptitiously transported one of Peggy's largest bakers, my crock being too small for the extended operations. The baker was missed, and after a search its whereabouts discovered. Words are inadequate to express Peggy's rage. She scolded, shrieked, shook her fist, until I got terrified, and picked up my largest pie, resolved to sacrifice it in my defense. At this juncture, papa came up and began a mild reproof to Peggy for her violence. Her temper, already fearfully high, instantly went up to white heat. For several seconds she was speechless, and could only execute a kind of war-jig until utterance came back; then she broke loose in such a torrent of invectives that papa, picking me up, fled, nor ceased his flight until safe in the intrenchments of his own room, with locked door, in his agitation depositing me in the coal-scuttle. He wiped his heated forehead, and remarked,—

"'Pussy, we must not tease Peggy any more.'

"I was too excited to cool down quickly, and burst out with,—

"'I don't like Peggy at all; she's a mean old thing. And, oh, papa! you ought to have seen her the other day, when a boy asked her too much for a fish, and she beat him with a dish-towel until I should not have wondered if he had dropped down dead.'

"'We must not exaggerate, Pussy,' suggested papa.

"'Well, she hit him mighty hard,' I asserted, positively, not prepared for further concessions. But a sense of justice compelled me to add, 'He had asked

her too much for the fish,—for he acknowledged it,—and said that he had intended to buy marbles with the halfpenny he had added on.'

"'Pussie! Pussie!' said papa, lifting me out of the scuttle, 'if it was not for Peggy's vigilance, I expect that we would be living on poor rates. She is an excellent woman.'

"But notwithstanding her excellence, he had no intention of tempting Providence by any unnecessary running into danger. So we remained in barricade until twilight came on, and candles had to be lighted.

"'Pussy, don't you think that you would not mind going to bed without your supper, just one time?' he asked.

"'Oh, I am so hungry!' I sobbed. 'I want to eat.' Papa looked troubled.

"'Don't cry, Pussy, I'll see if I can get you some bread and milk.'

"But the door which had been locked so securely remained locked: the key would not turn; the lock had not been used for so long that it had gotten out of order.

"'I declare, Pussy, we had better not have locked it,' said papa, wrestling with the contrary fastening.

"'It wasn't me,' I cried; 'it was you,'—not being willing to be implicated in the matter,—'and I want my supper, and I want to go to bed!'

"My weeping made papa desperate, and with a despairing effort the key turned: the door was unlocked. At this juncture, ting-a-ling came from the little bell that called us to our meals.

"'Good Peggy, kind Peggy,' said papa. 'She is going to give us supper, after all.'

"And uncommonly inviting it was. There was the broiled tripe that papa liked, and the crusty turnovers that I delighted in. Peggy had walked three miles to get the tripe. After supper, amicable relations were restored. Papa apologized about the baker, and Peggy explained that she was liable to be out of sorts when accidents occurred to her yeast, and that very day a whole pot full had been upset.

"I have no doubt but that a hope forced itself into papa's mind that no more accidents would happen to the yeast in the future. But he did not express it."

Gerald looked quizzically at me, and remarked that, considering her long propinquity to so much erudition, it was wonderful, her barbarity towards our gracious sovereign's English.

"There is no wonder at all about it," I replied. "She prides herself upon not 'putting on airs,' and would consider elegant language as much out of place in her deportment as elegant dress. It may be that I am accustomed to it, but I like her unsophisticated way of speaking: it is so genuine and honest."

"I hope, however, for the best interest of society, that your admiration of her remarkable style will not lead you to adopt it."

"There is no fear of that," I laughed; "the terror of Miss Ainsworth, to say nothing of the earl, would suppress a much stronger inclination for that dialect than I am conscious of possessing."

"Then I am to infer that my views would have no weight?"

"On the contrary, I have the greatest confidence in your judgment, in all matters, when the preference is

given to the word 'ask' over 'ax,' as Peggy unfailingly calls it."

"You do not abound in loose compliments, Miss Susette, and my little bit of angling was thrown away; but it is a gratifying circumstance that you do stand in awe of somebody."

"Slightly," I remarked; "but I do not think I have it in a dangerous degree. But just look, the formidable parties are enjoying a promenade under the trees. Miss Ainsworth has her hat off, and the earl is carrying it for her."

"Miss Susette, may I express the hope that you will spare me the quotation, 'speak of angels,' etc.?"

"You are really a very promising young man; your abilities will have a pre-eminent field for display in the diplomatic line."

"Yes, Miss Lenox, I have a modest hope in that way, to distinguish my native land and leave my name behind to a grateful posterity."

This peroration was abruptly terminated. Gerald ducking his head to avoid an overbranching limb, the covering of his chestnut locks was caught up and retained by the envious tree.

"Miss Susette," he called out, "get down and climb that tree for my hat."

"I prefer leaving it for a grateful posterity to do."

"Very well," he laughed, "upon second thoughts it will be as well; but, in the mean time, while it is waiting on posterity, I shall expect it to be venerated, as was Mr. What's-his-name's hat,—no, it was a cap,—therefore I shall expect you to bend the knee whenever you approach that chapeau. Here, Miss Ainsworth,

I've brought the culprit back, and deliver her over to you for punishment; and do not be too lenient, for it is my belief she destroyed that pocket-handkerchief purposely,—she is capable of anything spiteful. But do not be too heavy-hearted, my dear Miss Ainsworth; the young lady being a daughter of the house, I feel in some sort responsible for her bad behavior, and bound to make good any losses sustained through her agency: therefore, if you will furnish me with all that remains of that ill-fated kerchief, I will express it to London, and have its fac-simile sent down to you."

"How absurd, Gerald! That shows how much you know about it; new point is perfectly valueless beside old."

"Well, if that is the notion you ladies have about such things, you ought to feel under immense obligations to Miss Susette; the holes punched into it by her fists are certainly calculated to give it an extremely aged appearance."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Ainsworth, walking off.

Gerald dismounted and walked beside her, leading his horse by the bridle, calling back, however, to the earl,—

"You had better order your ward to gallop on in advance, otherwise you will be brought to grief."

"Get down, Susette, and walk with me," invited the earl.

Cautiously I gathered up my habit, and, making a little spring, stood upon the ground without a stumble.

"Very neatly done," I inwardly remarked.

"Let the pony go," said the earl, seeing me still holding fast the reins; "some one will come to him soon."

"Not for worlds," I answered, glancing towards Miss Ainsworth; "she (I was meaning the pony) will be sure to get in among the flowers."

"Well, give me the bridle," he said, taking it out of my reluctant hand.

I did not want him to lead the little horse,—indeed, I did not. My convictions were painfully acute that, acting in obedience to my unlucky destiny, the pony would undoubtedly make a vicious grab at the nobleman from behind. But for once my evil star paled, we reached the portico, where Miss Ainsworth and her companion were standing, in safety, and comparative comfort to me, as an occasional glance over my shoulder discovered no alarming symptoms. We had been talking about papa, and about Peggy, and about Bob, and had gotten quite confidential.

"Oh, great thief Mercury!" exclaimed Gerald, "if Miss Susette is not picking uncle's pockets!"

And, sure enough, my hand was fumbling in the pocket nearest me. With shame and fright I drew back quickly, pulling along something that dropped on the stone steps with the clink of breaking glass.

"Spectacles!" roared Gerald; "and it is lucky enough for you, Miss Susette, that you are not an inhabitant of Russia, or you would be safe for an overland journey to Siberia, for revealing state secrets."

Miss Ainsworth looked at me with horror. Picking up the broken glasses, I stood there, nervously trying to induce the fractured bits to reunite. The earl reddened slightly, and stated that he found the glasses convenient for night reading.

"Come, uncle," cried Gerald, laughing, "acknowl-

edge at once that Miss Susette made you injure your eyes over those abominable Greek characters. Cease your fruitless labors, oh, thou one of luck," he said to me, "those broken glasses are bound to remain a fixed fact. But what were you doing in uncle's pockets? I hope that you were not trying to abstract his watch?"

"I don't know," I answered, ruefully, "unless it was I used to be in the habit of feeling into papa's pockets for sugar-plums, and did so now, without thinking. I am very sorry."

"Do not mind it, Susette," said the earl, kindly, "you can feel in my pockets whenever you like; and, hereafter, you shall always find bonbons in them, now that I know my little girl's taste." And, putting his arm quite around me, he took the broken glasses.

"Are you sure that you are not offended with me?" I asked, leaning against the encircling arm, and looking wistfully into his face.

"Miss Lenox," remarked Miss Ainsworth, coldly, "in society it is not customary for young ladies to be so demonstrative, I might say affectionate."

Bewildered, I gazed at her. Continuing, she went on,—

"I do not impute improper motives to you, however; it is the result of your education, or rather want of it. Your papa did not understand——"

"Stop!" I cried, blazing with indignation. A thunderbolt would not have stopped me. Papa had been assailed. "Perhaps my father did not understand *your* society. I think he did not, if its requirements are ingratitude and deceit. But he understood *honor* and *principle*, and his teachings have taught me to

press on through a pathway of living fire, if there was no other avenue of escape, for integrity. And I think you underrate society: I have had no means of knowing, but I do believe that, although the spurious article may not pass unchallenged, yet genuine truth is everywhere respected. Even in a profligate-court '*Honi soit qui mal y pense*' had its origin. It has pleased Heaven to remove from me a father who had scarce his compeer in all this wide world, but it has also pleased that great high source to replace that parent with this kind friend, noble and true, and I never will fail in my gratitude to him, or be ashamed to show it." And, in defiance of Miss Ainsworth's eye, or rather in bravado of it, I upturned my face to the earl, and asked him to kiss me.

It may be fancy, but I thought a tear dropped with the light kiss that touched my forehead, and tenderly the earl's firm hands clasped mine, as he said, in low, earnest tones,—

"You are right, my child; and may Heaven forget me when I fail you!"

Gerald's heightened color betrayed how warm his feelings were; but, affecting to pass it over lightly, he begged Miss Ainsworth to order a servant to bring a blanket, "For I am going to weep," he said; "and when I do, pocket-handkerchiefs are totally inadequate for the purpose of assuaging my tears. I am very sensitive," he added, "and anything of the pathetic uses me dreadfully. But I say, Miss Susette, couldn't you write that speech down for me; for when I get into the House I might on occasion use it with great effect? But whether you do me this service or not,

you can bear in mind, if an emergency should arise when you deem it important to have two fathers, I might be induced to act in that capacity myself. But you must never ask me to kiss you. *I wouldn't* do that. And then another thing: you would have to keep your paws out of my pockets."

"Petted child!" remarked Miss Ainsworth, looking at me, and gracefully vanishing into the house; when I turned to follow, but was stopped by Gerald standing before me, barring progress.

"Stop, Miss Susette," he said. "I cannot allow you to go in there and set on Miss Ainsworth. Be calm, I impore you! Control your angry passions; use discretion, and allow me the honor of bearing a conciliatory message to the lady within. My long acquaintance, blended with my admiration and esteem, not to use a warmer word, with and towards elderly single ladies, peculiarly qualify me for the office of mediator; and you must permit me to say that your charge just now had something in it of brilliancy and dash, but was altogether inadmissible, as it carried war into the peaceful territory of a non-combatant. The most refined species of martyrdom would fail to extract one word of retort from lovely Miss Ainsworth."

"You are an able champion!" I snapped.

"A zealous one, Miss Susette; but scarcely able, unless the cause of heaven-born peace lends eloquence to my tongue and potency to my arguments. I do not wish my uncle's house to become the scene of contention and discord, and I have no wish to deal in unpleasant personalities; but the rancor of your temperament would inevitably lead to acrimonious results,

perhaps even to the throwing of tumblers and the hurling of candlesticks at the head of amiable Miss Ainsworth. Commission me, therefore, with an overture of amity, and I pledge myself, on behalf of my estimable kinswoman, that it shall be received in a fitting spirit of peace and good-will."

"Your apprehensions, Mr. Fitzhue, seem entirely for the safety of Miss Ainsworth. Suppose that lady, outstepping her habitual reserve, should hurl missiles at me?" I answered, finding myself getting ashamed of my heroics.

"When lambs take to devouring wolves, and the gentle dove turns its beak against eagles, then my fears for Miss Lenox will arise, and I will betake myself to providing for her safety."

"For which service," I answered, laughing, "Miss Lenox begs to thank you in advance, and you are authorized to present my most humble apologies——"

"For words," interrupted Gerald, "used by you in the heat of the moment, but devoid of premeditated bitterness."

"My own idea exactly," I answered; "happily expressed."

"Certainly, Miss Lenox, the abilities I am the fortunate possessor of, enable me to dress even crude ideas in the gorgeous phraseology suited to the delicate ear of the most refined. But remain tranquil, my young friend. You shall not be forgotten in the terms of the issue; and I make no doubt but that I shall conduct the negotiations so as to reflect credit upon both ladies, between whom I have the honor to mediate."

The earl suggested the propriety of Gerald's com-

mitting the above to paper, as it might not come amiss in the course of the future parliamentary debates.

"Might I trouble mademoiselle?" was inquired.

"Most certainly not," rejoined the earl. "I forbid Susette to scent politics from even afar off."

"An excellent decision, most wise judge," applauded Gerald; "for a horrible fear has intruded itself into my mind that, when I stand for my seat in the House, Miss Susette, with closely-shaven poll and abbreviated skirts, will stump the borough for the opposition."

"Just hear him!" I said to the earl. "Let's sue him for slander."

"Well, well; but let us go to luncheon now."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Two years have passed. Alas! how few can recount the passage of time without vain regrets at the waste of hours that can never again return! Evils we may not have wrought, but the good that we might have done have we accomplished? Have we labored willingly and cheerfully in our Master's vineyard, and neither cried out at the heat of the sun, nor fled at the blast when the gale cometh? If the answer is, as it should be,—I have not awearied at noon, nor sought escape from the fury of the tempest; but the praise is not due to me; it is thine, O Lord, thy rod and thy staff have comforted me; and though the burden has oftentimes been grievous, yet it has not been beyond my strength, for a mighty God, always faithful, always just, has helped me to sustain it, ever whispering the glad tidings in my ear that toil and care are but the price of eternal happiness—then we have not lived in vain, and all is well.

But few changes have taken place in the earl's household. The most important one is, Gerald is now in the House, and is making his mark there. We all read his speeches. Both the earl and I are very proud of them. His oratory was brilliant, and was aided by the rare humor which attracts a crowd, and operates forcibly upon the public mind. No one

was more sought after as an adherent to a measure that seemed difficult to get through; and no one was more dreaded as an opponent. His promptness in detecting a weak point, notwithstanding the many defenses that environed it, and his quickness to assail with his courteous but invincible raillery, were conceded by all.

Much of his time was necessarily spent in London; but we saw a great deal of him. He had a knack of continually taking us by surprise,—popping in at odd times,—the earl and myself receiving him rapturously, Miss Ainsworth complacently.

Grace and her husband had now come from abroad, and had set up in elegant style. Gerald was continually telling us about madame la duchesse. No lady in London was so much the fashion. Grace and I had been regular correspondents since her marriage and the almost immediate death of papa; and upon receiving intelligence of that event, she had written to the earl desiring to send for me. His answer was declining to relinquish me, alleging that I had been bequeathed to Lady Margaret. I took great delight in hearing of the fine doings of my sister, just as one enjoys picturings of fairy-land; but as to any participating in them, I would just as soon have thought of joining Queen Mab and her court in their moonlight gambols within the magic circle. Sir Robert Peel's father-in-law made the remark that "Robert killed our Sarah when he made a lady of her." I do not mean to assume that a lady may not dwell in the country; but I do mean to say that God has made some wild, free natures that languish under shackles of any kind, and whom even

the light meshes of a silken cord would chafe. The trammels and restraints of fashionable life would, I well knew, bring weariness, lassitude, and illness; the pure, fresh air of the country was to me life, the absence of it death.

## CHAPTER XIX.

I HAD been singing at the piano, and was still trifling with the instrument, running over the keys, childishly amused at the rapid passage of fingers, looking not unlike a frolicsome party of mice. The earl was waiting for his paper, for it was time it had come. Miss Ainsworth was crocheting a tidy of a marvelous pattern. Between that lady and myself I cannot say that our long residence under the same roof had cemented any ardent friendship, but we had become accustomed to, and reconciled to, one another's ways, which was perhaps just as well, if there is truth in the adage, that "the best of friends will fall out"; a misfortune quite out of the question with us, for in all our intercourse we mutually observed and preserved a system of scrupulous politeness. The earl's conduct towards me had been of unvarying kindness. Our one hour every day of Greek reading had never been discontinued. But I was becoming averse to it. I could not tell what had come over me, I was getting so awkward and embarrassed. It seemed to me if I only looked at a chair it would tumble down of its own accord. I was not much to be depended upon, even in so small a matter as holding a book; the book would not fall in an ordinary way, but appeared to actually leap out of my hands; quickly as a sea-gull I would dive after it, and

would have the mortification to bump up against the earl's face, as more slowly he would stoop to recover the volume. On one occasion I inflicted a large lump on his forehead; after that I was allowed to pick up the books without offer of assistance.

Steps were heard that I knew never belonged to James, our footman, in the world. Wheeling suddenly around on the piano-stool, I saw Gerald standing in the doorway. I thought then, and I still think him, the handsomest man I ever saw; his well-cut aristocratic features, so evidently belonging to somebody eminently qualified to take care of himself, were a pleasant sight to see. I sprang forward, but catching Miss Ainsworth's reproving eye, decorously fell back, and awaited with well-bred composure until the earl's hand was shaken cordially, Miss Ainsworth's with elegant *empressement*, and then was my turn to get both of mine well shaken in his hearty grasp.

"I was not intending coming quite now," he said. "But, Miss Susette, I bring a letter from sister Grace." My hand went out instantly for it.

"No snatching, Miss Lenox; it's for the earl."

My eyes followed the missive with a slightly surprised look,—the earl was a long time reading it,—and we all could see that the subject was not a pleasant one, from the expression of gravity that deepened on his face as he read. At the conclusion the letter was refolded with precision, and destined evidently to go into his pocket, but was unconsciously crushed in the hand that held it.

"Susette," he said, at length, "your sister insists that you spend the coming season with her. You are now

eighteen years old, and she says the propriety is manifest that you be brought out,—presented at court. Miss Ainsworth is expected to accompany you."

I imagine that Grace had perhaps said more by the letter not being shown; but what I heard was enough. It had the effect of a bombshell projected in our midst. For an instant I could scarcely breathe, from the suddenness of the thing, and sat gulping in my respirations as if I had no other aid for breathing purposes than a hand-bellows, and that not in very good order.

"I shan't go," I enunciated, as soon as I could speak; and, turning to the earl, to enlist him on my behalf, asked him if I should; but he seemed averse to speaking. Not so with Miss Ainsworth, who took up the matter with great animation.

"By all means," she said, addressing the earl, "it is incumbent for her to go; it would be an unheard-of thing if she were not to. It was a duty of birth, and could not be dispensed with."

Miss Ainsworth was not generally given to much speaking, but on this occasion I thought that she never would have done. Gerald must have had some view of his own for keeping out of the discussion, for while it was in progress he opened not his mouth, but took the shade off from the lamp and inspected it with an intentness that might have led to the belief that he had it in contemplation to make one just like it. A great deal was said, principally by Miss Ainsworth; but the conclusion was, the earl decided that he would have to comply with the demand of Grace.

"But, my dear," he said, trying to soothe me,—for I was crying bitterly,—"if I was eighteen years old, and

going to be presented to her majesty of England—your sister has so worded her request that I find it impossible to avoid compliance. But I do not mean to relinquish my title to you, and we must have you back again; and I think," he continued, "that you need not stay longer than the presentation, should you then feel inclined to return."

Instead of replacing the lamp-shade, Mr. Gerald here thought proper to send it spinning across the room, saying: "Do not hug such a delusive hope, uncle. Miss Susette is very much distressed now; but immediately upon arriving at London, the court toilette will lay its claims to her undivided interest, and then after the ceremony, the grand occasion in which it will be worn, is ended, she will find so many flirtations on her hands that it will be impossible to tear herself away."

Indignation getting the better of my tears: "I am not going to have anything to do with flirtations, sir, and you know it!"

"I wish I did," was answered; "but that feminine prerogative, I fear, you will find too pleasantly alluring to reject."

"You seem well versed on the subject, Mr. Fitzhugh," I replied, much offended. Gerald laughed.

"I did not say, Miss Susette, that my views were obtained from personal experience. People can learn from books, you know. But it is true, however I may have gotten the information. The practice is naughty, but it is nice."

For the first time in her life, Miss Ainsworth came to my assistance, which she did so promptly and efficiently that I soon had the satisfaction of seeing Mr.

Gerald discomfited and flying out of the door crying, "Mercy! Mercy, Miss Ainsworth! I yield."

The earl looked after Gerald and smiled, but it did not appear to me very cheerfully, and remarked that his fears for his learned little friend took another direction, and hoped that her inquisitive mind might not be led into dabbling with the black arts; "though, to be sure," he said, "sorcery is not punishable now as it used to be. Modern chemistry has exposed many of its pretensions."

My interest was at once aroused, and I asked the earl where and how it would be possible to visit a large laboratory. "I should like to see all those wonderful appliances," I said, already excited on the subject, "and the innumerable bottles filled with the magic-working acids."

"Well, get back quickly, Susette," he remarked, "and we will set up a laboratory here, and, if necessary, import a professor to experiment for us."

"That will be too delightful!" I answered, in raptures. "I am going to come back the first minute I can. I wish I did not have to go," was added, sorrowfully.

"Never mind, Susette, the time will come around before you know it; and it will be pleasant to meet again after a short absence." And announcing his intention of taking a "little turn," the earl left the room.

Miss Ainsworth left too, and it is my belief that she went to inspect her available finery. Heavy-hearted, I got my work-basket and tried to sew. I had turned down and basted a great roll of ruffling to hem, which when completed I designed presenting to Miss Ains-

worth, to ruffle her petticoats, as a slight token of gratitude for her instruction in the art of needlework. But I couldn't sew,—I could not see,—tears got into my eyes, and I pricked my fingers until they bled.

Tying on my hat, I passed out into the grounds. Autumn was coming on, and the trees were getting brown, and all the tenderer kind of plants had been sent for winter quarters into the green-house. I was sad, I felt wretchedly low-spirited, and sat down out of sight in an arbor. I still mourned for papa. The acuteness of the pain had worn off, but I missed him yet; the gap in my heart his loss had made no time could remove. But the bright sun, so long obscured, was now coming out of the cloud; and the pleasant rills that had dried up were beginning again to flow, and the song-birds whose melody had turned to silence were again breaking out in gleeful chants, and I was learning that life had pleasures still left. This state had not been brought about by the quick rebound of youthful feelings, but was the fruit of many prayers and struggles for submission to the will of Him whose chastening rod had fallen upon me; and this was due to Lady Margaret, her gentle hand had turned me to this well of living water, the source from whence all help cometh.

This new calamity—for so I regarded going to London—opened my eyes to the great content I had been enjoying. It was true I might come back again, but it is human nature to shrink from a disagreeable ordeal. And then, what changes might occur! I might die. Like other impulsive people, I never could keep my feelings well in hand, and they were now going to run away with me. I wanted to cry, and I wanted some-

body to comfort me, and I was glad when I saw Gerald coming. "I'll just tell him how troubled I feel," was my reflection, "and I know that he will cheer me: he always does." A very little encouragement on his part would have had me sobbing out my woes on his breast. But his manner appeared less sympathizing than I had ever seen it, and he did not sit very near me; and I noticed that he was embarrassed, a phenomenon I had never observed in him before; even his usual fluency seemed to have deserted him. Something was wrong with him, I saw that. Apparently, he was suffering from the extremes of heat and cold all at once, or nearly so; one minute the warm flush would mount his cheeks, and slight drops of perspiration stand out on his forehead, and in the next second he would turn white and look cold enough to shiver. It was all that hateful London, I knew. He was getting out of health. I was afraid that he was going to be ill. In my concern about him, I forgot my own tribulations.

"Gerald," I said, quite anxiously, "you are not well; you can't deceive me; go straight to bed, and take a bowl of gruel. Peggy is always insisting on mustard-plasters, but I don't like them."

He said that *he did not feel well*, but it was not a case for gruel or mustard-plasters either. He then laughed a little, and said that he did not know that he could be such a fool.

"Fever!" I thought, getting seriously alarmed; "and I am afraid it's going to be brain fever." My reflections were cut short, for in an instant my hands were in his, and one arm was around me.

"Susette," he spoke, "I did not mean to tell you

so soon, but I cannot let you go up to that Babel without telling you how long and how dearly I have loved you, and to ask you to be my wife."

I pulled loose from him. "Oh, don't, Gerald!" I cried. "No, no, not that! I never have had any brother but you, Gerald; *please* be my brother."

"Confound the brother!" he said, in anger, and regaining my hands with a force that pained me. "Susette, you shall listen to me." Then came a long tale of love. He had first been drawn towards the little girl scuffling with rude boys for the life of a kitten. "From that hour, Susette, I have loved you, and hoped to make you my wife."

"Oh," I moaned, feeling like a guilty thing, "and I never dreamed of anything like this!"

"No, no," he said; "the absence of your knowing it was the charm, your innocence and purity were the magnets that attracted the worship of my man's heart. Day by day, hour by hour, have I gloated over you with a miser's greed, using an iron force to keep back fond words and looks."

I trembled all over and felt sick, but gathering courage, spoke,—

"Oh, Gerald, I wish I could love you as you would like me to! But I cannot; I cannot go to you as my mother went to my father, feeling in my heart that you are all the world to me. Oh, why," I moaned, "can we not command our affections? How happy I might be if I loved you,—you whose love would so honor a queen! Oh, Gerald, why did you love poor little me? Your wife ought to be a grand, magnificent woman."

"Grand, magnificent women," he said, bitterly, "are

doubtless very statuesque and handsome to look at; but, oh, little Susette, for our wives we yearn for veritable flesh and blood; for the eye that can look tender; for the cheek where the red blood flows swift and warm; and for the heart that is good and true. Where shall these be found among the painted butterflies of fashion? Child, I will wait for years and years, if there will be hope for me then."

"Please, Gerald," I pleaded, "do not force me to say unpleasant things. I wish that you could know how much I have always esteemed you, valued you. I think there are but few such noble characters in the world." Eager to prove my earnestness, I caught his hand.

Pulling it back, he said, grimly, "I understand you: you refuse me, and are sorry for me; you need not try, you can't palliate it. You have a perfect right to reject me, only do not go to pitying me about it. I am no child, crying for a toy. I am a man, hurt because his love is thrown back to him. I'll try to get over it, and I do not suppose it will kill me; but, oh, I do wish somebody would cut my throat!" he said, rushing off.

I sprang after him. "Oh, Gerald, do not go away from me so! Oh, be friends with me!"

"Poor little thing!" he said, taking my face in both his hands, and softening as he gazed into the tear-dimmed eyes; but, as if struck with a new idea, "Tell me, Susette, why do you so absolutely, so forever refuse me? Is it because you love some one else?"

The hot, swift blush crimsoned neck, cheek, and brow. The past few minutes had been making revelations, and revealed to me a secret of myself.

This confirmation was stronger than he expected.

"I am answered," he spoke, sadly, dropping my face.

"And you have chosen wisely; his worth is beyond praise," Gerald said, glancing towards him, who was visible to us, as he wandered among the shrubbery. "And as his wife you will be as happy as mortal may be. I am not the mean dog," he added, "to run him down because he'll get what I can't have. Good-by, Susette!" And, pressing my hand with a convulsive grasp, he hurried off.

"Why, Gerald, my boy, you do not look like an accepted lover." How plainly the evening breeze wafted the words to my ear!

"I am a rejected one," was the short answer.

"Why, how? I thought——" began the earl.

"She loves some one else," Gerald interrupted.

"Who?" And I could fancy I saw the change that swept over his face, the monosyllable had in it so much anxious meaning.

"*You had better go ask her,*" said Gerald, striding away.

I had scarcely time to hide my face. I would have gotten up and fled; but I was shaking as from an ague, and my feet had no strength to move.

"Did you refuse Gerald so as to give me a chance, *darling?*" was the glad whisper as two arms met around me. I felt anxious to run. Oh, woman, woman, even to thyself are the workings of thy heart a mystery! How sweetly fell the tones upon my ear, and yet the wild, maidenly wish to escape them! Rapid words told me how by imperceptible degrees the child had

crept into his heart, until he loved the very books her hands had touched. The flowers nearly pulled to pieces by her busy fingers became precious, the patter of her footsteps sweet music; sunshine and delight in her presence, loneliness and dearth came with her departure. "Yet all this vast love, my Susette, I had to keep back. I would not stand in Gerald's way: it seemed so natural that he should win you. And even now, when I hear the beatings of your heart against my own, your dear head nestling on my breast, and your form shrinking not from my embrace, the joy seems to be too exceeding great to be real, and I fear that I am but dreaming. Look up, darling, and tell me it is no dream."

Closer yet pressed the head against the breast that was to shelter it for life. Louder yet beat, heart to heart, the two that were henceforth to be as one; but the word and look came not.

"Well, love, I must take silence for consent; but you must not keep me waiting long. Without you I shall be very lonely. To-morrow I shall take you to your sister Grace, and not see you again until I can call you wife."

"Oh, not that horrid London!" I exclaimed, springing up. Marriage was a trying circumstance; but I might get through with it if we could only sneak off to some remote place in the country. This opinion I managed to deliver with considerable difficulty. But the earl was clear that this would not do. Indeed, he promptly repudiated the arrangement.

"Then we will have just to get out of the idea altogether," I said, in distress. "London is quite

impossible. The archbishop, the grand church, its loud organ, and the richly-clad people assembled to witness the rite would dismay me, and I should lose my senses entirely, and could not in the least be relied on to act as a rational creature. I should marry myself to some one else," I gasped.

"I am not apprehensive of such a mistake," remarked the earl; "and there is nothing to be so frightened at, darling. I have no doubt but that with the assistance of sister Grace I can make you my countess without any serious aberration of mind."

"Yes, Grace can do a good deal, certainly," I stammered; "but there seem so many difficult things."

"These difficult things," he answered, soothingly, "will not seem so difficult after awhile." And then with infinite tact he changed the conversation from our two selves entirely: and I was breathing freely again, unconstrained and smiling. The hours went swiftly by in their happy flight as we sat conversing, until the chill air of late evening came on. "Come, pet," said the earl, "you must go in: you will take cold;" and, looking fondly upon me, "*I wonder what the world will say* to my having such a bonnie wee wife."

"I have an idea," I replied, gayly, "that it will do as it generally does, take the liberty of saying what it pleases,"—as laughing, we went towards the house.

A letter was handed to the earl. "Stay, Susette," he said, quite gravely, as I was springing away; and reading the note without remark, he placed it in my hand. It was from Gerald, and was only a few scrawling lines,—

"WM., EARL OF HUNTINGTON:

"The race was a fair one, and I have lost. I suppose I shall rub through it; but it will not be very easy. I shall leave England, and not return until I can look upon another man's wife and not covet her. Show this to her. God bless you both!

"GERALD."

"We will not speak of this, Susette," said the earl, taking the letter.

"Certainly not," was my immediate answer.

## CHAPTER XX.

MISS AINSWORTH was standing before a slight fire. The earl approached her at once and requested her congratulations.

"Susette has promised to be my wife."

I expected that she would have manifested immense surprise, but I could not detect a vestige of it in the gracefully expressed hopes for happiness, etc., that immediately followed; and I experienced an uncomfortable conviction that the event was not unanticipated by that far-seeing lady. For the first time in my life I felt the want of a mother. How I longed for a mother's sympathizing interest, in this new great happiness! how I longed for a mother's kind encouragement, in the new life that had dawned upon me! how I longed to hear a mother ask God to bless her child and show her how not to fail in any of the wifely duties towards him who had chosen her for his companion until death! Humbly I approached Miss Ainsworth,—

"Please call me Susette just this once," I asked, "and kiss me."

"Susette," she said, dropping her head and touching her lips to mine.

Grateful for the concession, I gave her a spasmodic hug, disarranging her laces and ribbons frightfully. She winced slightly, but otherwise did not testify disappro-

bation. The earl explained to her that he would leave in the morning, to place me with my sister Grace, and invited her to go along.

"No," she replied, "I'll go up to the wedding and remain for the season."

"Good-night, Susette. Go to bed. I shall want a bright little traveler," said the earl, getting his candle; and his step was almost as light as Gerald's, as he left the room.

"I shall retire, too," said Miss Ainsworth, departing.

Left to myself, I too sought my apartment, but not to sleep. In the sudden dawning of this new era, it seemed as if years had flooded over my head, I felt so oldened. In the solitude of my chamber, reflections, not all of pleasure, came crowding around me, and would not go back whence they came, at my bidding. I thought of Gerald. "Oh, if I could only have known!" I groaned; and wiped away a tear, thinking at that moment he was tormented for me. "And I am so happy too!" I murmured, compunctiously, and could scarcely smile, even when thinking of my noble lover. What can women be thinking about, I wonder, when they prate of "woman's rights"? Is not the power they wield felt though invisible,—absolute though indefinable? And my heart swelled, not with pride, but with the humility of self-abasement, at the fearful range of empire it is in woman's nature to exert. What obstacles have not been surmounted, when lured on by bright eyes,—even when the light that shone in them was false! Toils, sufferings, privations, and death have been undergone for lips that were not true; and in all the dark catalogue of crime, what is there that

has not been done for woman's low tones that flattered but to deceive? Oh, woman, how blessed would be thy mission, how almost divine thy attributes, if, with a steady light, they beamed only on the path of virtue; if only honor and truth were admitted to the sunlight of thy smile; and if thy influence tended heavenward, instead of hurling immortal souls to perdition! "Oh, Gerald," I cried, "God grant that you may have naught to lay to my charge!"

But did the love of a good woman ever harm any man?

Miss Ainsworth's chignon and shining braids lay in their respective drawers. The collar, cuffs, scarf, bows, and other light feminine paraphernalia were disposed in beautiful order, and the fair owner was calmly fastening the last button of her night-gown, the last stage of preparation for her virgin repose. A timid knock was heard at the door. "What has that tiresome Jane forgotten?" wonders the lady, unjustly imputing short-comings to the innocent chamber-maid.

"Why, Miss Susette!" she exclaimed.

I was thankful that she did not say Miss Lenox. "May I pass the night with you?" I petitioned. "I am going away to-morrow, and"—getting embarrassed—"I believe I am nervous. I never was going to be married before."

"Ah!" said Miss Ainsworth, elevating her eyebrows, as she accorded the permission. "Bless me!" she exclaimed, "if she has not pulled off her shoes and stockings and pattered all the way down the hall in her bare feet! I shall get frost-bitten."

She shivered, and seemed inclined to send me back,

as I stood there regretting the oversight, and trying to get up some degree of warmth by putting one foot on top of the other. I think if there had been a kettle of boiling water convenient, I would have plunged both feet into it.

"There, take that," she commanded, pointing to the blanket she always kept neatly folded at the foot of her bed,—useful in a sudden access of cold.

Obediently I took the covering, enveloped my feet, silently hoping that it might not cause me to fall into a perspiration, so as to incur her displeasure again.

"Miss Lenox," was demanded, just as I was settling myself to sleep, "have you any bad habits?"

I started up, very wide awake.

"How can you?" she observed, reproachfully. "You have nearly dragged the counterpane off me; there was no necessity for so much energy. I do not suppose that you smoke a meerschaum and drink whisky. I simply meant to ask if you were apt to snore or be restless."

Not being informed on these points, I could only hope that I did not.

Sleep, which had been so near my eyelids, now seemed to have taken a long, perhaps final flight, and I had the misery to find myself getting restless; so excruciating were the efforts to keep still, that in desperation I essayed to make a stealthy retreat to the privileged precincts of my own room. But at the first cautious move Miss Ainsworth's slumbers became disturbed. Instantly I was still as a mouse, and abandoned all ideas of relief in that way. In the long, wakeful hours that intervened, I am not sure that I did not wish for an alarm of fire. At any rate, I did desire that the

peaceful sleeper by my side would wake up with the toothache or a pain in the stomach or something. But no, nothing of this sort happened. That lady's body was too well regulated to indulge in such freaks. I had heard that taking a flock of sheep one at a time through a gap, repeating the alphabet backwards, or even reciting the multiplication table, were methods calculated to induce sleep. I tried all these, getting from one to another so rapidly that I got as lively as a cricket, and wanted to hop.

Towards the close of this wretched night I dropped into a sleep so profound that it required considerable shaking from Miss Ainsworth to arouse me.

"How soundly children do sleep!" she enunciated, somewhat in exasperation, in consequence of her prolonged exertions. "Miss Lenox, will you never wake? You will never be in time for the train."

In another instant I was up, flying out of the doorway.

"How dreadfully furious!" she sighed, closing the door.

In five minutes I had had my bath, was dressed, and was in the breakfast-room. The earl met me, looking absolutely young.

"You have had a good night's rest," he remarked, looking at the face flushed from the hurry, and red from the recent scrubbing.

Have I? was thought; but I made no mention of the incorrectness of his opinion. Our breakfast was soon over, and, standing in my jacket and hat, ready to start, I was near breaking down, and only a slight provocation would have had the effect of loosening the

flood-gates of my tears. Miss Ainsworth suspected this, and, detesting scenes, she politely hurried us away,—her placid kiss barely touching my lips, and her well-chosen words of adieu delivered with modulated euphony, as she suggested the unpleasantness of a bustle at the station.

## CHAPTER XXI.

My wonder at London was beyond words, and the interjection, o-o-o-oh! was prolonged until there was danger of hoarseness.

We found Grace at home, also the duke. Grace was glad to see me, and not at all put out by the fervency of my embraces. Her husband received me very kindly, and I was secretly charmed to observe that he was probably as much older than Grace as the earl was than myself. They both immediately began thanking the earl for bringing me to them so promptly; these thanks were as promptly declined, the earl saying that he was not entitled to them, as his object was to take me back with the utmost dispatch that could be used. Grace did not appear to relish the statement that followed, and the duke seemed diverted to an extent that threatened explosion into peals of laughter momentarily.

"Susette is very young," was Grace's first remark.

This objection the earl thought "would decrease each day."

"And she has not been presented," was still objected.

"On that head," was the reply, "when I discover that Susette is pining for a presentation, I will immediately bring her up for the purpose; and," continued the earl, "much as I deplore dissenting from madam

the duchess, yet, being authorized by Susette, I feel warranted in insisting that an early day be fixed for me to take her back to a home that has ceased to be a home until the light of it returns."

Grace, seeing there was no help, promised to use all reasonable diligence. "But who would have thought," she added, "about this child getting notions of marriage in her head?"

"I assure you, madam," was the answer, "that there were no such notions there, until I took the liberty of instilling them."

The expected explosion from the duke now took place.

"Own up, Grace," he said, "that you are disappointed about the bringing out of *la petite*."

Grace, declining to answer, entered at once into the arrangement of matters with the earl. They mutually displayed a knowledge on the subject, as minute and practical as if both had been getting married every day of their lives. Of course, between two such enlightened minds there was little trouble to arrange a programme.

"Well, now, it is all settled," said the earl. "I'll bid you good-morning, and say good-by to Susette, and be off. I dare say that you do not want me," he remarked to Grace, who made no denial.

"Indeed, I think you had better go," she said, "with all the hurry you have thrown us in."

Do not blame me, reader,—but I was young, and new in a strange place, and feeling a long way from home,—if, when the earl, coming to me to take leave, I clung around his neck, refusing to let him go, completely ignoring the company present.

"I declare!" said Grace, quite vexed, "you must not be so childish, Susette. You are making too much fuss over the earl."

She was informed by that person that he had no objection to being made a fuss over.

"I do believe," continued my sister to my affianced, "that Susette is as much wrapped up in you as she was in papa."

The earl thought it to be likely. "I must go now, Susette," he said, showing some dexterity in his manner of getting rid of me.

"Be off with you!" commanded Grace. "I shall be getting in a hurry about this marriage myself if Susette is going to keep up this blubbering." And she made quite a show of getting him out of the room.

"Did you speak to me, Susette?" he asked, reappearing.

"No, she did not!" said Grace, unceremoniously shutting him out. "Come, little sister, as I am never to have you with me any more by yourself, I can't have you moping."

Dear Grace! How good she was to me! contriving to make the time so pleasant, that it went by swiftly, and managing in some way to render passably easy even the encounters with the dressmakers. The sights I saw were in such quick succession that I seemed to be turning London around in a kaleidoscope. There is no possible emergency that Grace would not be able to cope successfully with. I have an idea that she could have gotten "the grand army" back from burning Moscow, safe, bag and baggage, into quarters on the banks of the Seine.

I must say that it was due entirely to her benign influence that the wedding in high life, duly chronicled in the *Times*, passed off without ludicrous concurrent circumstances. She had previously married me so often to the duke, in order to familiarize me with the ceremony, that, when I stood up with the earl, I could not realize whether I was committing bigamy, or had been very unfortunate in the matter of husbands.

By means of resolutely holding my tongue, and looking to Grace for signals, nothing occurred to mar the general *éclat*. The breakfast, the church, and the choir were splendid, if the soprano singer did squeak in the unequal struggle with B flat. On this occasion, I have to record, I shed no tears. Grace had avowed a determination to pinch me if I did, and there was no eluding her watchful eye; and I have no doubt but that her sentiments of relief were profound when she saw me safely shut up in a railway carriage, incapable, as she supposed, of public transgression of any of the inexorable rules of etiquette.

## CHAPTER XXII.

"Who is in that carriage?" asked a passing conductor of the guard.

"An old gent and his grand-daughter," was the irreverent reply.

The earl colored, but it was not with pleasure, for he looked angry, and said something. I did not catch the first part of it, but it was about some sort of a nation. For some hours my emotions had been under a severe tension, aching for an escape-valve of some kind. The strain was now removed. I got into such an hysterical fit of laughter, that I am afraid it was all my bridegroom could do not to shake me. I saw that he was not pleased, and did try to stop, and, by an almost superhuman effort, was checking up; but the earl had gotten out of patience, and said, "Susette, I am astonished at you!" so sternly, that I went off again violently. I could not burst the hooks and eyes off my dress. Grace had laced my stays so tight that the fastenings remained intact, but the blood rushed to my face with such a sweep, that I began choking, getting purple. This frightened the earl, who rushed frantically into an adjoining compartment where there were many passengers, calling for help. This call was nobly responded to. In less time than one could imagine I was in a puddle of all the combined liquors usually

carried about by British subjects, male and female, who, one and all, sacrificed the contents of their private bottles in the cause of humanity.

"She has been overeating herself," remarked a female Samaritan in an ancient bonnet and blue-eyed spectacles, deliberately pouring a quart of aromatic vinegar over me. "My daughter Lydia was once taken in the same way after partaking too freely of plum-pudding."

"Susette, could you tell me how to get you some dry things? I think I may be able to get at your trunks," inquired the earl of the guilty agitator of the public commotion, which had now subsided, and we had been exchanged to a dry carriage.

The dry things were obtained and put on, and the drenched articles of my attire ejected from the window with contumely, and the earl readmitted to the privilege of a seat beside his new-made wife. I was mortified at the deep interest he at once took in the morning paper. I was likewise penitent, and composed several little speeches tending towards a reconciliation, but discarded them on the instant as not suitable. The main difficulty was in the style of address. The earl was the most convenient, but, under the circumstances, not sufficiently expressive. The next thought, of husband, was rejected, as he did not look as if any allusion to the recently formed tie between us would be agreeable. I then thought of William, but that seemed too familiar, for apparently he had, or was going to, resign my acquaintance. I was not equal to the situation, and hopelessly looked out of the window, watching the fleeing objects, until I could see them no longer for the gathering tears. I blinked, trying to keep them

back, and did succeed for a short time, but gathering force they rushed forth in a volume, a deluge! "I wish I was dead!" was sobbed. Down went the paper, the earl was at my side calling himself a brute, begging forgiveness. "It's me that should ask pardon," I said, between sobs.

"Oh, no, my precious; you are an angel!" he very magnanimously remarked.

My generosity was touched, and I stated to him that I also considered him one, or approximating one, I forget which. He instantly went into raptures, and made the wildest assertions, perfectly regardless of truth; not even making his statements plausible. For instance, he affirmed that I had been an object of affection with him all his life: he was born with it, in fact. This was simply impossible: my advent was not made into the world until a great many years after his, nor was my mother born at so early a period. I said this to him, and asked "where he thought he would go to when he died?" I expected to see an exhibition of confusion under this merited reproof; but with a degree of moral turpitude I could not have imputed to him, perfectly unabashed, he dated the hour of his attachment from the instant of first beholding me. This also was not true, and I mentioned one or two circumstances as indubitable proof that it could not have been so in his case, although it might have been so in Gerald's, I added.

"Why didn't you marry Gerald, then?" he asked, getting into a passion.

I thought that he ought to know the reason why I did not; so I sighed, and gave him a reproachful look;

beginning to feel sorry that I had married anybody. I do believe the hypocrite thought I was going to cry, and that was the reason that he instantly began the endeavor to restore harmony, becoming abject in his self-accusations. I not only forgave him, but made an effort, tired as I was, for his entertainment, by starting a conversation out of my own resources. I inquired if he had witnessed the solar eclipse, and by what process did he inspect it? relating to him that I had seen it through the medium of smoked glass, and that I had broken five or six pieces before getting a piece sufficiently dark, and had burnt my fingers. He manifested not the slightest interest in solar eclipses, but did say "poor little fingers!" I next "regretted that Miss Ainsworth was so obstinate about passing the season in London, and mentioned that she would not go back to the country with us, although I had implored her to do so."

"Miss Ainsworth be hanged!" he said, brutally.

I was surprised at the remark, for two reasons: firstly, I had always considered the earl to be a mild-tempered man; and secondly, the suddenness of his antipathy to Miss Ainsworth.

"She will never be hanged," I asserted, dogmatically; "for if that lady has a fault in the world, it is too great a leaning to the side of law and order. And I wish she was here: she has always been calling me fidgety; but she would not do so any more if she was to see you now——" My remark was unfinished, for the earl interrupted me by an expression, the strength of which was so great as to stay the unspoken words upon my lips, and I gazed at him in open-mouthed amazement and terror. I think that he felt ashamed

of himself, for he apologized at once, saying that he was not often betrayed into such atrocious expressions, but there were causes operating, affecting his usual frame of mind: the train was moving too slow, he was impatient, and wanted a cigar.

"They won't let you smoke here," I said, looking at the prohibitory placard; "but isn't there a smoking-place, or something of the sort, where you could go?"

He had no intention of going to a smoking place.

"Well," I said, bent on being comforting, "couldn't you put your head out of the window, and light your cigar? I wouldn't think that they could object to that; these railway people have no right to be so tyrannical."

He was not going to put his head out of the window.

"Dear me!" I said, vexed at the failure of my plans for his comfort. "It is just as Grace said, we must not look for perfection in anybody."

"When did Grace tell you that?" he demanded.

"Last night, when we lay talking."

"When you lay talking?" he questioned, in surprise.

"Yes," I answered; "she slept with me last night. She proposed it, because I was going away, she said. But I was not to be imposed upon in her motive at all: it was to keep on telling me over and over again how I was to behave at church."

"She displayed great kindness," rejoined the earl, amused; "and would you object to telling me what was said, as I conclude that I was mentioned in your conversation?"

"Yes, we spoke of you. We had gone to bed and extinguished the light."

"You don't tell me," said the earl, "that you were not afraid in the dark?"

"Don't ridicule me, sir," I said, with dignity. He disclaimed intending any ridicule, and I proceeded. "Grace asked me where I supposed you were, and what you were doing."

"What did you answer her?" asked the earl, showing an interest.

"Why, I presumed that, after leaving us, you had gone straight to your lodgings, and were perhaps at that very moment looking at my picture, which I had taken and sent after you the same day that I arrived in London."

"Yes, that was good in you about sending the picture, and your conclusions were natural; but what did sister Grace say? Did she think so too?"

"No," I replied, and did not seem inclined to continue the narrative.

"Go on," he said; "no half-confidences; let's have it."

"Well," I resumed, on being pressed, "she did not think that you had gone to your lodgings; but was of opinion that 'nobody was perfect,' and that you had gone to some other place to meet some associates, and were passing your time in smoking cigars and——"

"And what else did Madam Grace tell you?" was demanded, sharply. "What did she say I was doing?"

"Drinking punch."

"Grace has great astuteness. But did you have nothing to say in my defense?"

"Yes; I told her that you did not drink punch. I had heard you say so; but I had to admit about the

cigars, but I told her I was surprised that she should say anything about cigars. The duke smoked, and so did papa, and as for being perfect, it was my opinion that some people were so nearly so that the difference could not be found out, and I wanted to know of her if papa had not been without flaw, and she had to agree with me."

The earl was profuse in his thanks. "But do not expect too much, Susette. I have my faults, but I do not expect that you will be quick at discovering them or given to descanting upon them."

I was much affected, and grew very solemn, and felt on the spur of the moment as if I had been married about a hundred and five years, and became very affectionate and confidential; but I was soon distressed by observing that my husband was again showing symptoms of wanting to smoke. I alluded sympathizingly to this fact, but added, stoically, "I have my wants, too. I am sleepy; I never slept a wink last night. Grace never left off talking once. I did not eat any breakfast either, and I am just as hungry now as I can be."

The earl was all concern, and hopefully remarked that it would "not be long before I would be able to get food and rest."

"I don't believe I can wait. You do not know how hungry I am," I said plaintively. "If I only had a cracker,"—peeping through the door,—"just see that little boy. What a nice-looking slice of bread and butter he has. He's got two," I said, looking closely. "I am going to get one."

"Come back, Susette; are you crazy?" demanded the earl, seizing my arm.

No, I was not crazy ; but I was tired, hungry, worn out.

"You've pinched me," I said, resentfully.

"I did not," said the earl.

I stripped up my sleeve, and there was the blue mark. "It hurts," I sniffled.

"Poor little arm !"

"It is very well for you to say poor little arm," I said, getting spiteful and extremely disgusted with matrimony,—*"but you have scolded me, made me cry, and pinched me, and I do expect that you'll beat me next,"* and I began to sob.

"Bless my soul !" said the excited earl. "Do be quiet, Susette." The sobs redoubled, and strong symptoms of violent hysterics. The nobleman fairly gnashed his teeth. "Oh, if I could only get you off this infernal railway !" he muttered. "Do, Susette, behave yourself, if you can," and his tones were not affectionate.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"SPEAK out, young woman ; tell me what you want. I am sufficiently buttered," remarked the earl. I had been using diplomacy, but I blushed at the detection, and answered in confusion that I "wanted to go over to see Peggy."

"Certainly," was the polite response ; "I'll order the carriage and go over with you." This was exactly what I did not want. I had misgivings as to the result, were the two great powers suddenly brought into juxtaposition without some little previous preparation of soothing the way.

"Maybe I had better go by myself," I said, getting exceedingly red, "to propitiate Peggy ; you know we did not ask her consent, and perhaps she is resentful."

"Then go alone, by all means," he laughed. "I understand that she is a formidable person, and not to be slighted."

"May I ride the pony ?" I asked, humbly ; for I had already discovered that my domestic happiness underwent fewer vicissitudes when I maintained a strict humility of demeanor, and slightly suppressed the innocent candor which was my distinguishing trait. I was afraid, too, that Grace would lose respect for me ; and Miss Ainsworth I knew would despise me.

"Oh, yes ; James can attend you."

Peggy was busy about her butter, Bob locked up, as no vigilance was adequate to keep him out of the prints, so great was his fondness for that luxury.

"So you have got to be a countess, have you, Miss Susette?" was Peggy's salutation. "But you needn't look for me to be calling you 'my lady;' I shan't do it."

I assured her that it would do just as well to call me "as she always had done."

"I am glad on it," she condescended to reply, "but I hain't a going to make no change, no how; but you have dun a heap better than if you had taken t'other; not that I am a saying anything agin Mr. Gerald, for I must say that he did behave handsome about the pickles—he gin me ten shillings over, Miss Susette, to buy my niece a gown. But then, young folks will be young folks,—they can't help it, I s'pose; but leastways, according to my notion, the old yearl is a heap the likeliest man; and his being a little oldish is noth'ing agin him." At this juncture, the niece came hurrying up. "La, Miss Susette!" she cried.

Great was my consternation to behold Peggy immediately bestow two or three well-directed cuffs on the poor girl's face.

"Where is your manners?" she said, "to think of you a-calling the countess 'Miss Susette!' and you a-living along with me, too, where you might have learnt better." The niece made a great outcry.

"Stop your jaw," ordered Peggy, making at her with the butter-paddle. The unhappy niece darted off, describing an eccentric circle in her flight, necessitated thereto by the exigency of avoiding her pursuing relative.

My sympathies were all with the niece, but I stood cowardly looking on, afraid to interfere.

Peggy returned from the charge, a little flustered. "Young wimin hain't no account, Miss Susette, unless they are kept in order," she explained.

"I've brought you a present, Peggy."

"You dont say it is a bunnit, honey?" she said, with trembling eagerness.

"Yes, it is a bonnet, though. Send your niece to get the box from James."

"Elmiry, do you go and git that box,—that bunnit-box,—from Jeems," was loudly ordered.

"I hope, Miss Susette," said Peggy, manifesting apprehensions, "that you have brung me a bunnit to go on my head, and not a little scrap of something that ain't no account."

"I have brought you a bonnet, Peggy,—a real bonnet,—and nobody in the world would think of calling it anything else."

I had, with infinite pains, designed the superstructure myself, and Grace had influence enough in a millinery establishment to have the model reproduced. I suppose that when finished it had probably been on exhibition in the shop as a curiosity; but the object of its creation was answered—Peggy was charmed. The one for the niece was on a more modern style.

"Put it on, Elmiry," ordered that person's aunt, "and don't a stand ther bustin' your eyes out."

The enraptured girl had been gazing at the pink bows and bright flowers. I think it was only the exercise of strong self-control that prevented her from

hugging the article. The bonnet was immediately elevated atop of her head.

"Turn it around," I said; "you have got it on backwards."

"Well," said Peggy, admiringly, "it looks well any way."

Leaving them in the happy possession of the bonnets, I stole away to the room made sacred to me by the long occupation of the good man who had been called to heaven to join the young wife, so loved, and so early lost; also another whom he had tenderly cherished.

A rich flooding of light streamed through the window, enveloping me. This is a happy omen, I thought,—my dead parents' blessing; and silently my thanksgiving went upwards. A full hour I lingered, feeling that here I might imbibe sweet influences of the virtues which, as a quenchless aroma, remained behind,—for what is good never dies, but lives, fulfilling its beautiful mission, long after the mortal part of it has returned to its mother earth.

I did not leave without dutifully presenting myself to Bob, now in the enjoyment of his liberty; but his feelings were hurt about the butter, and he had not recovered from it. The deprivation still rankled in his mind, as he made a great pretence of watching a fly harmlessly crawling along the wall, and would not notice me in the least. I felt sorry about this, and if I could have got hold of a print of that butter by any under-hand means, I would have given it to him.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

I HAD ridden on a short distance, the way home, when I saw the earl coming to meet me, mounted on a magnificent charger. Both horse and rider looked so handsome that I reined up, feeling no inconsiderable happiness on account of my share of proprietary interest. I rode up and preferred a request.

"Yes," was the response, "I was just going to mention it to you."

"Go home, James; you are wanted no longer."

We rode forward slowly; dismounting, and leaving the well-trained animals standing, we passed into the quiet city of the dead. A shaft of Italian marble, still white in its newness, denoted the resting-place of Lady Margaret. For some moments we stood looking intently at the superscription, but not reading it—at least I was not; my brain was full of busy memories.

"How unworthy I am to fill her place!" was my first remark. The earl passed his arm around me with a determined grasp, and gathered me to him, as if he would shield me from the blast before which she had bent, meekly ready. "Lady Margaret is not less happy in heaven," was the earnest answer, "that you have come to cheer my desolate heart, and with the sunshine of your presence to bind up the broken links that lay scattered;" and following my eyes, that looked

still farther on, "neither yet does papa, happy with his own Susette above, grudge me the one he left behind."

Standing beside our other graves, for the first time I noticed the incongruity as I read aloud, "Honorable Roger Lenox, aged 63 years. Susette, his beloved wife, aged 19 years."

"I wonder," I said, "if papa looked aged to mamma when she flew to meet him, as the angels heralded his approach."

"These things, Susette," answered the earl, "are not for mortal ken; we will not speak of them, dear."

We did not proceed directly home, but made a *dé-tour* in order to prolong the ride.

"You have not told me how Peggy received you," was remarked, with a smile.

I launched forth at once, giving an accurate detail, not omitting the ill fortunes of the niece.

The earl was highly amused. "But it is too bad," he said, "to strike a grown woman."

"I think so too," I replied; "but there was another grown woman, and a married woman, who was lately on the extreme verge of being the recipient of personal chastisement."

The earl laughed. "I imagine," he said, "that it was caused by a justly enraged husband seeing the wife of his bosom traitorously taking sides with an enemy, and subsequently showing mutinous conduct."

"There may have been an error of judgment," I observed; "perhaps the poor thing had for hours been pulled hither and thither, until, stunned and bewildered, unstrung from the loss of sleep, and faint from the

cravings of hunger, she might have been laboring under a nervous derangement."

"It is my opinion," deliberately remarked the earl, "that husband made a beast of himself."

"Yes, he did," I said, candidly; "and yet, for all that, I should not wonder if that feeble-minded young woman worships the very ground he walks on at this moment."

A conversation of a strictly private nature ensued, but, not being fond of a too long continuance of any subject, my glance roved over the colossal proportions of my companion's horse. "What a big horse," was my comment; "there is room on his back for three or four persons more. I should like to ride there myself," I decided, after gravely considering the safety of the seat.

"Nonsense, Susette," said the earl, not viewing the exploit with approbation.

I had not cared a great deal about it before, but now I grew quite anxious,—in fact, bent on it.

"Just a little way; the pony will follow."

"Don't be childish, Susette."

I was now going to ride two at a time on that horse, even should I be compelled to make immense sacrifices to do so.

Recently I had learned of the existence of an ingredient called soft sawder, and that there were phases in life where the judicious use of it produced astonishing results. After a somewhat lavish expenditure of the commodity, I found myself perched upon the crupper of the big horse.

"This is perfectly delightful," I said, straightening

up and clasping my hands, feeling that with very little practice I would make an accomplished circus-rider.

"Hold on, Susette."

"There is not the slightest necessity for me to hold on," I asserted; "you might go a great deal faster;" and, acting on my own responsibility, I gave a little dig with my heel. The consequence was sudden, and not anticipated. I found myself standing on the highway, my husband twenty yards ahead, proceeding on his way in solitary grandeur.

"Come back," I called, "and pick me up."

The earl did stop, and did look over his shoulder, but it was only to recite the couplet,—

"Humpty dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty dumpty had a great fall."

"You are acting infamously, sir; why don't you come to my assistance?"

"I think I see a countryman in the distance," was the reply, "and if you would wait until he gets here perhaps he will put you on your pony."

"I would not be mean," I said.

"People have to be mean sometimes," he replied, dismounting; "otherwise the salutary law of *lex talionis* would be non-operative." Placing me in my saddle, he stood leaning slightly on the pony's neck.

"Now," he said, "you have it in your power to make a graceful acknowledgment."

I nodded, placing my hand on his shoulder, saying, "Good actions carry their own reward; I will not insult you by the offer of any gift."

"I should not have been insulted," he said, remounting his Bucephalus; "but come on, let us ride a little faster."

"Creina," the name given to my Shetland, was a marvel of beauty and docility, and likewise possessed of most excellent qualities of head and heart; but she had an airy habit of occasionally switching her long tail, probably meaning it as a legal notice to quit to all troublesome insects. She put forth one of these notices just as I came up with her to the side of the larger horse, tickling him in the flank. Not approving of such liberties, he suddenly wheeled, kicked furiously at the pony, who darted backwards, pluckily laying her ears back, as much as to say, "Come on; if I am little you can't impose on me." This invitation not being responded to, and being too lady-like to kick, she rushed forward with teeth set, avowedly to bite the other horse.

"Keep off, you vicious little brute," said the earl, using considerable skill to remove his horse from the attack.

"Will you be kind enough to tell pony and me which you just called the 'vicious little brute'?" I said, cautiously riding up once more to the side of the earl.

"Take my advice, Susette," he said, "and do not learn to ask questions."

"But we want to know," I insisted.

"What if I should say both?"

"We'd forgive you," I said, patting Creina's neck; "we would not bear malice, would we, pony, against either of the great big brutes!"

"One of the great big brutes," he answered, "is very thankful that you did not get hurt."

As we arrived at the doorsteps he lifted me down, carrying me quite into the house.

"There is one thing in favor of you ridiculously little women," he said: "you are handy of portorage."

## CHAPTER XXV.

ANOTHER two years have passed, and I have arrived at the ripe age of twenty years, and the earl seems to have got his life-lease amended in some way, for he actually grows younger. He ascribes it to locomotion, saying that he does not find time to keep up with the ordinary lapse of years; he has such a troublesome little animal to look after.

Our life is a happy one. There is great affection between Grace and myself; she often comes to visit us, and once the earl and myself made a pilgrimage to London, the object of which was my presentation at court, and the mention made of it in the *Times*, was, I imagine, satisfactory to the earl, for I surprised him perusing it eighteen times.

Miss Ainsworth visits us, too; but never long at a time. I think she fancies that a great deal of her sweetness was wasted on the desert air at the period when her stay was necessarily so long.

"I wonder," said the earl to me one day in one of our confidential communications, which we were rather given to having, "that Miss Ainsworth does not marry."

I gave my opinion that "she preferred her liberty."

"Oh, her liberty," he said, "is fixed on too strong a basis ever to be interfered with. All questions of concession would be on the other side."

"Very properly," I remarked.

The earl shrugged his shoulders. "Her influence is potential, I admit, for I discover a considerable relaxation in my wife's attentions to myself when under that lady's scrutinizing eye."

"I am timid," I remarked. "I am not self-sustaining. I need the moral support of Miss Ainsworth."

I am ordered not to be ridiculous.

The evenings are getting cool; a bright fire is burning on the hearth; our dinner is over, and the earl, in comfortably-slippered feet, sits by a table. I have adjusted the shade on the lamp as he likes it, brought the spectacles, which he now wears openly, and which in keeping looked up goes a good deal of my time. As he appeared to have no other immediate orders, I drew my stool to his side and sat down. I am not a Turk, I am a Christian; but I prefer this kind of a seat, although perfectly aware that it would not be selected by a dignified matron. At length the Mogul speaks:

"Susette, I have received a letter to-day from Gerald."

I was all attention, and leaned over on his knee, and would have kissed him if he had asked me, willing to propitiate him into getting the news promptly.

"He is coming home," he said, looking down into the eyes raised steadily to his; "and," he continued, "he is married."

I jumped up, careening the earl's chair fearfully in being so headlong.

"A little moderation, if you please," requested

the earl, with difficulty keeping himself from going over.

I came back and apologized, as I very often had to do, and had gotten accustomed to it. In fact, when the earl stumbled over his own bootjack I always asked pardon.

"I was going to tell you," he continued.

"Yes," I said, settling myself firmly on the stool to overcome a second inclination to spring up; "and would you mind speaking with brevity?" I insinuated.

"I am coming to the point, child. Don't hurry me."

"No, I won't hurry you."

"Well then, listen."

"I am listening," I said.

"No, you are not; you are talking."

"No, I am not talking," I asserted.

"Susette, if you do not remain quiet I can never tell you."

"Do!" I implored.

"There, read the letter," he said, giving it to me.

In trying to unfold it, I tore it half in two, and had to spread it open on the table to read it. It was not long, and read thus:

"MY DEAR UNCLE,—For reasons that have now no existence, I would not for a long time write to you; and I now write to say that I am coming home, and shall not come alone. I found somebody at Naples of English parents, but foreign birth, that has been good enough to marry me. She is well enough in her looks, but not as handsome as a person I once knew; but if

you choose, you may kiss my wife as I shall yours.  
Expect us on the 25th. GERALD."

I refolded the letter, carrying it back to the earl. I was sober now, and very serious, and my tones trembled slightly as I looked straight into the eyes that were looking at me, and said, "You know how friendly I always was with Gerald, and how much I liked him. Are you certain that you will not misconstrue the unreserved affection with which I would like to treat him?"

"My confidence in you, little wife," said the earl, resting both hands on my shoulders, "is boundless;" and, smiling, he added, "your heart is easily turned inside out, and it is plain to read the writing there. Of course your conduct towards Gerald must be as if all recollections of a certain afternoon were blotted out."

"When may we expect our boy and his wife?" I asked.

"Let me see," he said, looking at the date. "This letter has been delayed somewhere; we might have expected them to-day."

"They have come now," I cried, hearing a ringing of bells; and in another instant I was tip-toeing, trying to return Gerald's hug.

"That's a jolly old aunt," he said, stooping down to the mouth held up for his benefit.

"Mamma," I said.

"Well, I'll own you," he laughed; "but where is Clara?" he said, looking around.

"Here she is," said the earl, releasing her from his embrace; "she seemed left out in the cold, so I had to give her comfort."

"And house-room," added Gerald.

I had quite an old, responsible feeling, as I welcomed the young bride. She was extremely beautiful, with the bluest of eyes, and golden-hued hair, and with the bewitching vivacity and spirituelle grace that sometimes comes to England from a foreign clime, but is never indigenous there.

"Would she like to go to her room for anything, before supper?" I asked.

"Oh, no," answered Gerald, "we stopped a few hours at a way-side inn for toilet purposes, so as not to burst upon you dusty and disreputable; but I am glad to hear mention of supper, and shall be ready for it: traveling always makes me feel like an anaconda. But as for Clara, I do not know how she lives—she hardly eats enough to keep life in a canary bird."

"I esteem light suppers myself," said the earl, "but Susette is so destructive on beef-steaks that I feel afraid, sometimes, that she is in private training for a boat race."

This was true, in part; I could not deny the general good condition of my appetite. I was very well, and out-door exercise often made me impatient for the dining hour; but I wondered, as I glanced admiringly at Clara's light figure, if I was to leave off beef-steaks entirely and otherwise mortify my appetite, if the same delicacy of contour would be the happy result; but I could not make up my mind to try it.

"Gerald," called his wife, "where is that little bag?"

"That little bag?" he repeated.

"Yes, that little bag that I handed to you at the inn, to take care of."

Gerald immediately stood up, feeling in his pockets.

"Why do you not answer me, Gerald?"

Gerald, still busy in the investigation of his person: "If madame would not be so impulsive," he said, "and give me time to think, I might recollect something about it. You were scolding me so at the time, that I became confused."

"I do believe the idiot is going to look into his boots," remarked his wife. "Did you swallow it, sir?"

"No," answered Gerald, "I did not,—upon my honor, I did not. I hope that madame will take my word for it, and not subject me to the cruelty of a stomach-pump. I do recollect now—I bestowed it upon that kind-looking person standing at the inn door; he looked so sympathizingly at me."

"Well," said Clara, sweetly, "you had a perfect right to give it to him; it was your own bag."

"Clara," he said, "you do not mean to tell me that it was my bag that had the Damascus razors in it?"

"Oh, no," continued the lady, and no honey ever dropped sweeter than her words; "there were no Damascus razors in it; but the razors bought in Damascus were. You know that they were not genuine; you had them submitted to the test, and they were found wanting."

"You are breaking my heart, Clara!"

Unfeelingly she went on, "And you paid such a price for them, too!"

"Do not try to frighten me, madame," said Gerald; "I am going to tell the truth about those razors; I was not imposed upon,—I bought them with my eyes wide open to the fact that they were base counter-

feits,—but you see, as I entered the shop, a back-door was open, and I saw the poor vendor, and his wife was pulling his hair. His grin of anguish, as he came forward bowing, so touched my feelings that I instantly paid the price he demanded. My pleasures in life are few now; madame has got me so completely under her thumb that I think I bear the brand about me. I watch the face of every passer on the streets, to see if he looks as if he thought I was hen-pecked; and when I meet with one who does not seem to know it, or exhibits any sympathy with me, I immediately feel like giving him something."

"Gerald, you are a wretch!" remarked his bride.

"I know it, madame; but you need not fling it up to me,—it is hitting a fellow below the belt."

"Oh, Gerald!" I said, "that is slang. Who have you been associating with?"

"There was a time," he replied, "when I did keep good company; but my spirits are so broken now that I will run with anybody that will take me up, particularly if they look as if they felt sorry for me. You have no idea of the pitiful state to which I have been reduced. It was in Paris when I happened to come upon madame, who had taken a carriage and had gone on the Rue de la Croix to make purchases. Just as I came up, she was about concluding the purchase of a piece of lace, the filthiness of which no tongue can tell. I thought of smallpox and leprosy as soon as I saw it. I thought I could see them crawling about over it. 'Do not buy that, Clara,' I advised; in short, I used arguments, I begged, I implored, almost getting down on my knees, in the vehemence of my entreaty not to

imperil our lives, not to contaminate us with an incurable malady, or one that might disfigure us for life. The French, you know, are an ubiquitous, excitement-loving people, and we were soon surrounded by a large crowd of *sans culottes*, manifesting a lively interest in the discussion between myself and wife. Bets were freely offered, and taken, on the result. 'I'll back monsieur,' said one. 'My money on madame,' cried another. 'Monsieur is in the lead.' 'No, he is not; madame is ahead.' 'She is falling back, she has lost ground,' shouted an artisan in a dirty jacket; 'a hundred to forty on monsieur.' This man was deceived by illusory appearances; the truth was, I had got excited in the contest myself, and determined to do all I could for my backers, and did make quite a brilliant little brush. 'I'll take that bet,' answered a female, with a young Frenchman on each hip. The excitement was now tumultuous. 'Monsieur, monsieur!' 'Madame, madame, madame!' yelled the partisans. 'Monsieur has won!' screams the better who had taken such odds on monsieur. 'Ah! the madame wins!' said the lady carrying her family; holding out her hand for the sous, as the lace was cut off and a check filled for the price.

"Who would have thought the great lout to have been such a bloody duffer," said my disgusted backer, eyeing me savagely. 'Monsieur is dead beat, while madame has plenty of run left,' observed the lady who had won so largely,—jingling the coins in her pocket.

"I felt so bitter over this, that when we crossed the border I privately paid the official a five franc piece for extra fumigation."

"Gerald, I could not have thought that you would have been so mean."

"My meanness, dearest," he said, going over for a matrimonial endearment, "was punished; the joke-loving rascal kept his smoking apparatus within two inches of my eyes all the time. And then, Clara, do you not recollect how well you nursed me that time I got caught in the storm and got wet,—the time you made me go back half-way up Mont Blanc for the hair-brush you left behind?"

"No, Gerald, it was my sweet little Etruscan brooch."

"Yes, I recollect, it was a *buckle*," said the delighted husband; "and when I got to the inn, dripping water, and disposed to be cross, you ordered me to go straight to bed."

"And drink a hot lemonade," remarked Madame Fitzhuc, looking as if she thought that in some mysterious way she had inherited the mantle of Æsculapius.

Gerald gave a merry, pleasant laugh, and said to the earl,—

"I think that all ladies have a habit of sending us out of sight when they suspect that we are going to make ourselves disagreeable; they seem to have an idea that the solitary meditations of one's pillow, solaced with *gruel*, or some other enlivening beverage, are efficacious in restoring the system to desirable tone. Clara, will you have the kindness to come and show me in what part of our luggage I can find the present we have brought *my mamma*?—a music-box," he explained, "of French workmanship, where a bird no longer than an inch springs out of a box, opens its

little bill, trills a song, and drops back to its hiding-place."

"Yes, I'll show you," assented Clara, getting up.

"Wait a minute," said Gerald, gathering the odds and ends of her loose belongings, "I'll carry these traps along."

"Do not say 'traps,' Gerald."

"Certainly not, if you forbid it; but you will have to supply a word, and tell me what to say."

"Say 'things.'"

"Well," said Gerald, "if the pressure of circumstances was removed, and I was in the enjoyment of liberty of speech, I would ask in what way *things* has the advantage over traps. I appeal to my natural protectors," he continued, looking at the earl and myself.

"Things is the proper term, Gerald," I said.

His uncle declined to give an opinion, but hinted at the controlling influence of "hot lemonade."

"My reason is convinced, Clara, and it was stupid in me to open an argument where there was no room for one, and I apologize without reserve."

And I heard him calling her darling, as together they went in quest of the musical wonder. My cup of joy was full almost to overflowing, and I was feeling as happy and elated about Gerald as if I owned an undivided half-interest in the family of Brigham Young, of Salt Lake, which household is not exceeded in point of number, that I am aware of.

"Gerald will now go back to the House," I said to the earl, "and will make better speeches than ever. This Clara is lovely. Did you ever see any one so beautiful?"

The earl replied, "he had."

"Well, at any rate," I continued, "he is very fond of her, and they are very happy."

"He is situated similarly to his uncle," was the comment.

ONLY A WOMAN.

## ONLY A WOMAN.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE lowering day had closed tempestuously, and fierce was the storm which beat against the windows and rattled the casements.

I sat alone with my uncle, the rector. Here let me say a few words in praise of this true servant of the living God. "Pure religion and undefiled" had been exemplified in his life. What virtue that adorns a Christian was in him wanting? Was not his the quick eye to discern want, and was not his the quick hand to relieve it? Did not the widow and the orphan rise up and call him blessed? And how many peaceful deathbeds had to him their origin! Verily, the good tree had borne good fruit.

I was the only son of a deceased sister, and his kindly hand had been stretched towards me. Oh, my benefactor, how feeble seem the praises of my tongue when compared to thy worth!

The day had been a noted one,—it was marked by the interment of the Countess of Landsdown. My uncle conducted the funeral services, and was moved beyond I had ever seen him. I wondered to see that

his hand was shaking so that he could scarcely hold the book, and his low trembling tones finally died away in a sob as he gave place to the assistant, who finished the services. The bowed head was raised no more until the last of that large throng which had come to pay honor to the dead countess had left the churchyard; 'twas then he approached the widower, who seemed in a lethargy of grief. I saw both near the grave, and bend low over it; here was a sacredness that mortal eye might not behold, and with slow steps I turned away, but lingered not far off, for my heart went out with a mighty love towards my more than father, so overwhelmed with what was then to me an incomprehensible grief. Anxiously I awaited until the two men appeared. The husband of the late countess entered his carriage and was driven off.

Silently I offered my arm to my uncle, and sheltering his shaking form with my cloak, while without a word we proceeded to his dwelling, and sought his own private room—the study. I wheeled up a large easy-chair, and opened the fire, which burst into a bright blaze. Shivering as with an ague, he seated his tottering limbs.

“I thank you, boy,” he at length spoke, but in tones so hollow I could not recognize them for his own, “but there is a chill that fire cannot warm.”

I knew not what to say, but my heart ached to speak words of comfort to him in this bitter hour, when his soul was out amid the breakers of some great sorrow.

“Uncle,” I ventured at last to say, “cannot the ‘balm in Gilead’ which you have so often preached to others—cannot it also reach you?”

He started up, and, with clasped hands, cried out, “Forgive me, oh, my Maker! From the lips, as it were, of a babe, thou hast rebuked me; but forgive thy servant, Lord; all thy dealings are just. I acknowledge thy might, and bow before it.” Sinking on his knees, he seemed to grovel in the very dust in the abjection of his humility before the throne of mercy; and when did man ever yet appeal there in vain? No storm of passion ever yet ran too high for its tumults to be stilled; no wave of grief was ever yet too dark for the divine love to beam upon.

I gazed upon the scene with awe; to me there was the struggle of Jacob with the angel, for a blessing.

That blessing at length came, and when the white face was upturned, it was almost that of a glorified saint. The grief-storm was over, and a patient, I might say, a cheerful hope, shone in his tear-washed eyes; and placid were the tones that said,—

“I thank you, Louis, for the care you have taken of the old man when he was too weak to care for himself; and I thank you for the words which recalled an imperfect Christian from the by-path of sin, for did I not in my heart murmur at a decree from the divine source; and did not my not strong spirit droop ready to faint at the workings of his holy hand?”

For some minutes he seemed lost in silent communings, or rather as if he was making up his mind for a painful effort.

“Louis, my boy,” he said at length, in grave accents, “lock the door to keep out interruption, and I will tell you the story of her whom we have lain out yonder;” and he walked to the window, and looked

out upon the new-made grave, made distinct by the lightning's lurid play, which also revealed how pitilessly the cold, cold rain was beating upon it.

"Not to-night, uncle," I said; "wait until another time."

Without heeding my interruption, he resumed his seat and began the narrative.

The tale I have to tell is a sad one; it is one of human sufferings bravely borne; it is one of self-abnegation, and shows *how loving, true, and strong a woman can be*; it is that which I myself know, and what I learned from him who was her husband.

It is now twenty years gone by. One hot afternoon I was returning from a visit to one of my sick parishioners; and to take shelter from the sun, I was tracing my steps through a small wood, and, having fallen into one of my fits of abstraction, I was almost upon a group of persons before I knew of their vicinity. There was a middle-aged, not bad-looking man, and the most beautiful woman I had ever beheld. Her fair hair clustered in a thousand little ringlets on her white brow and neck, a delicate bloom mantled her cheeks, and her eyes were of a deep blue, with an expression in them of almost child-like purity and truth; and a bewitching grace that I have never seen equaled pervaded every action. She was very young, evidently under twenty years of age.

Lastly, in a sort of hand-carriage, propped with pillows, was an object, whether a child or an old person I could not decide. The face was wrinkled and drawn, marked, scarred, and seamed, presenting a picture

of revolting ugliness. One small eye was deeply sunken in the head, whilst the other protruded from the socket with the horrid leer of an idiot. A group so striking would have claimed attention from any one. At a glance I saw that they were on a pleasure excursion. The woman had collected a quantity of bright-hued hedge-flowers, which she had woven into a garland, and was displaying it in festoons before the strange object in the carriage; and when it nodded its deformed head, and chuckled in approval of the glaring colors, her face lighted up with an expression of rapturous joy, and with the glee of a child she burst into a musical laugh, patting the creature with fondness as she exclaimed, "Oh, the dear funny Charley!" Turning to her other companion, she inquired, "Dick, don't you see something rational in his face? I think I do."

The man made some reply; and seeing me, he looked in a questioning way, as if to ask why I was intruding.

Perhaps I was actuated by a desire to know more of the characters in this singular scene. I scarcely know what, but under the influence of some attraction I felt loath to pass on; so, briefly stating my name and calling and the accident of my appearance, I asked leave to enjoy with them the cool shade of the trees.

"As for that, sir," the woman replied, "your right here is as good as ours; but you seem to mean kindly, therefore you are very welcome; and to get up an acquaintance, I will tell you our names and who we are. My name is Roberts, and this," laying her hand affectionately on the object in the carriage, "is my husband, my dear, unfortunate husband," she added, with emphasis, seeing, I suppose, the look of surprise I

could not altogether hide; "and there is Mr. Richard Markham, our four-horse rider. I perform with the lions and tigers; we belong to a circus company." I sat still in blank amazement, unable to say a word. "Have you not seen our bills?" she quietly asked.

I had seen some bills; but never in the course of my life had I stopped to read one. For this kind of itinerancy I always had a strong aversion; and in my zeal for reformation, I had once addressed a pamphlet to this class of depraved human beings, as I honestly considered them to be; and from my pulpit, and in my private conversation, I had earnestly implored the people not to encourage them by patronage. And to find myself placed in companionship with any of these obnoxious persons, was undoubtedly a shock. But I instantly reflected within myself, what business have I to hold myself aloof from any of my Master's creatures? and perhaps it may be my good fortune to here sow seeds that may take root, and in time yield a harvest which will not be despised when the angel comes, gathering up the good sheaves for storage in the eternal garner.

I was going to make some suitable remark, when the sound of a neighboring clock smote the ear. Mrs. Roberts at once arose. "I must go," she said; "it is time to feed the beasts; but keep Charley out a little longer, Dick. You need not come in quite yet; and he likes being out in the woods better than any other place." She stooped to arrange the pillows, and, uttering some fond words to the poor helpless creature, was hastening away.

"Mrs. Roberts, madam," I said, detaining her,

"will you not promise me to come to-morrow to the house where we meet to worship God, and if you have not yet found his comfort, oh, seek it. Believe me," I added, glancing at the piteous and now moaning bundle which lay in the little carriage, "He can turn sorrow into joy, and bring light out of darkness."

She hesitated, saying, "I think that I would like to go; indeed, I have often thought so, but—"

"If it's Charley," the man Markham spoke, "that needn't stop you; I will just bring him out here and keep him."

With some words of thanks, she hurriedly left, as if fearful of being late.

"My friend," I said, addressing the man, "there seems to be a strange history here: unravel it to me. It is not idle curiosity," I went on to say, "but a deep interest in the lovely woman who has just left us, and a strong desire to serve her. Perhaps a knowledge of facts might enable me to be of use."

The man seemed to turn the matter over in his mind before deciding upon his answer, muttering, "I don't see any harm in telling it; but look here, mister," he said to me, "if harm does come of it, and harm to her, you will have to answer to me for it, that's all." And thrusting his hand into a capacious pocket, he abstracted therefrom a huge jack-knife, opening the larger blade, feeling its edge, as if to satisfy himself that it could be relied upon to execute summary vengeance at an instant's notice.

I earnestly stated to him that no interest of hers could possibly be jeopardized by his placing full confidence in me; that I had no motive other than for her

benefit. He seemed satisfied, for without further pause he related to me the following:

In one of the northern shires resided Cornelius Willard, a distant, though direct relative of the Earl of Landsdown. By a long course of extravagance and dissipation he had reduced himself from wealth to penury. And so justly incensed was the noble earl by the reckless conduct of his unworthy kinsman, that he refused to acknowledge him, and sternly interdicted all intercourse. This embargo Willard considered of little consequence, as the multiplicity of the earl's sons and daughters entirely precluded all hopes of succession to the earldom for himself or his family, which, besides his wife, consisted of six sons and an only daughter. The sons, without exception, faithfully walked in the father's footsteps, and were as selfish and as worthless a half dozen men as could be found in the United Kingdom. But Elleen, the daughter, who can describe the paragon of loveliness she was from her birth? Beautiful as an angel! but, alas! poor child, her lines had been cast in an evil place! A pearl among swine, who deemed her beauty an adjunct to retrieve wasted fortune, their stock in trade for speculation! And, while yet in short dresses, eligible parties were sought; and it was a recognized law in the family, that whosoever could bring the most money to these greedy spendthrifts might aspire to the hand of the peerless Elleen.

Familiarity with the theme sometimes reconciles a repugnant destiny, but such was not the effect upon Cornelius Willard's daughter. A child of unusual quickness and sensibility, she early conceived a loath-

ing for the base designs; and, so far from being vain of her personal charms, she considered them in the light of an evil-fairy gift, bringing only misfortune and woe; and would cheerfully have welcomed an attack of small-pox in order to be relieved of the hateful bane.

Not a day but the proud spirit belonging to the race from which she sprung suffered humiliations.

Why was it that the noble blood, theirs by heritage, should be but a base fluid when flowing through the channels of her father and brothers, and in hers should run red with all that constitutes true nobility? This is a question for savants to decide; but certain it is that Elleen felt the discrepancy without knowing how to define it; and all the sweet flowers of her loving heart perished in the bud or turned rankly to weeds of rebellion and bitterness. This was the existing state of things when her seventeenth year dawned, and the crisis came.

Lord Edward Herndon, who had been traveling abroad with his tutor, was now of age, and had returned to take possession of the immense estate falling to him by the death of his father. This young baronet had seen the fair Elleen, and as a matter of course was deeply smitten. Few could remain indifferent to that beauteous face. But, unfortunately for his tender passion, he possessed not the qualifications to awaken a reciprocal feeling. Good young hearts are not brought to love by a rent roll, however long it may be; and this sprig of nobility was in appearance and manners uncouth to an extreme degree, and wofully deficient in mental powers; in fact, he was little more than an idiot. But this was no bar to those who claimed

Elleen; indeed, it was a circumstance highly conducive to the rich bargain they were not ashamed to make. The elder brother conducted the negotiations in a manner reflecting credit to his business capacity, which seemed to have lain dormant until needed for the especial transaction; and joyful was the family at the dogs, horses, and bank-bills of England to be had in exchange for the hand of the daughter and sister. The marriage rites were fixed for an early day, so eager were they to obtain the price for the living, breathing young life they had contracted to sell. And the one who was called mother undertook to prepare the victim, or, in other words, to apprise her unwilling daughter, and school her into a passive endurance of the ordeal that was to give her in wife to a peer of England. Elleen well knew what blow was about to descend when her mother's cold face made its appearance into her little room.

The traffic had not been so secret in its management but that some knowledge of it had reached her ear, and her heart beat wildly ere her mother's tones fell in measured accents. "Elleen, my daughter," she said, "I have great news for you, for us all," she added, and, undeterred by the scared white face gazing at her so imploringly, pitilessly she went on: "Lord Herndon has proposed for your hand, and your father, knowing that you could not feel otherwise than sentiments of joy and gratitude for the honor, has given his acceptance,—of course with that appearance of reluctant dignity suited to the occasion from a blood-relation of the noble Earl of Landsdown; and next Thursday is the day fixed for your nuptials. We shall be hurried, my

daughter; there is no time to lose. We must arrange at once about the wedding-dress: decide whether it shall be lace over satin, moire antique, or plain rep; or perhaps, on account of your extreme youth, you would prefer simple illusion."

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" pleaded the trembling lips, "have pity on me! remember your girlhood, and do not force me into an unloved union. There may be happiness in this world, but you well know that I have never known it. I do not mean to reproach you, but has not my life from the cradle tended to this hour? have I not been kept as a slave preparing for market? But I will forgive it all, and promise to marry to suit you and my father when I can do so without the maddening repugnance I feel towards this half-idiot boy."

The face of Elleen's mother reddened with anger, yet her tones were those of kindly remonstrance as she replied, "Have you forgotten that you speak of a peer of England, and is your vanity so egregious that you imagine wealthy noblemen to be plenty as ripe cherries waiting for your fair fingers to pluck? No; there is not such another match in the land, and were you a dutiful daughter and a kind sister you would see the advantages to be derived. At present your brothers are in the embarrassing situation of gentlemen without means, but your marriage with this young lord will remove from them the inconvenience of poverty: his generosity will afford the support suited to their position. Of your father and myself I do not speak; of course our son-in-law will see that we want for nothing, but your brothers are needy."

"Oh, mamma, why cannot my brothers shift for them-

selves like other men? Why must I be sacrificed to obtain for them a living that they might earn for themselves?" The mother was spared a reply, for the father, eavesdropping at the door, overcome by wrath, burst in.

"Hold your tongue, you confounded fool," he roared. "Have I not brought you up, taken care of you—and this is your return, is it? What business of yours is it to compare my sons with others? They were born gentlemen, and not churls to work; and mark me, girl, if I hear another word of objection, I'll just take you by the nape of the neck and pitch you out of that window." So saying, he stamped from the room, closing the door with a bang. The young maiden, terrified by this violence, covered her face and wept.

The mother was considering whether it would be best to settle matters at once with a high hand, or to wait for the subduing effect which follows copious tears, and the mind, too depressed to struggle, offers no opposition—yields a passive obedience. But again the mother's tactics obtained a respite; for the sons, viewing themselves as the party most interested, hovered near the door *en masse* in the honorable capacity of listeners, and one of them, conceiving it to be one of the few times in life where some coaxing would not be thrown away, entered the room, saying, "Come, sis, don't cry; the governor had no right to be so rough. Everybody knows that Lord Edward is not bright,—anything to speak of,—but he's got tin—no end. And there is not such another pack of hounds in the country as his,—regular beauties! Why, one bitch cost him fifty guineas! And then his horses,—such

hunters! they are enough to make a man's mouth water! Why, sis," he continued, warming with the congenial theme, "you might learn to ride,—to follow the hounds and wear the Herndon colors, which are red and green. What a slasher you'd be! a complete out-and-outer!—why, I don't doubt but that many a fellow would come down from London on purpose to see you take the field. If that ain't something worth living for, I don't know what is; and then, again, you might make the biggest kind of a book on the Derby. I could post you, and you would win, sure; and if you did not take any but outside bets, I could do your collecting. I am not settling at 'Tat's' now; I got published there as a defaulter the time I got so cleaned out; and it was no fault in my judgment, either: I stood to win an awful pile. But it is no use talking about it, sis; I've cursed myself hoarse fifty times, thinking about that miserable brute, not two dozen yards from the score, stopping to eat grass when he was winning in a canter; but such a thing can never happen again, and when I mention to you that such a horse is going to be winner, you can just go your bottom guinea on him, although I don't play the tout myself, of course. I'm above such a thing; but there is others who do, and my information is to be depended upon; and you bet, sis, I am always ready to go halves with you." Feeling sure that his powerful line of reasoning had removed all objections, this *unselfish* brother removed himself and his cigar from the room.

Elleen, raising her eyes, looked sadly after him. "All—yes, all—against me," she murmured. Turning suddenly towards her mother, she exclaimed, "You all

do not know what you are doing. I shall lose my reason, or, in my misery, perhaps bring shame upon you!"

"My daughter," was the calm reply, "I think that you have already lost your reason; the other alternative has never been possible to the females of your house. Our women have all been chaste, and the men brave,—though, to be sure, that is all that has been meritorious about them. It must be admitted they are, and have been, dreadful *habitués* of every vice and folly appertaining to a sinful age; but I dare say that there are plenty more like them. When you live to be as old as I am, my dear, you will have found out that men are not angels; but we cannot do very well without them, so we have only not to allow them to break our hearts, and get along as well as we can with them. Love's young dream is a poet's fancy, or, at best, but an airy fabric, too unsubstantial for everyday wear. The test of time and its changes require warp and woof of sterner stuff, which can always be supplied by practical common sense. I can look back now and smile at my own youthful delusions. I imagined your father a demigod, but I do not think so now; nor does it matter what I think. It is folly to rub against the pricks; it is enough that he lets me alone and I let him alone; and money is all that we need in order to get along comfortably; and we intend to obtain this through you, and at the same time to place you in a position to enjoy all the reasonable gratifications of life, excepting the ideal one of love. I will not pretend to you that I have an idea that you could love Lord Edward; I do not think you can; I don't think I could myself.

Nevertheless, the alliance is a very desirable one, and we cannot expect all the good things of existence to come in a lump; we must take some bitter almonds with the sweet. I will leave you now for a couple of hours to compose yourself, whilst I am arranging the minutiae of detail. I will not spare myself in this matter, nor shrink from any trouble involved, and you can rely upon it. Your nuptials will be almost as splendid as if you were a princess royal." So saying, this lady passed from the room.

Who can describe the varied passion which convulsed that young form? But the sharp pang of wrathful grief reigned triumphant; the accumulated wrongs of her unloved childhood, this crowning act, the unutterable misery of the hateful union, rose in gigantic force and snapped asunder the last tie binding her to home and friends. Without shawl, without bonnet, she arose and fled. Where? Anywhere, so that they might hear of her nevermore!

She passed through the garden—out of the grounds—across the open country—through the wood—out among the hills, with the speed of a frightened deer, until she fell from exhaustion and lay as one dead.

## CHAPTER II.

A BAND of people composing a circus company was passing along the highway; following was a closed wagon containing wild beasts in charge of two men, or rather in charge of one—the other seemed along for the companionship, and was an ordinary appearing man of middle age, whilst the other was much younger and a splendid type of manly beauty. His noble-looking head was carried erect, with an air of strength and grace that characterized the regal bearing of the man; and from his clear gray eye beamed an expression so honest and true that it was impossible to avoid an instantaneous prepossession in his favor.

This was Charley Roberts, the renowned tamer of wild beasts, or, to speak more correctly, celebrated for the remarkable subjection of a lion and his mate, and a pair of royal Bengal tigers. So complete was the control he exercised over these fierce creatures, that it would seem as if he employed the cabalistic art of the conjuror; but his only art was the inherent one of a bold, undaunted spirit. It is useless to recapitulate the circumstances that led him to this line of business; the fascinations of courting and subduing danger could not have been the sole motive to a mind so essentially noble as his. The weird hand of destiny, or rather the will of Providence, often leads through strange and

crooked paths; but whosoever walks uprightly in his ordered way will find it all right at the last.

The manager and owner of the circus and its attractive feature—the beasts—had made a long season in London, and had now set out to make a grand tour through the country. The animals were traveling under the immediate care of the keeper, between whom and Richard Markham, who performed in the ring, an intimate friendship existed; indeed, the two men were rarely apart, and were now conversing in rather a desultory manner. The heat of the day was great, and the road dusty.

"Markham," said Charley, "I've got soil enough on me to fertilize the great Sahara. Look out for the beasts while I take a dip in yonder clear-looking water." And swinging himself down until his feet touched the earth, without stopping the vehicle, his big strides soon brought him to the brook, where, boy-fashion, he threw himself prone on the green sward, and quenched his thirst with a deep draught. "Now for a plunge," he said, as he arose to divest himself of clothing, when his quick eye made a discovery. "By George! what's that?" he ejaculated; and in a moment he was beside the prostrate form of a female.

"I wonder what's up? Here is a pretty go! Somebody is always playing the deuce! I'll see if she is alive, anyhow." So saying, he raised the fallen face, deathly white; but the faint breathings that came and went in quick gasps revealed the presence of the vital spark. To him it was the work of a moment to raise her in his arms and bear her beside the water; and not knowing what else to do, he began bathing her

face in the limpid stream. "Poor little mite!" he said; "I wonder what ails her? She is pretty as a picture, though! Open your eyes and tell a fellow what to do; no, you needn't: just keep still, and I'll keep on washing your face forever; no, I can't do that, either, for I've got the beasts to attend to; but I never did see such a face!—Jupiter!"

The pale lids trembled, and a pair of blue eyes opened wide upon him, and Elleen—for 'tis she—awakes from her blessed torpor to consciousness and misery.

Quickly withdrawing from the young man's half embrace, and looking around with a terrified glance, while she exclaimed, with the pathos of a child, "Oh, you won't take me back, will you?"

Poor child! She felt like an escaped prisoner, and that all the world was in pursuit of her.

Utter amazement came over the honest face regarding her so steadily. His guileless, straightforward nature was puzzled; but no distress ever appealed to him in vain, and this lovely suppliant at once commanded his heartiest sympathies, and he was ready to stake his life in her cause.

"No," he answered, "*I am not* going to take you back to any place that you don't want to go to; and let anybody else try,—he'll get mauled into a jelly! But"—and he hesitated—"had you not better tell me how I can help you?—you can count on me," he added, with emphasis. And seeing that she was still silent, he went on to say: "If my little sister, who went to heaven long ago, had have lived, she would have been just about your age." And a tender gleam passed

over his face in memory of the child who had called him brother.

Elleen was bewildered, but the stamp of truth was here too plainly written to doubt; and who else could she trust? In all the wide world she was alone; and in a few words she told him of her home and the cause of her flight therefrom.

The big, noble heart that drank in the story of her wrongs from the beautiful lips that told of them, throbbed with indignation towards the unnatural kin.

"Oh, the despicable hounds!" he cried. "Why, even the meaner sort of beasts love their own! How you have been persecuted! Poor little lamb! poor little dove! But they shall never have you back again, for you shall be my little sister in place of the one that is gone. I was telling Markham—that is, Dick—oh, what a fool I am!—I mean Richard Markham, who is my chum, and the best old fellow alive—just the other day that if I did not get somebody to look after, to take care of, besides Aunt Polly,—to buy things for, so as to have some good use for my money,—I'd go to the dogs, certain. A young fellow who spends all, or most all, of his 'spoons' on himself is bound to get dissipated, you know," he added, in apology; "and is it not lucky aunt Polly—my aunt, Polly Baxter—does not live over ten miles from here?—only a step. She is all the relative I've got in the world; but she is good and kind enough for lots, so I'll just take you there. Why, it's nothing to me,—your weight,—it's like carrying a feather; and you are my little sister, you know. Why, I feel rich—just like somebody had left me a fortune—now that I have got you on my

hands. I am as good as a reformed man. There is no danger now of my going to the bad."

This part was purely an invention. Uncontaminated as the bold mountain stream that springs from its crystal bed and bounds on its own resolute way, was his noble nature. His generosity prompted it, as a kindly ruse, to put to flight any feeling that she would be an incumbrance to him.

Elleen murmured her thanks. "For the present," she said, "I see no other way than to accept your care; but I will not be a burden long: I will soon learn some decent way to earn my own bread; and I must, for I am alone now," she added, sadly.

"Hush, little sister," he said, picking her up with the ease that one could lift a kitten; "I've got you now, and you must not run away from me; and I know that you will not want to run away from Aunt Polly."

Thus the kind-hearted fellow rattled on in the effort to cheer and encourage her, until they reached a little brown cottage off from the roadside.

"Here, aunt Polly," he called to a motherly-looking old lady, busy about some household duty, "I've brought you a baby; she is mine, but I'll go halves with you." And gentle as a woman he placed her on the old-fashioned settee.

Aunt Polly, in a paroxysm of joy, sprang forward and kissed both cheeks of the lofty head that stooped for her embrace.

"Oh, Charley, my pride!" she exclaimed, looking fondly at the young man, "what an unexpected pleasure! I did not know that you were near!"

"Dear aunt Polly! how glad you always are to see me! But you have not seen my baby yet."

"Oh, dear me! I am so remiss sometimes!" said the old lady, shocked at her own neglect of hospitality; and taking Elleen's hand tenderly, "You are very welcome, dear; and so tired, too," she said, observing the drooping form: "you must take a cup of tea and lie down."

Elleen could but observe the perfect trust there was between the two. Without a word of question, the stranger found a prompt and willing welcome to the aunt's little home. "*Her boy could do no wrong*, and it was a sin to doubt him," was the thought of her loving, trusting heart.

"And you, too, Charley, must be in want of something to eat." And off she was bustling to her cupboard.

"No, no," said the young man; "not now, aunt Polly. I have not another minute to spare, but take good care of the young lady. I have not time to tell you any more now, but she is to be my sister in place of little Julia."

"Yes, indeed, Charley, I'll take first-rate care of the sweet dear, for her own sake as well as yours; and won't you try and love me a bit, pet?" she asked, as her kind old hand gently touched the weary face so pale and still amid the pillows.

"My little sister must love her big brother some too," said the young man in his hearty way, "and forget that she ever belonged to any one else but us; and, aunt Polly, we must try and make her happy." With some earnest words of caution about avoiding observation,

he bid them both good-bye and was soon out of sight.

Why dwell on what followed? Who can wonder that between the man and woman there should spring up a feeling that was not the love of a brother, neither yet of a sister. And ere long Dick Markham and aunt Polly witnessed a quiet wedding; and when Charley would have left his young wife for a time with aunt Polly, shaking her bright fair head, she replied, as woman has often done before, and will do so until the end of time: "I entreat thee, Charley, not to leave me. Whither thou goest I will go; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God." Charley, gazing upon her with the great love of a strong man, said, "It is well, birdie; we will bide together until death doth us part."

### CHAPTER III.

WE will now pass over a period of three years. Again we behold Dick Markham and Charley Roberts, arm in arm they walk towards the quiet boarding-place of Elleen. They are conversing in low tones, and Roberts is saying, "Markham, old boy, there is something on my mind, and I may as well out with it. I want you to promise to take care of Elleen should anything happen me," he added in a husky voice.

"Why, Charley," said Dick, stepping forward and taking his companion by the two shoulders, while he looked him straight in the face, "is anything the matter? are you not well?"

"No, no," was the answer, "I am not going in that way."

"Then how in the name of heaven are you going? What is the matter? what has come over you?"

"Markham," was answered, in a low tone, "Madame Borgia, the lioness, will do for me."

"Charley, are you joking, mad, or what is the matter with you?" asked Markham, in deep concern.

"I will tell you how it is, old friend," answered Charley. "For some days back there has been something wrong with all the beasts, but I might push through it if it was not for Madame Borgia; she will do the mischief, Dick; and oh, Dick, don't think me crazy or a

fool, but when I go to flog her for being sullen or bad-tempered, *she looks to me like Elleen.*"

"Your wife!" cried Markham in dismay.

"Yes, Markham; my wife, Elleen."

"Charley Roberts!" exclaimed Dick, clutching him forcibly by the arm, "something has come over you; you are not in a condition to go into that cage. I'll lock you up! I will, by the powers above!"

"No you won't," answered Charley, sadly. "Does a soldier falter? is it right for him to flee from the battle because he gets cowardly? would not such conduct be base? And would it be less so in me to shirk the duties that pertain to my calling because I grow nervous? and, after all, it may turn out just a foolish nothing," he said, with an attempt at unconcern. "But won't you promise me, Dick? I will feel better if you do, for I have been an extravagant fellow, and have not laid by much for that dear angel," he said, looking at Elleen, who could now be seen as she stood at a window watching for her husband.

"Charley Roberts," was the low, solemn answer, "while I live Elleen shall never want a friend. This I promise by all that's holy. You go in to her now. I will take a little turn first; I am completely upset."

Ten or fifteen minutes had scarcely elapsed when Markham followed into the little parlor. Elleen sat on a sofa. Ah, how gloriously beautiful she was! fresh, fair, and dainty! meet only to be loved and cared for. Charley was on a cushion at her feet, his handsome face looking up into hers, and glowing with all the deep yearnings of passionate love.

"Elleen," he asked, "have I not always loved you?"

"Indeed you have, dear Charley," she answered; and adding, as her fingers played caressingly with his wavy locks, "since I have known you, this world, which was all a dreary world before, has been very bright; *sometimes I almost feel too happy.*"

"Bless you, my Elleen, my wife, my life," he murmured. "Heaven forgive me; but I believe I love you better than I do my own soul!" and in his wild idolatry, stooping, he kissed the hem of her flowing robe.

Tremble, tremble, tremble! When the sky is cloudless, and the storm-winds seem lulled into an eternal sleep, 'tis then an earthquake begins in its awful fury!

"What are you young folks doing?" cried out Markham, in an effort to be cheerful. "I declare that you make an old rip like me blush. I will have to quit coming here; you are forever billing and cooing; it makes me bashful."

"Why, Dick, what horrid girl has been trifling with your innocent affections, to make you so cross, you dear old bear?" said Elleen, coming forward and taking his hand in an affectionate way that showed the kindly friendship in which they lived.

Just then a pert youngster, belonging to the corps, called out from the open window through which he had thrust his head, "You two men as had better be where you belong, or there will be a row. They are waiting for you both; and the boss is tearing his hair, and talking *sweet* about you." Executing a remarkable

pantomime, this piece of precocity darted back adown the long street.

Markham and Roberts, after a hasty glance at the little time-piece on the mantle, looked at each other aghast. "Who would have thought it so late?" they murmured.

"Charley," pleaded Elleen, "could you not stay? Just this one time, please stay, Charley. I don't know why, but I never felt so badly about your going before. I feel downright babyish, and want you to stay to pet me. *Stay, Charley.*"

"Yes, yes," eagerly interposed Markham, "stay at home with her, my boy, this once. I'll tell the 'old man' that you are ailing. What's the difference if he does fuss a little? he can't get along without you."

"Do, Charley!" Elleen still pleaded.

For an instant he stood irresolute; but habit and duty rose up before him.

"No, no," he said, "*I must go,*" and looking at Markham, he continued, "What would it avail? would not to-morrow come?" and as if fearful to trust himself longer, hurriedly he pressed Elleen to his breast. "Good-by, little woman," he cried, and with quick footsteps he almost fled from the room. Without a word, Markham followed.

Oh, how many thoughtless ones deride the class of human beings who hardly earn their bread by entertaining those who have time to be entertained! Little is it imagined under what an iron rule they live, and how often they still an aching heart and wear a smiling face when racked by agonizing pains!

## CHAPTER IV.

THE vast pavilion is densely crowded. A mammoth cage occupies the ring; two compartments are in the structure: one contains two immense lions,—a male and a female,—the other a pair of royal Bengal tigers, whose restless movements give token of their inborn fierceness, and yet how beautiful were those dark, sleek stripes on their agile sides! What fearful grace exhibited in the softly-cushioned paws, whose delight would be in dealing death-giving blows!

They were magnificent specimens, superb! the like had never been on exhibition before. And the large concourse of people awaited in wild expectancy the entrée of the daring man who was to go through a performance with them. The four-horse act was over. Markham's skillful riding had received loud plaudits. Now the exacting public waxed impatient for the concluding feature of the exhibition, and loud cries of displeasure marked a slight delay.

Markham, with his toggery still on, had taken a stand near the cage, and was watching anxiously the point from which Charley was to emerge; and so fixed was his gaze that he seemed turned to stone.

"What ails the fellow?" was jeered by the crowd. "Is he going to be pitched in as supper for the beasts?"

"Maybe he wants a quid of tobacco," said one;

"or a sugar cake," said another. "Hello, mister," was halloped, "does your mother know you're out?"

Unconscious of all this, Markham awaited the appearance of his friend. No one but he knew what a struggle for life it would be; and at the first quick glance he caught of Charley, who now stood before the curtain, his head dropped upon his breast, and the hopelessness of despair settled over his features. It had been the habit of Roberts to advance with a quick, resolute bound, his bright, clear eyes upraised, while a fearless smile played upon his well-formed lips, and his bearing so confident and self-relying as to disarm all fears for his safety.

This time, per contra, he moved slowly, as with an effort, and thoughtfully his eyes sought the ground; and yet he looked a king. Oh, what a type of strength and beauty! Without pause he entered the cage on the tigers' side; and these beasts, instead of rising and standing on their hinder legs, as they had been taught to do at his entrance, retreated as far as their limits would permit, and showed their teeth. Roberts followed them up, and by a vigorous use of his whip brought them to subjection, and succeeded in getting them through with their tricks. He then passed through the communicating door, closing it after him; as he faced the lions, both obediently rose in greeting, but almost immediately the female lion slid down on her haunches. Roberts advanced, and struck her a powerful blow; but on the instant he dropped his whip, clasped his hands over his eyes, uttering a faint cry. The public thought it was from fear, but Markham

knew it was the ideal likeness to his wife—that fatal fancy!—which brought on the catastrophe and led to ruin. With a wild roar the infuriated beasts were upon him, and in the twinkling of an eye he was down, and both lions busy, biting, gouging, chewing, and clawing. So sudden was all this that not a hand was raised, not a move was made; all those hundreds sat as if bound with a spell, and it was a spell of nameless horror. But hark! one shriek, whose agony those who heard it never forgot, and a slight figure was seen flying toward the cage: it was Elleen, and with the speed of lightning she unslid the panel, regained the lost whip, and with the fury of embodied wrath began lashing the beasts.

With a suppressed growl, and recoiling from that terrible *human will*, mighty beyond the ferocity of brutes, they relinquished their work of death, subdued. The male lion rising on his legs in an obedient salute, and the accursed lioness—the infernal beast!—slunk off to a corner, crouching low and whining piteously, as if deploring the work she had done.

So rapid was this awful scene in its enactment that not a sound was uttered, and it would seem that scarce a breath was drawn, by the beholders; the appalling tragedy had frozen their hearts' blood, and held them still, as if in a vice.

"Dick, get a stretcher here, and some one bring a surgeon," were the first words heard; they came from Elleen.

In one moment Markham was at the cage; and Elleen kept the beasts at bay while the mangled form of poor Charley was withdrawn and placed upon the

appliance which the occasional casualties of the ring caused always to be in readiness.

Ah, look on that misshapen mass of humanity, and recognize if you can him who a few short moments ago was an Apollo—a splendid creation of glorious manhood!

The poor wife shed no tear; not a muscle quivered in the face, blanched to a fearful whiteness, as she stood near the two surgeons who were engaged in making an examination of the injuries, and watching their operations with an intentness no words can tell. At length one of them speaks: "He lives." A gleam of happiness passed over her face, and a quick, grateful glance went over towards the speaker.

One hour subsequent, skillful surgery had done its best; and in the little parlor lay a breathing, but insensible form. Not yet was it known if he could live. By the couch sat Elleen, with eyes still tearless, and making no moan. Her sorrow was too deep; it was down low, twitching among her heart-strings.

In all this trying scene, Markham had acted as one in a dream. He did as he was told, and was always ready to fetch and carry, as he was bid; but he made no offer, suggested nothing. A hideous nightmare overruled his senses. But when the men of science were gone, and a fearful silence reigned supreme in that room of doubt and terror, he too brought a chair, and sat down to watch. He sat long ere Elleen was aware of his presence; but when she did look up and saw him, "Poor Dick!" she said; "are you keeping watch? You, also, loved him."

"That I did," was Dick's answer; "and I would

die now this minute to give him back to you;" and his head dropped on his great breast, and heavy sobs burst forth; but stifling them with the strength of a giant, he asked, in a hoarse tone, "How came you there?"

"I don't know," answered Elleen. "After Charley left, I took up some unfinished work, and tried to busy myself as usual whilst awaiting his return. But a wild feeling of terror seized me; I could not overcome it; the air I breathed was choking me; voices all around seemed calling, and an invisible hand beckoned me on. Under this resistless spell I followed him, and got there, as you know," she added, shuddering. "Dick," she continued, after a long pause, "do you believe in a God and in a heaven?"

"Yes, I do," he promptly returned. "When I was a bit of a boy I had an old grandmother; she told me all about them things, and I have never forgotten about them, nor about a pretty hymn she used to sing. It went this way, 'When I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies;' and there was something more about never getting scared, and having nothing more to cry about,—I forget how it went; but I used to like to hear it then, and I wish I could hear it now."

"Was that all?" she asked gently.

"No; she taught me the Lord's prayer."

"Would you mind repeating it?" she asked, still softly.

Without demur, Dick, in a low tone, repeated the divine model of all prayer, which first fell from lips which were those of a God.

"You have been fortunate, Dick," sighed Elleen;

and she said no more, but sat quiet and patient all through the hours of that long night.

With the morning, the doctors came. After a tedious and pains-taking examination their eyes met. Both understood the condition of the patient, and both were reluctant to break the tidings to that pale woman, with eyes fastened on them so beseechingly.

"You tell her," remarked the younger physician; and with slow steps he left the room.

The elderly one had, through a long practice, acquired much composure in painful situations; but here was something that taxed it all. The announcement he had to make he felt to be a sadder duty than he had ever been called upon before to perform.

"Madam," he said, at length, "I wish I had better news for you; he will live. But—"

"Oh, thank Heaven!" burst from Elleen's lips.

"He will live," continued the doctor; "but he will never know you again; the seat of reason is so impaired."

"Oh, still I thank thee, Heaven," repeated Elleen, and tears, copious tears, now rained down, and fell on the maimed and crushed form of him who was yet her husband.

A film gathered over the doctor's sight; the beautiful devotion of that loving wife challenged and obtained the tribute of a tear from eyes long unused to weep. "Such remedies as art furnishes, madam," he said, "I will leave with you;" then followed a detailed explanation, and the kind surgeon withdrew.

"Oh, Dick!" exclaimed Elleen, almost joyfully, "he will live. I shall keep him. I am so glad—so grate-

ful! I should like to pray, but no one has ever taught me how." Dropping upon her knees, she clasped her hands, and silently raised her glances upwards; no words came, but surely that unspoken prayer was caught by good angels and carried up, pure as a chaplet of pearls, and laid at the feet of the Most High.

Markham gazed at her, feeling in his heart that heaven was not far off, that he was looking at one of its spirits and with his bodily eyes seeing a cherub.

The silent prayer was ended, and oh, it had not been in vain. Light, strength, and hope had been sent her, and her feeble woman's arm made strong, and resolution invincible filled that slight frail form.

"Yes, Dick," she said, as rising, she turned towards him, "Charley will live, and I must do something to support him; he must be kept in comfort."

Markham tried to speak, but the words that he wanted to say would not come,—his utterance seemed choked,—but he was understood by Elleen, who, pressing his hand with unreserved warmth, as she said,—

"How noble you are, dear Dick! You would burden yourself with us both, and I am grateful to you more than I can say. But I must work for Charley myself; that pleasure is my only one now; and I cannot resign it,—not even to you, Dick; but you will always be our best, our only friend," she added soothingly. "I will take control of Charley's beasts, and earn money in that way."

"Oh!" groaned Markham, staggering back, as if from a blow; "oh, my —," and in the depth of anguish his Maker's awful name escaped his lips; "No, no, I cannot bear that,—to see you, too"—

"No, Dick," was the quiet interruption; "they will not hurt me; I shall be protected by a potent charm. My love for him"—and she glanced towards Charley—"will be a strong shield betwixt me and danger. Will you remain here until I return?" she asked, tying on her hat.

Markham bowed his head in acquiescence; but he felt that his heart was breaking.

## CHAPTER V.

VERY mournful was the proprietor of the now keeperless beasts. His rich harvest of gains was at an end; ruin stared him in the face; after the late catastrophe where would he find another keeper? "There is no help for it," he murmured; "I must dismiss the company, and sell the animals at auction. 'Tis a pity, too; I shall never see their like again," and tears actually stood in his eyes. A low knock was heard at the door. "Go away, in the devil's name, and leave me in peace," he called out in angry tones, thinking it was some of his people coming to him for instructions.

"It is I," said a gentle voice. And Charley Roberts' wife stood before him. "Do you wish to employ a keeper for the beasts?"

"Ask a starving man if he wants to eat! Ask a dying man if he wants to get well!" was the emphatic rejoinder.

"Will you engage me?" was asked.

"Y-o-u!" was the astonished reply.

"Yes, me," was the firm, quiet answer; "I can manage them."

"Oh, *if you only could*," he cried out, eagerly, "it would make my fortune, and yours, too!"

"I am willing to enter the cage now," she said, "in

order to satisfy you ; but you must just promise to agree to my stipulations if I should succeed."

"What are they?" he asked.

"The salary that was paid to my husband, and that you will remain here until he is able to travel ; for I will never leave him, except for the time required for my performance."

The manager tried to explain the inconvenience which might arise from the latter clause.

"Those are my terms, and I will not deviate from them," remarked Elleen.

"Well, well," was answered ; "I agree to all. Come on, then, if you want to give the beasts a trial ; and, if you do not deceive yourself about getting on with them, the afternoon's performance can still take place."

He insisted, however, that the irons should be first heated, and all the precautionary measures known adopted.

Elleen urged that they were not necessary. Poor thing ! she was longing to get back to Charley. Soon all was in readiness. The beasts had been kept closely shut up since the sad event in which they had played so frightful a part. And now when the shutters were removed they showed themselves dangerous, throwing up their heads, uttering short, sharp growls, and lashing the air with their tails. The manager said to Elleen, "It will not do for you to enter now. You must wait until they get quiet."

"I prefer *now*," was the reply. And, before she could be hindered, she unslid the panel, *and was for the second time among the lions*. With whip in hand, she stood, silent and erect, and surveyed the terrible

creatures, from whom a slight touch was death. Minutes passed,—they seemed hours to the lookers-on,—and the brutes quailed beneath the power of those calm blue eyes *that looked at them and feared not !* With an humble and vanquished air, they went through the acts taught them by Charley.

The tigers succumbed as readily to the magic influence exerted by this fair, slight woman. "You see that I was not mistaken," she said to the manager, as she hurried away to Charley.

"The angels and saints be praised !" was the manager's heartfelt ejaculation.

The pavilion was crowded to its utmost capacity ; not one person more could edge in under the large canvas. The announcement that the wife of the ex-keeper would exhibit the animals had acted like a sweeping wind over a vast conflagration on the already excited populace. Bloodshed had occurred in the struggle to get in, and the reinforced police were actively employed in dispersing the frantic mob unable to gain ingress. Not the slightest attention was paid to the riding, hurdling, leaping, etc., of the usual performance. The public appetite hungered after a treat more rare, and loud cries testified their impatience. Elleen had not yet arrived, and the manager was trembling with apprehensions for his personal safety and, to have the effect of somewhat quieting the tumult, the structure containing the animals had been placed in the ring ; but the people, beginning now to suspect that they had been deceived, were shouting and yelling like mad, and cries for vengeance were rising loud,

when Elleen's rapid footsteps passed adown the passage opened for her. It had been Markham's only hope that Elleen would lose courage and not come; and when the cheers that heralded her arrival fell upon his ears, "I cannot see it," he murmured, and, as if to escape a great horror, he swiftly fled.

The delighted manager rushed in to announce that "Madame Roberts had arrived." But a sight of the beasts made him tremble. All of them were in attitudes ready to spring, their eyes gleaming like coals of living fire, and their panting sides quivering with rage. The loud shouts that greeted Elleen's entrance were drowned by a wild roar from the cage. Elleen apparently heard neither, nor did she hear the admonitory tones which dropped from the manager's lips by sheer force of habit, as a comedian is said to make faces on the scaffold, "Bow to the right, bow to the left."

"She is frightened," groaned the manager, and drops of cold sweat stood upon his forehead; but, with an impulse that did honor to his humanity, "Stop her!" he cried. "Stop her!" he shouted; "it's murder!"

But it was too late. Elleen was in again with the lions, who swayed their heads from side to side with fierce wrath that threatened to devour her. Without an instant's pause, the whip waved aloft, and descended with force upon the angry lions; first one, then the other received the heavy blows, falling like rain. It is impossible to describe the fury of the creatures,—boundless was their rage; but still they touched her not. Something supernatural restrained them. *They dared not harm her.* By slow degrees, like sullen children, at last they gave in, and lay conquered at her

feet, quiet and submissive, and rendered prompt and willing obedience to a force that was stronger than their own: and that force was born of woman's love. A repetition of this same scene was enacted with the tigers; and it seemed as if an eternity had passed when Elleen descended from the cage. White and faint, she passed behind the curtain, sinking from exhaustion on the nearest seat. The now obsequious manager hurriedly brought a glass of wine. "Water," she murmured. "I am so tired; but I must get back to Charley."

"My carriage is at the door; take it," said the patron, so elated at visions of the wealth that now would roll in upon him that he scarce seemed to touch the earth.

The poor, weary, heavily-burdened woman, little more than a child, went back to her sad vigil, and, bending over the disfigured form of her insensible husband, passionately her own terrible desolation burst forth.

"Oh, Charley, Charley, if you could only know,—only look at me, only speak to me, in my bitter struggle!" Such weeping as can only come from a sorely-stricken heart was heard. But soon it died away, and, self-reproachful, she murmured, "Oh, what an ungrateful wretch I am! Does not Charley still live, and is it not a blessed part to take care of him? I will repine no more, but be thankful and patient."

How loving and gentle was the hand that ministered all through the night to the unconscious sufferer; and, when Elleen opened her door in the morning, there, on the outside, lay Dick,—faithful Dick!

## CHAPTER VI.

SLOWLY healed the frightful wounds; but scars and seams completely covered the distorted and useless limbs, and gone, forever gone, was every vestige of former comeliness; even the wavy hair was cropped short and close. Like an infant, he was to be tended and cared for. Always kind, always loving was the faithful wife, who never received the reward of one gleam of recognition as days and nights she hovered near, never leaving him save in fulfillment of her engagement at the circus. Early she discovered that noise and the presence of strangers disturbed him, and had made for him the little carriage; and she and Dick passed much time with him out in the open air under the trees, and it was on one of these occasions that I chanced upon them about two years subsequent to the accident. And on the morrow, when I entered my church, I saw already there the little figure I looked for, almost shrouded in a large brown veil. Kneeling in silent prayer before the services, earnestly I prayed that it might be vouchsafed to me to speak words of comfort to the heart bearing such a heavy load, and that I might be the instrument of bringing this lamb safe to the fold of the Good Shepherd, whose almighty love could make easy the weightiest burden. A member of the royal family by hap was present, but my discourse

was all for her; it was for her I spoke in glowing terms of the divine grace; and I preached as I had never preached before: sparkling gems of the exhaustless riches of a Saviour's love dropped like a refreshing shower on a barren waste, fertilizing the ground that was destined yet to bear fair fruit meet for eternity. I spoke as one inspired; and when I saw repentance speaking through the clear, truthful eyes, my glad heart could have echoed the joyful shout of welcome that rolled all along the broad plain of heaven at the coming in of this one wanderer.

I lingered in the vestry, knowing that she would come to seek me; and briefly she touched upon her early life, showing that even in this Christian land how benighted a soul can be—how worldly parents can bring up their children with only a faint idea of the basis of Christianity, and in a total ignorance of its practical workings. Under my teachings, this beautiful woman became a beautiful Christian, and received the baptismal sign, which is the seal of an eternal hope.

They were filling a long engagement, and many happy hours I spent with Elleen and Dick,—Charley always along. He was generally quiet, but was subject to moaning spells: pain unconsciously asserting itself, for his maladies were of a nature that defied detection. The most skillful physicians failed to furnish remedies to remove an undiscovered cause; he suffered, but how, or where, could not be even remotely conjectured. These spells increased in frequency. Elleen anxiously watched for symptoms that would afford a clue to give relief, but this shattered life had almost lasted its time, and was drawing to a close.

One afternoon I was sent for, and found Elleen alarmed and anxious.

"Oh, my friend!" she exclaimed, as I entered, "something ails Charley,—look at him!"

It was easy to see that something was the matter. His poor head was rolling on the pillow, and faint, unintelligible sounds coming from his writhing lips.

"Have you sent for a medical man?" I asked.

"Yes," was the answer, "and I expect him now."

And soon he came, and pronounced Charley's attack from the stricken brain. Why prolong what followed? In a few days the body, so wretchedly transformed, was still and cold,—it could suffer no more,—and the spirit was returned whence it came.

The widow, in her quiet grief, sat beside the corpse. Poor Dick, too, was there, the picture of woe. Charley, his pride and joy, had, it seemed to him, come back in all the glorious guise of his noble beauty, to be again snatched away. Ever and anon he touched the pale, cold form, as if trying to realize the stern fact that death was indeed there.

"Yes, Dick," said Charley's widow, "he is dead. And do you know that I am glad it is so? And tomorrow, when my heart's idol is laid away in the peaceful grave, forever hid from sight, and the infinite desolation that has alone been banished by the presence of his dear breathing form comes crowding over me—even then, I shall be resigned and glad."

"I do not know what you mean," sighed Dick.

"It means this," she continued: "of late the mighty horror that he might outlive me has been a phantom of continual dread; it has preyed upon me

like a nightmare, and I was growing mad under it. The idea of leaving him so helpless as he was; needing so much care; dependent for the very food that kept him from starving!"

"Yes," mournfully responded Dick, "that's true, every word of it. His aunt Polly and me would do all we could; but that would be nothing at all with you away. But I had not been thinking about that. You are so young yet; and you get on so well with the beasts."

"*It's them!*" she quickly replied; "six months more would see me dead, or a raving maniac," she added, shuddering. "Believe me, the laws of nature are not with impunity outraged. The weak must not tamper with the strong. The dominion that in the Bible is given to man over the beasts of the field does apply to those of the jungle and cane-brake; but the subduing power that renders wild beasts obedient to human agency comes from an intense concentration of the will, that our bodies are too frail long to support. Five years was the length of time it took to bear upon the gigantic frame of Charley; how well I now know the cause of that miserable mishap,—the over-taxed mind was at last forced to yield in the unequal struggle. Who knows so well as I what a terrible death I face whenever I enter that cage? Not an easy death on a peaceful bed, surrounded by loving friends, but a horrible one,—wild beasts mangling and eating flesh and crushing bones,—*and to be alive to feel it!* This would surely happen upon the slightest forgetfulness, the slightest withdrawal of my eye, the slightest shrinking of the powerful, resistless will. The difficulty

of maintaining such entire recollection and command over the faculties, keeping every one at its post alert, is augmented a thousandfold by the shouting and clapping of the people, notwithstanding they are requested to remain quiet—that the exhibitor's safety depends upon it. Do they not pay their money at the entrance, and have they not a right to all they can get? is the logic they use; and why should they refrain from expressions of the exhilarating excitement they enjoy, although it may distract the performer's attention, and thus destroy the one only chance left for life. While Charley lived, there was no alternative but *to keep on to the bitter end*. But I am done with it now, and will never enter with the beasts again; my career in that line is closed."

"Thank heaven!" burst from Dick's lips.

"But my constitution is wrecked, and I shall soon be at rest with Charley. I have saved only a little," she continued, "but enough to put him away decently. I shall take him to aunt Polly's; he carried me there once, and it now falls to me to take him. Oh, Charley, Charley!" she sobbed, bending over and clasping with her arms the dead body of her husband. Large tears sprang into her eyes, rolling down her cheeks, leaving red marks in their blistering course.

With an overwhelming emotion of pity, I felt that I could have laid down my life for means to comfort her. I could not even speak comforting words; utterance was choked, and I could only pray in silence. Dick hid his face; he could not look on her distress. The convulsive sobs gave place to low moans, which finally died away in a broken gasp. 'Twas then she bowed

her head, and her lips moved mutely in prayer. With a grateful heart I adored my God; for I knew his goodness, and that his consoling dew would descend like a healing balm upon that suffering heart. And when she arose and turned towards me, her face, though wearing the impress of a great sorrow, gave token also of a great struggle for patience, and her voice trembled as she said,—

"How wayward is the human heart! Whilst I bless my Maker for the rest he has given to a life which only lived for pain, yet I am a miserable woman, grieving for her husband, and my grief is not like that of other women, who have loving kindred still left; he that is gone was father, mother, and brother and husband all to me. When I was alone in the wide world, an outcast from natural affections, not a human being to love, and not knowing where to turn, his sheltering arm took me in, and all the wealth of his kingly heart was lavished upon me, making the poor object rich and happy. But oh, how short-lived are the joys of this life! but it is a glorious thought that we surrender not our loved to the grave, which indeed receives the empty casket, but the immortal soul, the imperishable mind, has but gone before, to a brighter and better land; and there we may meet again, and nevermore be called to part."

Speaking rapidly, as if fearful of giving way to her emotions, she asked me to make arrangements for the journey of to-morrow to aunt Polly's.

"I shall stay there for a little," she said, "and then you will help me to find some quiet way to work for bread for myself and aunt Polly. Charley, you know, supported her until I took care of both."

"I understand," was my brief answer.

On the morrow a plain hearse quietly moved out towards the country, followed by a close carriage containing the widow, Dick, and myself. A messenger had preceded us, and we found a grave already prepared, under a wide-spreading tree.

Aunt Polly met us, and holiness in all its beauty sat enthroned on that aged face. Fondly she caressed Elleen, kissing neck, cheek, and brow, doatingly, as a mother endeavoring to soothe her troubled child.

"Let us bless the Lord, daughter," she said; "goodness is in all his ways; he afflicts us not willingly, and troubles that he sends, if we bear them meekly, will turn out royal blessings."

With few words of earnest prayer to the most high, commending to his holy care the bereaved ones, and asking for them a reunion with the loved one in his own good time, we gently put Charley away, and replaced the green sod which had been unclosed to receive him. Elleen and aunt Polly obediently, at my suggestion, went with me into the house. I placed Elleen upon a couch, and begged her to take the rest she was needing so much, and pressing her little hot hands, "Oh, my child," I said, "forget not to also turn for rest to the Good Father who careth for his children. The arm of flesh will fail, but the stronghold of his love endureth forever." Wringing aunt Polly's withered hand and promising to return in a few days, I rejoined Dick. Poor fellow! grief had done its mighty work with him. Sullen and quiet he sat; and when I, putting aside my own deep trouble, essayed to comfort him, almost gruffly he repulsed me, saying,—

"I know that you mean well, but leave me in peace."

He sprang out of the carriage, motioning me to go on.

As I neared the town, a man was putting up huge posters, on which Landsdown and Willard glared out in big letters. I stopped to read; and judge my amazement, when I read that information was wanting of Elleen, daughter of Cornelius Willard, next in succession to the Earl of Landsdown, deceased; whose sons and daughters had rapidly passed away. And oh, divine heaven, how infinite is thy justice!

Retribution had wrought its course in the family of Cornelius Willard. The evil career of his numerous sons had brought them to early graves, and himself and wife were placed beside them ere the demise of the old earl, in whom the hereditary virtues had flourished as a green bay tree, and yielded the enjoyment of a hale, cheerful old age.

I could not immediately mock the grief of that poor child with tidings of earthly honors, and waited some days before I made my visit.

## CHAPTER VII.

As I approached the house I caught a glimpse of a spectral figure passing among the trees, and as I drew near I saw that it was Dick. He came up to me, and with a sad smile, piteous in its wanness, said,—

"I could not go away."

"Does Elleen know that you are here?" I asked.

"No," was the answer; "I did not want to pester her, and kept hid."

I felt a pang for the poor fellow,—such devotion is rarely seen in this cold world of ours,—and taking his arm I said,—

"Let's go in to see her."

Together we entered the house. By an open window sat Elleen and aunt Polly. Elleen was occupied with some coarse sewing; her beautiful face was very pale, but I could see that she was patient in her tribulation. Aunt Polly had her spectacles on her old eyes, and was reading aloud from the Book of Psalms. Frequently the eyes of both wandered out to where Charley's grave could be seen. Loving hands had already been at work upon it: fragrant flowers gleamed like stars through the green grass, and a wild bird near by was carolling his lay.

Elleen came forward to welcome me. "I do not like to be idle," she said; "and I am hemming all these

towels,"—showing the pile of crash. "But, Dick," she exclaimed, catching sight of him, for he was lagging behind me, and taking his great brown hand in both of her little ones, "This is kind of you, dear old Dick; but I might have known," she added, "that you would come back to see me."

"I have never left you," he replied; "I have not been out of sight of the house."

"Dick, that was not well," she gravely remarked; and looking into his pinched face inquired, "Have you been without food?"

"I was not hungry,—I couldn't eat," was his reply.

Kind aunt Polly instantly produced some cold edibles. Elleen, taking the plate, put it upon a table and said, "Sit down, Dick, and eat."

Obedient as a spaniel, he sat down and ate as he was bidden, Elleen looking on with an expression of sad interest. The old lady went back to her chair, and, crossing her hands on her Bible, sighed as she said, "David had no greater love for Jonathan than this!"

"Sit down, Elleen," I said; "I have strange news for you." In substance I related the purport of the handbills, and concluded by calling her Countess of Landsdown.

"Too late!" she replied, mournfully, shaking her head. "What are wealth and title to me now? But at least I can take better care of aunt Polly," she added, looking affectionately at the sweet old face; "and Dick, too," she continued; "you must never go back to that circus again, Dick."

"I had forgotten all about it," he answered, in a bewildered manner. "The truth is," he said, placing

his hand on his head, "I am afraid that I am not all right here."

"Dick," said Elleen, going up to him in her soft, compassionate way, "you need rest,—change of scene; you must travel,—go away from here," she continued, placing her hand on his bushy head, as a child might pat a huge Newfoundland dog.

"Oh!" he cried, imploringly; "do not send me away! Let me stay where I can see you sometimes! I will not come near to bother you!—just a look from a distance at you,—your dress!" he added, humbly. "I loved Charley so long!" he sobbed out; "and you seem like something from him left to me!"

A tender light came into Elleen's eyes and trembled there as she answered, "Our friendship, Dick, is of a growth too strong to sunder. Did it not have its origin in Charley? and did it not live through three happy years? and did it not survive all through the two years of anxious watchings? No, Dick; I cannot give you up. Nothing remains to me that Charley loved but you and aunt Polly, and, please Heaven, we will bide together until separated by death. But it is my wish that you go abroad for a little. Your strength has been cruelly taxed of late, and your big body is giving way under it. I must take care of you," she added, "if I would not lose you too; and Dick," she continued, speaking slowly but perfectly distinctly and unembarrassed, "when you return, in order to justify our friendship to the world,—for I do mind what it says, *when it has the slightest shadow of an excuse for its gossip*,—you must give me the right to call you husband. Charley's friend must not follow my foot-

steps as a dog or a menial, but must have a position of recognized respectability."

Dick gazed at her in blank amazement. His unselfish heart had no thought of self. It had been his wish to be near her,—to see her,—for she was all the world to him, and without a murmur he would have been either her dog or her menial; and his astonishment would not have been greater if the brightest star in the Pleiades had offered to come down from its lofty sphere and share his lot.

"Aunt Polly," asked Elleen, "do you not think that would be best?"

"Indeed I do, my child. Your youth will need a protector, and doubly so now of all this fortune."

Dick raised his head. The happiness of feeling that a right to be near her would be his, and his also the right to care for her, was so overwhelmingly great that he found it difficult to answer Elleen.

"Your goodness to me is very great, and I will live only to serve you."

This was all of the strange wooing, or rather compact. Of love's language there was none, and, in the usual acceptance of the term, perhaps none was felt.

The peculiar circumstances connected with Elleen's intercourse with Dick had cemented a strong bond between them, and the intimacy of their relations she felt that she could not resign. Her early life had engendered a shrinking and distrust of men and women; but here she knew that underlying the rough exterior was a heart precious as gold thrice refined in the crucible, and fit for reliance upon in all the exigencies and demands of life.

The glowing ideal of her beautiful dream—her young hero—slumbered full six feet deep in the earth. But was it not the crowning act of her love for Charley to bestow her wealth and honor upon the faithful friend remaining?

As for Dick, he did love her as man has rarely loved woman. But high above this personal love there surged a feeling of the sacred trust pertaining to the household goddess that once was Charley's; and in his heart he classed her as one in sisterhood with the angels, and whom it might not be lawful to covet. He also felt that this priceless jewel was too good for his degree, but internally he registered a vow to become less unworthy of her.

As I said farewell to Dick, who was starting on his travels to visit cities and far-distant places, he wrung my hand, and almost sobbed, "*Take care of her!*"

## CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER the usual forms of law in proving identity, etc.—and there was but little trouble in doing so—were gone through with, Elleen was acknowledged Countess of Landsdown, and took her residence upon the princely estate, aunt Polly going with her; and I was easily persuaded to change localities, and follow her to 'a more extended line of duties than had hitherto occupied me.

Twelve months had passed away. A slight female figure was standing beside a handsome marble tablet, inscribed,

CHARLES ROBERTS,  
*Aged 26 years.*

That beautiful face is little changed; indeed, if it were possible, it was still lovelier. The light of a soul at peace shone over it. Under the shadow of His wing she had found rest.

A man's heavy step instinctively lightened as it approached that hallowed spot, and in a moment more Richard Markham stood beside the grave of his early friend. Elleen extended her hand in silent welcome; and, taking a seat near by, they conversed long, in low tones, about the noble Charley they both had loved so well.

Time elapsed, and my lips pronounced the words that rendered the two no longer twain, but one flesh. And who could have identified that grave, reserved man as the whilom four-horse rider in a circus? and that fair woman as an ex-tamer of wild beasts?

You, Lewis, have known them both, and know what blessings their lives brought to all within their reach; and I see, boy, that you would ask if I myself did not also love her. Yes, I did love her, as one who was little less than an angel,—as one whose absence here makes the world dark, and whose presence in heaven makes that goal more anxiously to be sought.

A beautiful spirit, such as hers, is at rare intervals vouchsafed to earth as a type foreshadowing the beings of that celestial home who wear immortal crowns gained by a life well spent and duties well performed.

Kind reader, I entertain for you the most distinguished consideration. Will you not shake hands and part friends? Adieu!

THE END.

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