

# OVER THE BRINK;

— OR —

## *THE PERIL OF BEAUTY.*

**A Story of Life in a Factory  
Town.**

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Prize," "The Rival Sisters," "The Black  
Doctor," "The Recluse," etc.

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LEWISTON, MAINE.

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NOTE.

The following story was originally published in 1866, in the "Once a Month" and "Yankee Blade," and was widely copied by other papers at the time. It is intended to portray certain phases of life in a factory town, its perils and pitfalls, and while endeavoring to avoid anything that could offend the most exacting sense of propriety, the writer has at the same time sought to truthfully present the facts as they exist, that those most deeply concerned may take heed, and thus add greater security to the sacred ties of the home and fireside.

JASPER COLFAX.

## OVER THE BRINK.

### CHAPTER I.

#### OUR HEROINE, AT HOME.

Seated in a farmer's dwelling, her nimble fingers swiftly plying the needle, was a girl of exceeding loveliness. From appearances it would seem that her age could not be over sixteen years, while the merry air and happy laugh which occasionally lit up her youthful features, indicated that her life had not as yet been so affected by unfavorable contact with the world as to destroy that most inestimable element in the female character—an amiable disposition. Nature had indeed been lavish with her favors, and the maiden's form, shaped in her fairest mould, would at once enlist the admiration of the beholder. Nor were the artful devices of fashion requisite to enhance the symmetry of the work which nature had already so faultlessly performed. Blessed with the full flush of health, which lent its lustre to the clear hazel eye and roseate cheek, endowed with a profusion of dark, wavy tresses, drawn back from the fair, full forehead with an unstudied grace, our heroine was at once a fitting ideal for the painter's brush, the sculptor's chisel, or the poet's pen. And all these outward indications did not belie innate worth of Dora Vernon. A New England girl, reared with the most rigid adherence to Puritan principles, she was now the possessor of a mind wholly free of ostentation, and

altogether worthy in its remotest tastes and inclinations.

The room was one of those cheerful, sunny living rooms, of ample dimensions, so common to our country homes. An ancient mahogany book-case, well filled with choice volumes, both secular and religious, stood in a retired corner, while near by, and more convenient of access, was a table laden with the current magazines and newspapers of the day, evincing the intelligence and cultured tastes of the occupants, as well as the prosperity with which they were favored. Pictures adorned the walls, while from without the open windows, which disclosed a broad expanse of fields rich with well-cultivated crops, were wafted the notes of the uncaged songsters who reveled in the delights of the midsummer scene.

Beside the girl, engaged in some household duty, sat an elderly lady, dressed in neat but inexpensive attire, whose features readily betokened the relationship that existed between them. As we enter the dwelling an earnest conversation is going on.

"And so, mother," said the younger, in a gratified tone, "you will let me go. I know it will be better for me. Only think, what a lot of money I can earn to clothe me, saving you and father the trouble of doing so. I am not afraid to work, and in the factories at Lewiston I am sure I can do quite as well as many who have been there before me."

"Possibly you might, Dora; but you must know that you would be an entire stranger at Lewiston, excepting in your uncle's family, with whom you can associate but little, and will have to form new acquaintances, it may be those of a dangerous character, in your ignorance of their antecedents, whose influence may result in your injury."

"Never fear, dear mother. You scarcely give me credit for the good teaching you have ever emplant-ed in my mind. Thoughts of you and dear father, if nothing else, would deter me from going astray from your loving precepts. Be assured, I shall make acquaintance with only those whom I have every reason to believe worthy. Strong as may be the temptations to enter into the exciting allurements which I understand encompass the factory girl at Lewiston, I trust I shall be proof against them, and never do aught to reflect shame upon the name of Vernon."

"I believe you will not, Dora; and if your father is willing, I will consent to your leaving home, although I would much prefer to have you remain with us, and am confident we would find no difficulty in affording you all the articles of dress and comfort you might require."

"Thank you, dear mother. You have ever been kind to me, and wherever I am, or whatever circumstances may attend me, the memory of your affectionate goodness will ever be uppermost in my mind. With this as a talisman to protect me from bad example or evil influence, I shall be able to withstand any temptation."

"Be not too sure of that, Dora. You will need to watch yourself constantly, that you may not yield an iota to the frivolities which will surround you. The young have many perils to contend with in the larger cities. The daily papers contain reports of occurrences in Lewiston and elsewhere which may well cause the inexperienced to distrust their powers of resistance. Young men and young women alike fall victims to the snares of Satan. But here comes your father, and we will hear what he says to your proposition."

Mr. Vernon, a fine specimen of the New England

farmer, entered the dwelling, and, with a cheerful word to his wife and daughter, seated himself for a brief perusal of the agricultural paper, which had just arrived.

Dora awaited her opportunity, and when, at length, he laid the paper aside and looked up for a short conversation, she broached the subject of her desire to enter into service as a factory girl. It is perhaps needless to say that Mr. Vernon opposed this idea of his child in the most marked terms, dwelling upon the trials she would necessarily be subjected to, and the want of care, when once beyond the reach of parental guardianship. His opposition did not avail, however. The girl's mind had for some time been fixed upon the purpose, and, contrary to the usually pliant and passive course she was wont to pursue, she insisted upon the feasibility of her undertaking, and with such zeal and enthusiasm, that her father finally acquiesced, and yielded a reluctant consent.

This compliance with her wishes elicited a degree of gratitude from Dora, for she loved her parents with a most sincere affection, and nothing but a confirmed and long-meditated scheme could for a moment have caused her to persist in a course that was at all objectionable to them. But she had heard of Lewiston; of its advantages to the factory girl, and in her country home, dressed, perhaps, in home-spun, at times, she may have dreamt of gorgeous ladies in silken garments, sweeping the pavement with their regal attire.

Such is the tendency of life. Human nature is much the same the world over; never satisfied; always grasping beyond its present sphere; always reaching forward into the visionary world, building castles in fancy never to be reared in reality. Was it to be thus with Dora Vernon?

## CHAPTER II.

### LIFE IN A COTTON FACTORY.

Clang! clang! rang out the bell in the factory tower, as the hour arrived for the operatives to gather to their daily tasks. Clang! clang! and the streets that a few moments before were empty and silent, were now filled with a crowd of hurrying human beings, all moving towards the immense, substantial structures of brick and stone which stood just across the dark waters of the canal. Clang! clang! How many a weary toiler had heard the tones so oft before that their repetition fell like a dull pain upon their wretched hearts! Here could one behold, as in nearly all other occupations, the varied conditions of life, from the pale, tired mother upon whom devolves the entire support of a family, to the thinly-clad child whose meagre pittance ekes out the scanty fare of a household, the father being dead, or worse, perhaps, cursed with the appetite for strong drink. Some greet the chiming of the bells as they would the notes of a festal occasion, and trip to their work as though it were a pleasant pastime; others, who see no rift in their future experience, plod on with the moody countenances of persons condemned to a term of penal servitude. Light and shade are blended in experience as well as in character; and amid the hastening throng one skilled in reading the human face and mind, would find ample material for study and reflection.

When Dora Vernon heard the ringing of the bells on the first morning after her arrival in Lewiston, it possessed no disagreeable sound to her. The

quiet, staid, unbroken round of country life had, in a measure, grown irksome, and the change, the novelty of the new relation she was about entering, filled her with a degree of pleasant anticipation. Had the task not been self-imposed, it is possible its assumption would have been less cheerful. When she appeared at the breakfast-table, many curious eyes were bent upon the fair features of the new-comer, and mental comments and sidelong glances readily communicated the impressions and opinions entertained of the youthful stranger. Dora did not observe these, however, but modestly partaking her food, she quietly repaired to the factory and reported herself ready for the task which had previously been assigned her.

Those who have visited a cotton factory, and observed the activity that prevails there, the din of the machinery, and the indifference of the operatives to the seemingly dangerous contact of belt and pulley, can appreciate, to some extent, the feelings of partial bewilderment which came over Dora when she emerged upon this busy scene. But these feelings gradually departed as she became engrossed in her newly-chosen vocation, under proper instruction.

A few hours later two girls stood conversing together at their looms. That they were on terms of closest intimacy was evident from the freedom which characterized their conversation. Presently the eyes of one fell upon our heroine.

"There is the girl I was telling you about, Pauline. Isn't she a beauty?"

The one addressed looked in the direction indicated, and, unobserved by her, studied the features of Dora. So intent was she in this that she quite forgot the other's interrogation.

"You do not reply," urged the first speaker, notic-

ing rather curiously her abstracted manner. "I asked you, if you did not think her beautiful?"

A tinge of red suffused the cheeks of the girl addressed, as she perceived that her close scrutiny or admiration had been observed by her companion.

"Yes," she at length replied; "your statement seems fully confirmed by the original of the picture."

"And you will have to look well to your laurels after this, I fancy. The girl who has so long worn the enviable distinction of the Belle of the Corporation is likely to be eclipsed by this fresh arrival from the country."

"Let your mind be at ease about my laurels. I don't think they will be endangered by the advent of this verdant country girl."

"But she's not so verdant—at least, she will not be, long. A few months often works wonderful transformations. Do you remember the day you first came to Lewiston? You were from the country, I believe?"

"I was." And the red deepened in the girl's cheeks as she spoke, whether from thought of her present or past life, it would be hard to tell.

"Queer things sometimes happen in this changeable, fickle world," continued the other, reflectively. "I'll venture to predict that some of your admirers will yet desert you for this same country girl whom you affect to regard so lightly—Dick Bruce, for instance."

There was another interval of silence. Many strange thoughts seemed to be coursing through the brain of the girl whom the other had sought to tease. The first speaker had intimated that her companion was a being of unusual personal appearance. This fact would at once become apparent to the most casual observer. The girl addressed as Pauline had indeed been beautiful, and that at

a time not long past. But other lines than those of beauty were now revealed in her remarkable face—dissipation, late hours, the ball-room, convivial—shall we say, vicious?—companionship, had left their impress there. Not only had she prepossessing features, but there were evidences of mental powers of no ordinary degree. Whether those powers were elevated by her better or subverted by her baser characteristics, we may in due time learn.

"Dick," she at length replied, a smile of peculiar meaning lighting up her face; "I should be most happy to have him become acquainted with her. And yet," she mused to herself, in a tone that could not be heard by her companion above the noise of the speed—"no, it would not do; it would be too cruel of me. Ah! me! how short a time it seems since first I came to this place! What was I then? what am I now? Before me I behold one as I was, but never, never can the past be recalled! And what care I? Out upon these reflections that come rushing in upon me! I have had to learn by experience; let others do the same! Do you know," she continued, loud enough for the other to hear, "that I must become acquainted with this new girl Dora, as you call her. You think my vanity will cause me to be jealous. To convince you of the contrary, I am determined to become her intimate companion, her chum, her crony, if you please."

"Perhaps you will succeed no better than in your attempt to become intimate with the Bishop girls," replied the other, renewing her efforts to tease.

"I care not for the Bishop girls, so long as they do not run across my purpose."

"And they will not be inclined to do that, I im-

agine, for they mind their own affairs, and care little for the attentions of the other gender. Only one of them has a suitor, I believe, and he is hardly up to her standard."

"You mean, Agnes?"

"Yes. Do you know I sometimes think she would make a splendid actress, with her elegant manners and graceful carriage? The stage is her *forte*, or I'm mistaken. Why, she's the very personification of dignity and pride."

"Poor and proud!"

"Yes, poor and proud, and beautiful, too, you will admit. Belle and Agnes Bishop were reared in luxury and refinement, one can easily see."

This aside allusion did not seem to be relished by the girl Pauline, and the stopping of a loom which required the attention of the first speaker, interrupted the conversation, and afforded her an excuse for leaving the alley. Repairing to another part of the room, she resumed her own task.

For the remainder of the day Pauline Montville's mind was no less active than her hands. Two elements in her nature seemed struggling for the ascendancy; and not until a severe mental conflict had been fought did one wholly usurp the throne of action.

## CHAPTER III.

## IN THE TOILS OF THE DESTROYER.

"Surely, Dora, you will not attempt to go home to-night; it is so late, and you can hardly find your way to the corporation. You are not familiar with the streets, and would be as likely to take the wrong one as otherwise. Besides, we should be worried for your safety."

"Which would be a needless matter. Never fear, Julia. I am not afraid of darkness, and as for the streets, they are regularly laid out, and I have little doubt that I can find my way. Then, if I should remain over night, obliging me to be late in the morning, the 'old man' would not like it. And you know I want to get off all the work I can, in order to procure my new dress this payment," replied Dora, laughing, as she used some expressions that had fallen upon her ear several times during her brief operative experience.

"O pshaw! Don't fret about the 'old man' and the new dress to-night. Be contented where you are. You certainly would be incurring great risk to venture out alone, and there is no one at home to accompany you. It isn't always safe for females to travel the streets even at an early hour of the evening, and now, owing to our agreeable conversation, we have failed to note the flight of time, till it has become quite late, and nobody but stragglers are abroad; that is, if I may except the police, who are so few in numbers it would be hardly reasonable to depend upon them for any protection. If you don't stay, I fear you'll have occasion to regret your imprudence."

## IN THE TOILS OF THE DESTROYER.

"Nonsense! cousin dear. You place a poor estimate upon my courage. I am not frightened so easily, I assure you. Just dismiss your forebodings, and imagine me safe at my destination."

"If you insist upon going, then," said Julia, "I must go with you a portion of the way."

"No, cousin, I cannot permit that; for you would have to return alone, and that would only increase the possibilities of the danger which you suggest."

Perceiving how useless were her efforts at persuasion, Julia attended Dora to the door, and, as she departed, bid her good-night.

Once out in the darkness, and alone, however, the latter's spirits and courage did not appear so buoyant. She was possessed of a good degree of self-reliance, naturally, and while yet comfortably ensconced in the home of her cousin she felt more like laughing at that worthy young lady's misgivings than like viewing them with any sort of seriousness. Now, it must be confessed, something of a revulsion took place in her feelings. Nothing but the uncertain light of the stars, struggling amid the drifting clouds, afforded any aid for her guidance. Had she not already committed herself so far as to make it seem almost absurd for her to forgo her purpose, she would gladly have turned and re-entered the house. But she felt too proud to do so now, and passing without the gate, she tripped lightly along, many dark thoughts and vague fears flitting through her mind as she advanced, sometimes uncertain of her whereabouts, and far from positive that she was pursuing the right course.

Under other circumstances, perhaps, Dora would have felt less concern for her safety, but her conscience upbraided her for treating Julia's anxiety so inconsiderately. Her cousin, she knew, would feel ill at ease till next she heard from her, which,



in all probability, would not be for several days. In the country, where her life had thus far been spent, no more danger was anticipated in the highway at night than in the broad light of noon-day. Few tramps were abroad at any time, and seldom could one be found after dark when a convenient barn or corn-crib offered him a chance for undisturbed repose. But in the city, as Dora was not aware, the night is the season of special activity on the part of certain characters.

At length, she reached a section of more frequent habitations, and the rays of an occasional street light, penetrating their darkened recesses, formed fantastic figures which her excited imagination converted into living beings about to spring forth and intercept her passage. Repressing a shudder, she would continue on her way, chiding her weakness for yielding to such feelings of timidity.

Some distance had been traveled, when she fancied she detected the sound of a man's footsteps following her. Even if such were the case, she reasoned, that fact alone need excite no apprehension. It might only be some one who, like herself, was belated from home. Still, at the swiftness with which she was going, she thought the sound must at once increase if he designed to overtake her. This impression was soon confirmed, for, though she pressed forward with redoubled haste, her trepidation greatly accelerating her progress, she perceived that her pursuer, as she now believed the person to be, was rapidly nearing, till, at last, when nearly out of breath, a young man reached her side, and accosted her:

"Excuse me, miss; this is a late hour for one of your sex to be out, and a dark night. Can I be of service to you? I am a member of the force, and shall be happy to render any assistance or escort

desired. It would be unsafe for you to go farther unattended."

"Thank you," replied Dora, timidly, pausing necessarily, for the individual had almost confronted her—"thank you, sir; but may I know why it is that you are on the street at such a time?"

"Ah! you do not understand. I am one of the force—a policeman,—and it is my duty to attend any one whom circumstances compel to be out at a late hour."

"O, indeed!" returned Dora, with some confidence; "then you will direct me the way to my boarding-house on the corporation." And she gave him the name and number where she wished to go. "I assure you your services are most opportune. I am almost a stranger in Lewiston, and should not have started out only for a foolish whim."

"I dare say," was the reply, with a sinister leer that, could Dora have seen it, would have driven the blood back to her heart in cold chills. "But come; I have detained you. We must make haste, for you are doubtless anxious to get to your boarding-place."

"Thank you for your kindness," said Dora.

And the two walked briskly along, turning into a more sparsely-populated thoroughfare presently, however, as the guide suggested they would thus lessen the distance to be traversed.

Dora had been but a few weeks in Lewiston, and this was the first time she had trusted herself to leave the corporation alone of an evening. She knew very little of the various localities, yet this knowledge had been deemed sufficient for her guidance when belated at the suburban home of her cousin, Julia Cameron.

As they now passed from street to street she wondered at her recklessness in attempting to find

her way. No objects appeared in the least familiar to her, and soon they were once more where the street lights did not shed their friendly rays. How fortunate that she were not alone! And yet—could it be?—a faint suspicion passed through her mind which she scarce dared entertain.

Still on they went, going a mile, it seemed to Dora, ere her companion again spoke, and then he merely deigned a word of reply to her questions as to their whereabouts. Something whispered to her consciousness that all was not right. Instead of approaching the dark, brick walls of the corporation, as they should have done before this, she perceived, almost by instinct, that they were in a section of fields and woodland, and must therefore be far away from her destination. Completely alarmed, she ventured to expostulate at the route they were pursuing.

"O, don't worry, don't worry!" said her escort, in a gruff voice, wholly unlike that in which he had first addressed her. "This is the way; come along!"

"But, sir, I cannot. I fear I have done wrong to accompany you thus far."

"Ah! indeed! You've made that discovery, have you? I fancy it's a little too late to be of service, however. Do you understand me?"

The poor girl was standing still, trembling with a deadly fear at the cruel, insinuating tone of the stranger, whom she now knew to be a villain, while the designs he entertained were but too evident.

"Come, come, I say! You are already out of the reach of help. You must come!"

"But, sir, I dare not!"

The villain had advanced several steps beyond Dora as she hesitated.

"As you choose, then," he said, in a determined tone, moving towards the terrified girl."

## CHAPTER IV.

## SOMEWHAT DIGRESSIVE AND DESULTORY.

Let us digress at this point long enough to introduce two new characters, one of whom, at least, will receive more or less attention in the following chapters of our story.

"Well, Robert, we are nearing the close of our college life. One year more of study and preparation, and then we shall go forth into the world to battle for fame and fortune."

"So far as I am concerned that may be true. With you, however, it is quite a different thing. The last condition is already met in having wealthy parents who will supply all the needful, and as to the first, it is sure to come, as a matter of course."

"How sanguine you are, Robert!"

"For you, yes. Your father is a prominent journalist and proprietor of one of the leading newspapers of the West, and with your inherited literary tastes, and the benefit of his long experience, I predict for you the fulfillment of your most glowing anticipations in the fields of journalism."

"Thanks, my dear Robert. I shall endeavor not to disappoint you. And, in turn, allow me to expect for you a career no less brilliant in the profession of medicine."

"That profession does not admit of such extended reputation as that of journalism. The pen is said to be mightier than the sword, and I presume it is mightier than the scalpel, also. The physician's life is comparatively obscure and commonplace, unless, perchance, he adopts some specialty and distinguishes himself in it. On the other hand,

journalism keeps one's name constantly before the public, and is ever open to its commendation."

"Condemnation, you might have said, also, Robert. Unfortunately, all journalists do not invariably espouse the cause of right. Selfish motives, political aspirations, particular objects blind, too often, the editor's vision, to write his honest convictions, if he has any, and society suffers in consequence. The true reformers of our day are few and far between—men who have nobly overcome their desire for personal aggrandizement or personal notoriety, and entered the arena to combat with some pernicious doctrine or practice from a love of principle, and nothing else."

"Still you will concede there are such."

"Yes, but conspicuously few. History occasionally mentions them, but where they have stood out in their truest fidelity, and thrown their light with greatest effect into the dark background of their day, may be found indications of violence, oppression and wrong; of persecution on the one hand, and patient, untiring forbearance on the other, in striking contrast with the obstacles and surroundings of our modern reformers."

"In the West you will find plenty of room to distinguish yourself as the champion of right," said Robert Converse, regarding his friend with an approving smile.

"I trust so. It is truly sorrowful to contemplate the iniquity and folly which exists in the West at the present time. A vast new country, open to immigration from all parts of the world, how important it is that her leaders should be men of principle as well as stamina, purity as well as vigor; that this great mass which is accumulating there, and which must accumulate for generations to come, from the remotest parts of the globe, should

be properly directed, instructed and nationalized at the beginning. And for this guiding power the West depends to a great extent upon her press; no instrumentality is so potent for good or evil in freedom-loving Columbia. Unfortunately, however, newspapers are too often moulded by public sentiment rather than moulders of public sentiment. The tide that has set westward for many years has contained an element that few have dared to antagonize, while many have been only too ready to cater to its abasing demands."

"But the West has improved in regard to her press, as in nearly everything else, since the Rebellion closed," said Robert, interrupting his classmate in a subject that evidently deeply interested him.

"Yes. Immediately on the opening of hostilities there sprang up a class of free-lance journalists who run a-muck, as it were, in their reckless career. There was no word too profane, no sentence too vulgar for their sheets. They obtained a notoriety and a circulation by this, and this alone; encouraged treason, multiplied the enemies of the government, and led the deluded Southern people to believe that vulgarity was chivalry, and open defiance of law the height of patriotism. Their monstrous calumnies of the best men of the North were intended solely to satisfy the prejudice and conscience of the rebellious faction, and keep alive the feelings of animosity, as revealed in the diabolical doings of the Ku-Klux Klan. These papers were worthy the darkest period of the world's history, fitting relics of a barbarous age, well calculated to induce a reign of terror no less terrible than that of France in its demoralizing results. For their proprietors the Guillotine were too easy a mode of exit. They should have been

made to feel, to appreciate more effectually the wrath of an injured community."

"And they did feel it. The leading papers of the class you mention went down, as they deserved to, and their owners are now remanded to the oblivion they so richly merited. Time will effect a radical change in all these matters."

"Doubtless. The promises of the West are unlimited, in growth, in wealth, in everything—but morals. Several of her leading cities are very maelstroms of vice and crime, where the New England boy, fresh from the pure atmosphere of his native hills, encounters all the baneful associations that are so inimical to his better nature, and goes down with the flood-tide of dissipation. The restraining element, at best, is feeble, inadequate, and life and honor hold little consideration where wealth is sought with hands imbued with human blood. With a purified press this condition of affairs will be remedied; when the unprincipled journalists who have taken advantage of the unorganized state of society, to disseminate their erroneous ideas, are wiped out, extirpated, then will society be founded on a basis of morality, Christianity and civil liberty."

"Nobly spoken," responded Robert Converse, as his friend concluded and subsided into a chair from which he had risen as he became warmed up with his subject.

Norman Chester was a Western boy, whose father had experienced many trying vicissitudes on the border during the early part of the civil war, and these facts had so impressed themselves upon his mind that his one ambition was to equip himself to assist and possibly eventually succeed the latter in the publication of a journal whose staunch loyalty and outspoken advocacy of justice had

won for its publisher honorable distinction and generous revenue.

"I was right, Norman," continued his companion, "in already according you a brilliant success. I fancy you now wielding the editorial pen in the cause of humanity, making for yourself a powerful constituency, and then going to Congress, as the distinguished Congressman Chester."

"No, I thank you," returned Norman, laughing. "I haven't forgotten Wolsey's advice to Cromwell. In adopting my profession I have endeavored to ignore selfish ends."

"Which is the surest way to succeed. Those who aim only to accomplish their own advancement are generally the last in securing it. Your victory is assured. In a medical profession, however, I see no such triumphs for myself."

"You are too pessimistic, Robert. As the *protege* of our kind tutor, Prof. Payson, you have enjoyed unusual advantages, which you have not neglected to improve, by the way, and with such a companion as Ella Payson to share your future lot, the prospect could scarcely be more auspicious."

The color came slightly in Robert's face at the mention of the name which had evidently touched a tender chord in the student's feelings.

Both young men were excellent specimens of mental and physical training. This evening Norman Chester had called at the room of his friend and classmate, which was at the residence of Professor Payson, in order that they might mutually assist in their studies. These satisfactorily disposed of, they were indulging in a glance at the future as we intrude upon their presence. However irrelevant to our story may be the conversation to which we have listened, it affords an inkling of

the hopes and anticipations which each entertained.

The room, which was spacious and comfortably furnished, contained besides many articles of luxury which gave evidence that a more than friendly hand had arranged for its occupant. Choice plants, rare botanical specimens, and fragrant flowers lent their cheerful influence to the apartment. Text books of various kinds were within easy reach, while standing in a corner were a set of Indian clubs, on the floor by which reposed a pair of dumb-bells of no trifling weight.

"And now for a brief exercise with the gloves before I go," said Norman, arising to leave.

The two students put on a set of gloves and quietly engaged in the sport of boxing.

Both were adroit in their manœuvres, but as the practice with them had been mainly to promote a healthy muscular development, neither sought to display superiority over his opponent.

After a few light passes, Norman stopped and looked at his watch.

"It's high time I was going," he said ; "it's later than I supposed."

And hastily assuming his hat, he wished his friend a hearty good-night, and started out in the darkness, taking the nearest way across the fields to his own place of abode.

## CHAPTER V.

### AN OBSTACLE IN THE WAY.

However cunningly devised, however carefully executed, the schemes of villainy are not always permitted to succeed. And sometimes they are so permitted. When one scans the daily record of crime in which the innocent so often suffer and the guilty go unpunished, the question naturally arises and frequently expresses itself, 'Why are such things allowed to be? If man's vision were not finite, the question might never occur. That justice will be meted out somehow, somewhere, we should not dare doubt. It is as certain as that there is a Supreme Judge whose rulings are never wrong, and whose decisions no technical evasions can annul.

But let us return to Dora Vernon, whom we so abruptly left under such critical circumstances at the conclusion of a previous chapter.

Not many strides had the bogus policeman taken, when a young man, who in the darkness and excitement had approached them unperceived, interposed himself before Dora, and as the fellow advanced, gave him a stinging blow which sent him to the ground. Only for a moment, however. Finding himself opposed by a formidable assailant, for the blow he had received was no child's play, he struggled to his feet, with curses on his lips, and commenced an onset. While no mean foe to be met in a hand-to-hand encounter, he found one who, although comparatively slight in figure, was yet able to render his efforts harmless, and at the same time return sallies that were very

much out of his reckoning, and altogether too severe for his corporeal system to withstand. Consequently, after vainly endeavoring to reach his adversary till his strength was quite exhausted, he received a *coup de grace*, which wholly unsettled his equilibrium and brought him to mother earth again. Thanks to that blow, it furnished its recipient with enough quietus to keep him in an unconscious state for some time.

No sooner had the villain fallen than the newcomer hurried to the side of Dora, who had also fallen, but only in a swoon, from which she was fast reviving. Placing his arm around her, he gently lifted her from her unseemly couch, and succeeded in restoring her to entire consciousness. Slowly did her eyes open at first with a dazed, bewildered expression, and then, as the tender words of solicitude fell upon her ear, she became reassured and cognizant of her position, a shudder passing over her, however, as she mentally recalled the scenes through which she had just passed.

"Dear miss," said the young man, when she had become sufficiently composed, "I have found you under the most embarrassing circumstances, and hope I have rendered you a service."

"O, sir, you have, indeed—a service I can never forget, and which shall ever receive my warmest gratitude." And she would have narrated the events we have given the reader, but he urged her to wait till they reached his place of residence, which was but a short distance away.

Thus she complied with, and escorted by the young man, Dora soon had the pleasure of seeing a bright light beaming from the windows of an elegant dwelling—the only one in the vicinity, to which the surrounding estate belonged.

And here Norman Chester—for it was none

other—was made acquainted with Dora's adventure till he had encountered her in the toils of the destroyer. Exceedingly wroth was he when he heard from those fair lips the story, told in the sincere and pathetic manner peculiar to Dora; and he blamed himself that his chastisement of the wretch had not been more severe. He had recognized his antagonist as one Harland Banford, a fast young man of respectable family, residing in another portion of the city. Perhaps he put a deal of emphasis on his wish for the fellow's annihilation, but the fact was, he cared little whether that individual was dead or alive, since he had been permitted the pleasure of rescuing so fair a creature, and could hear from her own lips the relation of his gallant achievement.

If Dora Vernon showed gratitude, Norman Chester revealed in his glowing eye something warmer—attachment, it might have been love for the youthful stranger. While assuming no credit for having rescued one who had thus unavoidably been cast upon his protection, the exercise of that faculty had kindled a flame of sympathy which had already attained a remarkable growth and threatened serious havoc with his unpledged affections. That he had never met a girl coming quite so near his ideal of true loveliness, he could but acknowledge, and fondly as he had imagined himself invulnerable to the female graces, the young man was compelled to cast down the gauntlet and recognize their potency.

That night Dora Vernon slept under a strange roof, but she did it willingly. She felt that they were friends near her, people who cared for her welfare, and who would not allow aught of harm to come to her. All this she thought over after she had retired—this coupled with her providential

deliverance from an untold fate; and of her cousin she thought—her dear cousin, Julia Cameron, whose wishes, had she complied with them, would have saved her so much trouble. Still continuing her meditations, she came at last to the one who had rescued her, Norman Chester, and, most credulous reader, will you believe it?—she took more pleasure in dwelling upon thoughts of him than aught else that had entered her mind. Like many another girl, she was susceptible to Cupid's influence, and he, the embodiment of powers capable of protecting her from enemies, and of personal advantages of no common order—well, well, who could blame her?

The next morning she partook breakfast with her newly-made friends, and after receiving a cordial invitation to repeat her visit under more favorable circumstances, she started for her boarding-house, accompanied by Norman, who was especially delighted with the walk.

But we are not going to divulge all the conversation that transpired during their slow stroll toward the corporation. The imaginative reader can conjecture various topics that might have occupied their attention. He is assured, however, that only one subject was indulged in—a subject agreeable to both. More than this it is not, perhaps, necessary to disclose.

## CHAPTER VI.

## A FESTIVE OCCASION.

"Miss Montville, you're wanted at the door!" rang in shrill tones through the hall of a certain Lewiston corporation boarding-house.

There was an inquisitive flutter at the head of the stairs, several doors stealthily moved on their hinges, as the young lady, gaily attired in full evening costume, appeared and recognized her caller. She had evidently expected his coming, and with only a word of greeting, the two sallied forth upon the street, their exit closely scrutinized by a dozen or more eyes curiously peering from the block they had just left.

"Where to-night, Dick?" familiarly inquired the girl, the twain presently emerging upon Lisbon street. "To the theatre. The play is having a big run there. You will be pleased with it."

"I shall be pleased with nothing of the kind!"

"How so, my beauty?"

"I have a play of my own to-night. We're going in another direction!"

"Just as you please. Where, then?"

"To the Park."

"What! to hear the band play?"

"No—not exactly—to see the crowd. The evening is splendid, the birds will be out in full feather, and I want to see the styles."

"You! How about me?"

"Well, you can see them, too, if you'll agree not to become enamored with some of the fair creatures, and desert me."

"Desert you! Never!"

"Until you find one that suits you better."

Both laughed at the badinage indulged in, as, thus conversing, they entered the Park, and were soon mingling with the gay crowd that was promenading its embowered avenues in time with the sweet strains of instrumental music which floated on the evening air.

The younger population of Lewiston were here fairly represented, in their happiest mood. Goldsmith's genial pen could have pictured a scene of no more rational enjoyment. Merry throngs of boys and girls frolicked in the utmost freedom upon the grassy lawn, the more sedate gathered in groups to discuss the latest predictions of the weather bureau, while multitudes of belles and beaux, engaged in pleasing converse, filed up and down the gauntlet of observing loiterers, who commented on their appearance or exchanged a word or look of recognition. This was a part of Lewiston life—this assembling on the Park of Thursday evenings, to pass a brief season in agreeable diversion from the exactions of routine labor.

"There they come," said Pauline Montville, to herself, as, seated with her companion, she descried a couple approaching them in the moving throng. "The country girl that she is, her beauty outvies all the lavish displays of dress made here. It's evident she's captivated him—this young student of prospective fortune. Perhaps she will win him; I doubt it, however. Pauline Montville has a hand in this game. But I must avoid their seeing me."

She averted her head as the couple passed by—Dora Vernon and Norman Chester—for the young student, having received her permission to call, had pressed his advantage by soliciting her company on the Park for the evening. Feeling confident that no ill could come of it, Dora had gladly complied.

"There goes a beauty for you," said the young man Dick to his companion, as the couple disappeared in the moving crowd. "Who is she?"

"An acquaintance of mine."

"Of yours? You didn't recognize her."

"I was looking the other way."

"O, yes; of course. I see; you didn't care to be recognized in turn. You were ashamed of your company, eh?"

"How excessively modest you are getting, Dick! A young man of your brilliancy should hardly consider himself in that light."

"I consider myself in any light that suits you."

"That's good, Dick, and leads me to believe that our acquaintance has not been in vain."

"Perhaps not."

"Dick!" She turned upon him so suddenly that he glanced at her in surprise. "We are only friends, you know?"

"Yes."

"Well, suppose this was our last appearance in public together?"

"As you choose," he replied, with an indifference that showed his association with the girl was only a matter of pastime.

"I have a proposition to make," she continued.

He inclined his head and listened. His eyes lit up with a strange fire. As she proceeded he glanced inquiringly into her face, as if to read the thoughts that remained unuttered.

"Well, you are a brick!" he exclaimed, when she had concluded. "You are the devil's own child, and no mistake!"

The Androscoggin bell slowly struck the hour of nine, the music ceased in the band stand, and the crowd gradually dispersed, leaving the Park a scene of solitude and quiet.



## CHAPTER VII.

## FROM NOONDAY TO MIDNIGHT.

Two months wore away in the factory experience of our heroine—not always pleasant experience, nor yet altogether disagreeable—when a beautiful Sunday was ushered in, with a clear sky and bland, exhilarating atmosphere. It was a day fit to excite man's deepest gratitude for the blessings of life and inspire him to the worship of its divine Author. Dora Vernon, adhering to the custom which she had scrupulously observed at home, prepared herself for church, and, attended by Norman Chester, with whom pledges of more than friendly fealty had already been exchanged, was among those who listened to the expounding of the holy scriptures. Rev. Mr. Candor, the popular preacher, much beloved for his zeal and earnestness, chose for his text a passage particularly adapted to the young, admonishing them against the treacherous enticements of sin, seeking constantly to ensnare the unwary, and its consequent remorse and ruin. With glowing colors did he picture the happiness which falls to the lot of those who ever walk in the path of rectitude, while with sombre hues did he paint the future of those who wander astray in the mountains and deserts of iniquity, where the voice of the Good Shepherd calls in vain for their return. On Dora's plastic mind, across whose camera no lasting lines of darkness lingered, the words fell with joyful impress, and as the congregation retired, she mentally concurred in the general comment upon the excellence of the sermon and the eloquence of the preacher. Alas! that the world

stands ready to tear down the noble structures of such worthy builders!

After dinner, anticipating a quiet afternoon, Dora went to her room, of which she was the sole occupant, it being a small but pleasant one usually assigned to the last arrival, intending to entertain herself with a choice volume which she had obtained at the public library the evening previous. Lying upon the book, probably placed there by the chambermaid in her absence, she found a note, carefully sealed, bearing her address in a precise, feminine hand. Breaking the seal, she read:

DEAR DORA: Thinking you would not be engaged this afternoon, I have taken the liberty to make up a little party of friends in your honor, for the purpose of visiting one of the most interesting and picturesque spots on the Androscoggin, called West Pitch. During the short acquaintance I have been privileged to enjoy with you I have been impressed with your admiration of the beautiful in nature, and with due regard for the character of the day, I trust you will see no impropriety in accompanying us. I will call for you at two o'clock. Please be ready. Your Friend,

PAULINE MONTVILLE.

Dora regretted that the invitation had been extended. She would have preferred to remain at home and read for the afternoon. Did the sermon of the forenoon recur to her mind, warning her against the step she might take? But she hesitated to decline. She had already received many tokens of kindness from the writer of the note, and would it not be ungrateful and rude to refuse so thoughtful a request, especially when the affair had been arranged in her own behalf? Yes; she would be ready.

Pauline Montville, the leader of the expedition,

if we may call it such, had from the first fastened herself upon the attention of Dora. What could be her purpose in seeking the association of one so unlike herself, the reader may need not be informed. Certain it is that such association could bring only harm to the latter. With her presuming manners and winning ways, with a ready wit for all emergencies, Pauline Montville had thus far avoided any exposure of her real character, and had succeeded in presenting herself only in the light of a good and true friend. A friend! when from the depths of her heart she hated Dora—hated her for the graces she possessed; hated her for the place she held in the estimation of Norman Chester. And this hatred had grown to a deadly malignity, warmed and stimulated by their daily intercourse, till now it only sought some mode in which to vent itself. Under the golden coating of deceit lurked the poisoned fangs of envy, ready and impatient for the opportunity to fasten themselves into their prey. Pauline Montville had studied her part well; her role was perfect as rehearsal could make it; and the curtain was rung up on act the first when Dora Vernon yielded to her solicitations to visit the spot we have mentioned. Was it to be comedy or tragedy? It could not be farce; Pauline Montville never had part in such.

It was a perfect day, and the merry party of girls took every occasion to express their delight at being free from the labor of the factory, indulging in outbursts of jest and song which at times were repulsive to the sensitive and untainted ear of Dora. But she forebore expressing displeasure, and at length, when her companions chided her for a lack of cheerfulness, so far entered into the excitement and enthusiasm of the moment that they

could illy conceal their gratification at seeing her footsteps tending so naturally toward that greatest of moral precipices, over which theirs, perhaps, had long before inadvertently slipped. Many a girl with her coveted her superior qualities of mind and heart, but at the same time would gladly have beheld them crushed, if only to satisfy the baser tendency of their desires. Cunning prevented this being shown openly; the heart's secrets were locked, that their silent workings might be the more effectual.

West Pitch! scene of the tragic Indian romance! a beautiful specimen of Nature's workmanship, perhaps, although the encroachments of civilization, with its vandal touch, may have robbed it of some of its primeval attractions! here do we find our heroine, amid her gay associates, all bent on enjoying themselves as best they might.

Seated upon the projecting ledge, the girls recounted to each other the many frailties which had attended their career in Lewiston; told of lovers' affairs and flirtations generally; of balls, and rides, and evening promenades, when Pleasure reigned, and Principle and Honor sank beneath her ghastly car.

Yet here Pauline Montville displayed the most remarkable trait in her character—that of guarding her emotions and assuming stoical indifference to the exciting incidents around her. She was too good an actress to be diverted from her own imperturbable part by the witty sallies of the moment's jester. With a calm exterior, she bided her time, studiously rehearsing to herself each chosen passage, that, when her name should be called, her success might be the more certain, her triumph the more complete.

At length a young man approached the party,

and being recognized by a majority of the girls, was introduced by Pauline to Dora, as Richard Montville, her brother.

Prepossessing in appearance, pleasing in manners, and quite confident and self-assured, he bespoke a person well accustomed to female society, and received a deal of flattering attention from the group of girls. Little did he seem to care for this, however, for his eyes were fixed upon Dora, and in the most familiar manner possible, he seated himself by her side and entered into conversation.

"A fine day to enjoy the Pitch," said he to Dora, as the other girls seemed at once to find something of new interest in another locality, thus leaving her, somewhat against her own inclination, to engage the entire attention of the new-comer. "Sister Paul informs me that you have but recently come to Lewiston."

"I have been here but a brief period," replied Dora.

"And this is the first time you have visited the Pitch? It must be quite a novelty to you."

"It is, indeed. I should hardly have ventured to come had the girls not extolled its beauties to such an extent. And yet, its very terrors seem to enhance its beauties."

"It would be a terrible thing for one to fall into the abyss of water dashing amid the rocks below us," he continued, directing her attention to the "Pitch," which was greatly swollen by recent rains.

"An awful fate!" said Dora, shuddering. "One could scarcely conceive a more certain death. There would be little hope of life after falling into such a dreadful place. Its contemplation is enough to excite the deepest alarm. I fear I am in peril now."

"O, there's no danger here," replied he, laugh-

ing. "Take my hand and we will approach nearer the precipice."

She gazed at him a moment and then drew back. Turning to see what had become of her companions, they were not in sight.

"What!" she exclaimed; "have they left me here alone?"

"No—not alone," said the young man; "I am here. Paul knew you would be well cared for while I were with you, and so probably did not consider it a breach of propriety to leave you. She is a thoughtful sister, is Paul."

"She has been very attentive to me," said Dora.

"And of course you will excuse her if she permits me to assume some of that attention."

"But she will return?" queried Dora.

"It is scarcely probable. They are a party of wild girls, with her, and are doubtless far away ere this. I trust my company will prove no less agreeable than theirs."

An expert at words, an adept at deceit, and his faultless attire bespeaking a person with scrupulous regard for externals, at least, he presented himself in such glowing colors to the artless perceptions of the young girl that she imagined him, both in purpose and appearance, a gentleman. It was but natural, when we consider how little she had seen of life—how much of the sweet and how little of the bitter she had drank. No drama on the stage had depicted to her how transparent are many beings who drift about within the pale of society—human vampyres, whose sole aim and object is to destroy. And how was it with her companions? Well did they know into whose hands they had committed her; 'twas all too well arranged; and, if anything, their footsteps were more buoyant homeward, gloating as they did over the prospect of another victim.

Withdrawing to a more remote point of observation, where the cataract afforded a better perspective, and the interlacing branches spread their canopy of leaves above their heads, the circumstances and surroundings seemed conspiring to render Dora oblivious of the dangers that lurked in her pathway, her young soul, meanwhile, unsuspectingly drinking in the enchanting beauties of the scenery and entering with full zest into the sentimental strain which her companion was pleased to indulge in. Many times had she had opportunity to commune with Nature before, and always attuned to its inspiring influence, her mind had ever kept above the carnal allurements of earth, and traveled in its own chaste, poetic sphere, untrammelled and unclouded by the false, and crafty, and subtle realities of life. Filled with this fervor, this admiration of the good and beautiful, she noted naught but the finer sentiments of the young man at her side, nor detected beneath the glittering surface, the sinister designs, the gloomy pitfall so skillfully being laid for her unwary feet.

Thus did the hours glide, thus did the conversation teem with glowing expressions of appreciation and delight, till the shades of night began to grow thick around them, and glimmers of light shot out from the windows of the distant habitations. Then did the thought occur to Dora—how similar were the circumstances to those in which she had recently been placed—yet how different! Then she was with a stranger; now she was with the brother of her friend. Poor, confiding, inexperienced girl! Little did she know what fiendish designs are instigated to mislead the feet of innocence. Yet did she sorely blame herself for so far overstepping the bounds of propriety as to have remained alone in such a place and at such an hour

with a comparative stranger, and in so doing, committing herself to his honor.

But Richard Montville was too well up to his profession to let aught successfully oppose his advances, and the wily, accomplished libertine bent all his arts and well-tried schemes to effect his purpose.

Would that this chapter could be blotted from our story, but it cannot; it is real-life, and must remain. It is the old recital—innocence yielding to false representations and delusive sophistries—and is only what frequently occurs in Lewiston and elsewhere. It is enough for us to add here, that when Dora Vernon returned to her boarding-house, late that night, she was as her associates had desired her—a despoiled, ruined girl.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## END OF ACT THE FIRST.

The next day Dora Vernon was not at her accustomed place in the factory. Word went in that she was ill—and true, she was. The thought of what had transpired, the reaction of her moral forces, with their blighting crimination, had completely stunned, bewildered her; and her mind went into a semi-trance state, from which it never emerged. Error once fastened upon her footsteps, she was not one to repent and try life again; but remorse, hydra-headed and with baleful eyes, confronted her at every avenue of thought, crushing out whatever of good purpose or noble impulse might have remained, and plunged her into the darkest abyss of despair.

Thus she remained. Norman Chester called upon her, but received word that she had gone home. Julia Cameron also called, and received the same reply. Had they known how deeply she suffered, how sadly it must all end, perhaps they would have rushed to her side, and diverted the course of events. But could Norman Chester ever forgive? No; his was a soul too noble to grant acquittal to such a course; and yet he could pity—would pity—had not circumstances prevented. Confined to her room under plea of indisposition, having her food brought to her, seeing none of her companions—who as well avoided her,—Dora spent the time in reflections of the most bitter character, and in meditating how she could rid herself of that now intolerable curse—life. With each day that she remained in this self-imposed immurement she

became more morbidly sensitive, more keenly alive to the infamy of her position, fancying as she did that every one knew the story of her disgrace. Live she could not, with reproach constantly before her, dragging her down and crushing her in the sight of mankind. And he—Norman Chester, the one to whom she had given her best, her holiest affections—to meet him were a far more deadly portion than that drawn from the poisoned chalice. She felt that all this must have an end, and that soon. Repentance, the only recourse left to her now, proffered its hand of mercy. The past was black and forbidding, but the future, the unknown, the invisible, whatever might be its mysteries, she gladly welcomed its opportunity for escape; and Dora Vernon, so short a time before happy with the most glowing anticipations that life could afford, now committed herself to her God, preparatory to taking that step which should set her free from the thralldom of her existence.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a great stir one afternoon when it was proclaimed on the street and throughout the factories, that a girl had drowned herself, and the body had been taken from the river where the deed was done. The excitement was intense, and the news, with all the startling details that imagination could suggest, soon appeared in the latest edition of the daily paper. The suicide had chosen a singular place at which to terminate her life—from the jagged rocks of West Pitch had she hurled herself, and the body was recovered, shortly afterwards, some distance below the falls. Tender hands at once bore her to her late boarding-house. To this abode large multitudes flocked to obtain a view of the unfortunate creature. Among the crowd was a young man, drawn by idle curiosity, who

walked along, with thoughtful countenance, toward the scene of attraction. As he entered the house he noticed for the first time that it bore a familiar appearance, and with an excited, tremulous step, he passed into the room where the drowned girl lay. Merciful God! could human heart be proof against such a trying ordeal?—Norman Chester standing there, petrified, crazed, gazing with blank, unutterable anguish upon the dead body of his betrothed—Dora Vernon! Such a scene would be remembered for a lifetime, and excites the human compassion to its highest degree.

But strange events and coincidences were yet to occur. While the group stood around the lifeless form of Dora Vernon, it was rumored that a man had been killed by being caught in the shafting in the factory. In course of time this was confirmed, and the name was made known. Reader, would you like to hear it? It was Dick Bruce, the *false* Richard Montville! Mysterious indeed are the dispensations of an over-ruling Providence.

Then did the whole story leak out. The two tragedies, almost simultaneous, had brought events to a climax, and the affair was too strange to be kept a secret by those to whom it had been imparted in boastful jest. Among the articles belonging to the unfortunate girl was found a long letter, directed to her mother, containing her last sad chapter of experience. How must her grief have been augmented as she recalled the admonition, fresh in memory, of that loved one!

Dora Vernon was carried home to be buried in the quiet country churchyard, attended and mourned over by a stricken father and mother, and Julia Cameron and Norman Chester, together with a large concourse of friends who had loved and respected her in her halcyon days of innocence.

## CHAPTER IX.

## OLD ACTORS IN NEW ROLES.

"There she goes, Harl!"

Two young men stood in the recess of a building on Lisbon street, of a Saturday evening, watching the lively tide of human beings coursing down toward City Hall, where an unusually brilliant affair in the character of a ball, was about to come off.

The remark with which we opened this chapter was elicited by the appearance of two young ladies, both dressed in the gayest apparel, and evidently bent on making a night of it at the ball. As they passed, one of them bestowed an arch look upon the young men we have noticed.

"Who?" said Harland Banford, turning to his companion at the observation.

The young man pointed to the girls, and inquired:

"Don't you know the one on the left?"

"Know her? certainly not. Why should I?"

"You've very good reason to. Though you may not be aware of it, she's a worthy accomplice of yours."

"How so?"

"You haven't forgotten the girl who committed suicide the other day?"

"Hist! not so loud."

"Well, you remember the one who assisted her towards taking the step. You recollect how you got euchred by the student, Norman Chester, who afterwards became so sweet on the ill-fated girl. But that's all between you and me, for it seems the fellow doesn't intend to blow on you, or else he didn't discover who you was."

"Perhaps not; but what's that to do with this girl?"

"A good deal. She's the one who played the decoy for Dick Bruce, and helped him to succeed with the part in which you failed. But Dick got knocked out in the factory afterwards, poor devil!"

"The deuce, you say! Then this is none other than—"

"Pauline Montville."

"You're sure of it?"

"Positive. She's going to the ball to-night, and as we're on the same bill, I'll introduce you."

"You know her, then?"

"Of course; and a more perfect trump was never dealt. It's very few she cares to associate with, although I understand she was quietly snubbed by the Bishop sisters when she tried to make their acquaintance. She's a speculating character, and even in pleasure she always looks to business."

"A little above the average, I imagine."

"Decidedly so. They say it was all envy that made her seek Dora Vernon's destruction. She'd an eye on Norman Chester, and thought by effecting the poor girl's ruin her own chances would be improved. But in this she counted without her host. Norman Chester belongs to another class altogether; and yet, he's a tiger when emergency requires—eh! Harl?"

"Hush!" replied Harland Banford, fiercely, his anger quickly rising, and revealing itself in flashing eyes, the orbit of one unnaturally limited by a slight swelling in its immediate vicinity.

"O, don't get excited, Harl," said the other, discreetly returning to his first subject. "She's a good card, and as you become acquainted to-night, you can make her your right bower."

"Suppose she doesn't condescend?"

"Depend upon it, she will. Your pater's got the stamps, and as for you, that's a matter of little consideration; the means are nothing—the ends are all with her. If you give her the slightest prospect of gratifying her foolish ambition, you can make her your obedient slave, I'll assure you."

But in this the young man was over-confident. He little knew the powerful will that Pauline Montville exercised, and that once given the advantage, it seldom failed to attain its object.

So they conversed for some time, still scanning the female faces passing by, some modestly turned to the walk to avoid their intrusive gaze, and others brazenly peering at them with expressions which it were an easy matter to interpret. But leaving them to this diversion, we will go back a short period in the history of Harland Banford, and learn some of its passages that are pertinent to our story.

When Stephen Banford obtained a position for his son with the firm of Stringham, Belcher & Co., New York city, he had hoped their old friendship and former business relations would be productive of great advancement to the young man; that Harland's ambition would be aroused by the advantageous opportunities presented him, and that in business matters he would prove as successful as had been his father years before. In this the anticipations of the senior Banford were doomed to mortifying disappointment. Harland, once planted in the broad and fertile fields of dissipation spread out in the great metropolis, soon yielded to the natural bent of his disposition, and found no difficulty in affiliating with the most deeply-schooled roughs of the town, attending upon all the various resorts of a questionable character—the theatre first, then the dance-hall, and finally the gambling

house, so that he soon came to enjoy their associations with even more zest than those who had been reared in their midst and always accustomed to their scenes. This course soon became known to his employers, and, unable to tolerate the habits of dissipation which were daily growing upon the young man, word was sent to Stephen Banford that it would be for the welfare of his son, and for their interest, that Harland should be immediately called home, for his presence was not desirable, but would prove a serious misfortune if longer retained in the establishment. Deeply aggrieved, the father at once directed his son's return; but whatever his business relations, evil associations could not be severed so easily, and Harland remained for several weeks a constant attendant at the gaming-table, where luck, as is often the case, was for a time lavish with her favors. The change came at length, however, and in one brief encounter with a skillful son of Belial, his funds were entirely exhausted, and he was thrown penniless upon the street. At this juncture, it was hinted, an affair of a desperate nature occurred in which Harland participated, for he left the city in a hurry, and returned to Lewiston, considerably sobered in deportment, and for a while evidently oppressed with some well-defined apprehensions.

Stephen Banford was not aware what a depth of villainy existed in his son, nor did he care to sound it, for young Banford's strong and violent passions would not have hesitated at any step in retaliation for a father's reprimand. Unchecked as his later life had been, he had grown to acknowledge no master but his own wishes, and these, reckless and perverted as they were, led him into all sorts of misdemeanors, and stamped his character indelibly with the satanical imprint. And yet, with all his

faults, there were those who readily attached themselves to his company, and sought to encourage rather than restrain his career of recklessness and profligacy. Not young men only, but females—some claiming the highest respectability—were often in his society, so that the clique of which his means soon gave him the acknowledged leadership, was of no ordinary proportions. To become a favored one of this clique was now Pauline Montville's greatest ambition. The fact of the bad character of Harland was of trifling significance when weighed against the wealth which he some day had the promise of possessing; and she was quite giddy with delight when, that Saturday evening, on the ball-room floor, she received an introduction to the dissolute young man. Proud, selfish and vain, she at once began to build castles for the future, when, as the wife of Harland Banford, she would take position in a society to which her aspirations pointed.



## CHAPTER X.

## RECEIVING PAYMENT IN KIND.

Summer had passed, autumn had followed with its ripened glory, and close in its footsteps, with less cheerful welcome, it may be, came the austere, frigid tread of winter. The warm, enervating days, when humanity seems but a waif upon the tide of time, drifting along in its passive course, had gone, and the sharp, inspiring airs of the colder season brought stronger pulsations to the heart and more practical views of life. Perhaps the effects were palpable upon the moral nature—for the moral and physical are ever in sympathy,—and better thoughts and nobler purposes were engendered by the more vigorous atmosphere.

Two months had elapsed since Pauline Montville took up her abode at the stately Banford residence as the wife of the only son and heir, Harland. And what changes had those two months wrought upon them both! Harland, once the reckless follower of pleasure, had wholly abandoned his former career, and adopted a course of the most exemplary rectitude, while Pauline, but recently the cold, cruel and ambitious girl, looking upon him only as the means of gratifying her unscrupulous pride, had in that brief time undergone a most remarkable transition. Instead of regarding him as such now, she had grown to consider him as the very soul of her existence. By that strange power which lies hidden in some natures, however depraved, he had drawn her to himself as by a mesmeric influence, and her once peerless individuality was completely submerged beneath the overpowering tide of her

affections. And the sudden change in Harland's character seemed to merit all this. A new life, as it were, had dawned upon him, which gave promise of a course of usefulness and noble realization in the future; so that Stephen Banford, reviewing the earlier career of his son, gratefully thanked the better decrees of fate which had brought about such happy results.

But all this proved to be only a link in the chain of retributive justice which was to attend them. It was but the transient favors of a destiny which rears the wicked to a higher degree of enjoyment, that, when the punishment is administered, the pain shall be the more poignant, the chastisement the more severe.

Day was slowly sinking away in the sombre shades of evening, and Harland sat in the drawing-room with his wife, conning the daily paper.

"Do you know, Pauline," said he, at length, laying aside the paper, "that I always look at the criminal record first?"

"Indeed!" replied she, nervously. "Why should you prefer that department, Harland?"

"I can't say that I do prefer it, Pauline, but I find it impossible to avoid it."

"Impossible?"

"Yes. A certain premonition tells me there is evil in store for me, and not only for me, but I fear for you, too, on my account."

"I trust not," said Pauline. "I have tried to bury the past out of sight. You should do the same, Harland. Hark!"

There was a violent pull at the door-bell. Pauline quietly passed to the door, and opening it, beheld two men, who inquired if Mr. Banford lived there. On learning that Harland was within, they did not pause for ceremony, but ushered them-

selves at once into the room where he sat, closely followed by the wife, now full of trepidation and alarm. Her alarm was greatly increased when she beheld Harland seized by the two men, and after a desperate struggle, thrown to the floor and handcuffed. The truth flashed upon her in a moment—these were the officers of the law, and Harland was about to suffer the penalty for some crime he had committed in times past. The thought that he, her all, the very life and existence of her being, was about to be torn from her, so worked upon the agonized wife, that the breath for a while forsook her, and she fell fainting beside her husband.

Pauline Banford had thought rightly, and when at length her senses returned and she was informed that Harland would be conveyed to New York to undergo trial for his participation in an extensive burglary which had been fully brought to light through the treachery of an accomplice, reason for a time wholly deserted her, and the punishment grew more terrible in its effect. For days she raved in all the horrors of delirium, often pleading to some imaginary being for the restoration of Harland. And in this delirium another form appeared to her—a beautiful girl, cold in death, with garments wet and reeking, but with voice of an unearthly tone, accusing her of an awful crime.

What she underwent in those few days of torture might far exceed the agony of the Inquisition. There was no cessation of the dread infliction, till nature, from sheer exhaustion, stopped its deranged action. Repose succeeded, and from this she finally came forth with reason restored, but with a burden of guilt oppressing her such as she had never felt before.

Stephen Banford, accompanied by Pauline, went to New York to do everything possible for the

release of Harland, but mightier powers were pitted against them, and neither the money of the one nor the pleadings of the other availed anything towards his liberation. Justice and the interests of society had to be satisfied, and Harland Banford was sentenced to Sing Sing for a period of ten years.

Stephen Banford heard the sentence with a degree of composure, but to Pauline it was as a death-knell. Her ambition, her hopes, her all, had perished, and the persuasions of the old man for her to return home with him, were but bitter mockery to her ears. He came back alone, leaving her broken in spirits, stricken in conscience, and sinking beneath her guilt, an outcast in that hot-bed of sin.

Why wonder we, then, that at such a time her remarkable face should attract the attention of many an evil eye, and that cruel hands should be extended to her in pretended sympathy for her condition? Alas! it has been the fell fate of thousands far more deserving than she. Let once the pride be gone, hopes blasted, and all that is noble in life becomes of indifferent value at best, while the tinsel and glare of iniquity and folly for a time dazzle the senses and bring transient relief to the mind in forgetfulness of the past. Pauline Banford's was the course of many another, but it was not of long duration.

Reader, you have probably heard how the "Castle Glen" went down—we mean the vessel, with its freight of abandoned women. Would it be too much to tell you that Pauline Banford, under an assumed name, was among the number? Does your sympathy bar you from desiring for her such an end? Turn back a few months, and see another being, purer by far, sinking beneath the tide, and remember who it was that plunged her there. Is it not payment in kind, and can you question its justice?

## CHAPTER XI.

## PROSPECTIVE AND RETROSPECTIVE.

Let us return for a while to the scene of our opening chapter—the home of Dora Vernon. More than a year has elapsed since our last visit. We then beheld her there in all her loveliness and innocence—a child of nature's own purity,—just ripening into those maidenly graces which bespeak the coming charm of womanhood. Alas! that the cold, damp sod lies piled above her now, and decay has already begun to mould away the delicate fabric of that fair temple.

The room has changed but little since last we saw it—the same precise appearance marks the general appointments of the place, while the picture of a sweet, youthful face—the last sad token of her now gone—looks down upon the scene she once made joyous with her presence.

There are four persons in the room—Mr. Vernon and his wife, and two visitors who have come to sympathize with them in their affliction. As you may suspect, the visitors are Norman Chester and one whom we have known as Julia Cameron, but who now bears the name of Mrs. Chester—strange as may seem the fact to those who have not been permitted to trace their history. Norman is now part owner and associate editor of an enterprising journal in the West, and with his young wife is passing a brief vacation at the East. His career is justifying the most sanguine expectations of his former classmate, Robert Converse. But there is a sad episode in his life which is painfully recalled by his present visit to the parents of her who re-

ceived the tribute of his first love. How heavily has the hand of sorrow laid upon them! What Christian resignation did it require to pass unscathed the fiery blast that swept over that household! And yet faith was not subdued, and affliction has done no more than temper with a deeper hue the reliance in that power which is all-sustaining in the hour of need. The clouds were dense, but the light of the spirit penetrated even their density, and revealed the goodness of Him who never forsakes his children. Instead of casting the Bible aside, and treating all its promises as vain, it became a closer companion to the stricken ones, and the daily devotions were of greater length and more fervent than of old.

Mr. Vernon and his gentle wife had grown to regard their visitors with as much affection as if they had been their own children, and every few months prior to their departure for the West, had insisted upon their coming to spend a season with them in their quiet, country home. Nor did they see any impropriety when the youthful couple, holding in the most sacred remembrance the relations of the past, had, not long previous, united themselves in the bond of matrimony. They looked upon it as a bond riveted and made holy by the memory of their own dear Dora, and thanked Heaven for a union so fraught with promises of good to noble lives, made happy and contented by morality and virtue.

When Norman Chester had stood by the bier of Dora Vernon, he had realized to its fullest the strength of the ties that had been so ruthlessly sundered. She had burst upon his quiet student life like the sudden flash of a meteor, had revealed to himself the hidden recesses of his own heart as they had never been revealed before, and had

then as suddenly disappeared, leaving him dazed, bewildered at the experience. For a while he knew not which way to turn for relief. The chosen profession of his life had lost its inspiration, and nothing but the most dreary, aimless existence seemed his portion. From this abstracted frame of mind his unselfish nature was suddenly recalled at beholding the grief of another—one who had shared the mutual acquaintanceship of himself and Dora for a brief season—Julia Cameron,—and whose excellent qualities, kindly nature and congenial tastes had already inspired his highest esteem. Scarcely less beautiful than her cousin had been, but two years her senior, Julia Cameron might well deserve such. And this was all that Norman Chester at first entertained for her; but as the weeks rolled by and became months, till his student days were fast nearing their close, he perceived that, while time could not entirely dispel the dream which had so enchained his senses, the sober realities of the future claimed his attention, and he must accept the situation that events had thrust upon him. No one could ever fill the place left void by the loss of his first love. Would Julia Cameron accept another? The question was simple, and she was too sensible a girl not to comprehend its import. She did not start or feign surprise when the proposal came, but recognizing the noble character of its author, and no less dearly cherishing the memory of her lost cousin, she answered in a quiet, unaffected affirmative.

"A year has gone since she was torn from us," said Mrs. Vernon, reverting to the subject that was ever uppermost in her mind, "and it has been a year of much darkness mingled with its sunshine. I sometimes feel to repine at her sorrowful death, but a Voice is ever ready to rebuke me for the pre-

sumption. No; I trust it is all for the best, and her spirit is beyond the reach of trouble. The stroke was severe, but it has chastened the soul, and taught us to rely more fully on the inscrutable purposes of Him who doeth all things well."

"We do not realize how much suffering there is in the world till a portion falls to our own lot," said Norman, as Mrs. Vernon ceased speaking, from the fullness of her feelings, and tears suffused her eyes. "I notice by the papers that the *Castle Glen*," a vessel having a number of disreputable females aboard as passengers, has been sunk at sea, and the poor creatures went down with her."

"A sorrowful end, truly," said Mrs. Vernon, with a sigh of sympathy at the intelligence. "Could we but go back to the home of their infancy, perhaps we would find many a parent's heart wrung by the catastrophe; and yet, might they not rather wish a daughter deep down in the sea, than leading a life of infamy? Far worse a life whose only fruits are dishonor, than a death which severs the earthly ties ere the soul is blighted! We little know what first led them to adopt such a course. Some, perhaps, from nature lacked moral principle to withstand the temptations of life, while others may have been the victims of circumstance, as we call it. Too often the pressing hand of poverty performs the fearful work—oppressive task-masters in large cities, who, for the paltry gain of restricted wages, consign those in their charge to the troubled sea of woe. When I think of all this, my own affliction grows lighter, viewing, as I must, the awful whirlpool of despair into which hundreds yearly sink. Many are compelled to suffer deeper than we—bereaved parents whose children have passed away in the darkest midnight of sin."

Mrs. Vernon's emotions so overcame her that

the tears sprang afresh to her eyes, while Julia's arms stole gently around her neck, as she sought to console the dear, good woman. Other arms had encircled her neck once—her own child's,—and yet she did not refuse the tender office so kindly meant, but looking up through her tears, she parted the rich tresses of hair from the pure, white brow bending over her, and imprinted a kiss there—a kiss of motherly affection and tenderness. Taking Julia's hand, she led her to the spot where Norman sat, and placing it in his, a joyful smile lit up her face as she said:

"Heaven bless you, my dear children! You were the last friends she saw on earth, and to you my heart must ever turn in the deepest gratitude. May misfortune and sorrow never cast their gloom over your now happy lives. The future is spread out in glowing fields of anticipation before you. May no storm imperil the way, but a kind Hand ever guide you safely in the path of right, to that eternal city whose walls are jasper and whose streets are gold!"

A fervent "Amen" from Mr. Vernon showed that he was far from being an unmoved spectator of the scene. With hearts filled with religious fervor, they all knelt down, and one united prayer found audible expression in his voice, while an air of holiness seemed to pervade the room, imparting fresh tokens of grace and peace by its sanctifying influence.

## THE PERIL OF BEAUTY.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE ORPHAN SISTERS.

"I declare, Belle, I'm getting heartily sick and disgusted with this stupid factory life. Day follows day with the same monotonous, unchanging routine of labor and care, till one grows weary at heart, and indifferent to living, at the slight prospect of ever obtaining anything better. 'Tis three years since father died and left us alone in the world, to care for ourselves. And three lonely, burdened years they have been, as you well know—drudgery, drudgery, nothing but drudgery—no relief, no cessation, as if life itself would be relinquished at the relaxation of toil. I long for a change—something better than the experience of the past few years, and I will have it!"

The girl's cheeks flushed to a deeper glow while she spoke, her manner growing more and more earnest as she continued, till her excitement reached such a pitch that the calm, thoughtful face of Belle Bishop grew suddenly more serious and thoughtful with concern.

"Hush! sister mine; don't let your feelings so get the better of you. How childish, to think you must have nothing but the sweet, flowery side of life! You have already seen too many comforts and luxuries to let you bear your present lot with

becoming submission. Don't complain. There is a future filled with happiness for us yet, I trust."

"O, you can philosophize, if you will; as for my part, I don't believe I was ever made to wear my life away in daily drudgery. More than one venturesome admirer has told me I possess a beautiful face, and the mirror does not lack in confirmation. When I was at school in our native town, you will remember, I used to take a prominent part in the exhibitions, and it was then said I displayed a talent that would be worth a fortune to another girl. But rather had not received the fatal stroke of adversity then, and he laughed at the idea. Things are changed now, however; I must use the means, the endowments which nature has given me."

"How? What do you mean, Agnes?"

"The theatre plays here next week!"

"And you—"

"Mean to join it."

"What! and become—"

"An actress. You have anticipated it. It is a free, easy life, full of pleasure and change; and I have no doubt that I shall succeed on the stage. I shall win a name, a fortune, and can make for us both a home of plenty."

Belle Bishop covered her face with her hands, and tears of bitterness coursed over her pale, wan cheeks. This was the darkest cloud that had ever threatened her peace. Rendered almost stoic by the adversity which had robbed her of parents and home, she had not yet schooled herself to abide the fate which might thus rob her of a sister.

"O, Agnes," she sighed, "how can you think of such a thing? What foolish ambition has taken possession of you? We are subject to peril enough now, without courting the dangers which come with such an exposure to the heartless world. You can-

not have forgotten the sad fate of Dora Vernon, who probably thought herself as secure from harm as any one could be. With her dark history fresh in memory, it behooves us to beware which path in life we pursue—the right or the wrong."

"But she was unsophisticated and inexperienced."

"So are you, Agnes, in many things. Treachery and crime lay wait on every side to assail honor and purity. 'Twas only last evening you were accosted by a stranger, who seems to have taken an unwonted interest in your beauty. You remember him—that dark-browed fellow, whose eyes were constantly upon you, and who, at last, made bold to solicit your company from the hall. Think of him, Agnes, and the many of his class who only await encouragement from those they would destroy."

"Pshaw! Belle. He was presuming, certainly, but I gave him a reply that satisfied him, I trust. Don't imagine I would associate with such as he; no, not so long as I have a will, and can exercise it for myself. But I must confess to a strange dread at the fellow's words. He appears to be a newcomer in Lewiston."

"Yes, a strolling adventurer, probably, who goes from place to place only as the law compels him. How know you but that you may encounter characters like his in the course you contemplate, and fall beneath the cunning arts of their deceit? O, Agnes! I had rather see you buried beneath the cold earth, than on the stage, with its gaudy, tinsel-plumage. What would become of you, once entered upon its questionable career—an outcast, a wreck in society, a wretched sacrifice to a false ambition." And Belle Bishop buried her face in her hands as if to shut out the terrible vision.

Agnes laughed a loud, careless laugh, which only augmented the grief of her sister.

"Ah! Belle," she replied, you had better join with me. I am sure such acting as this would make you a star at once. Really, I didn't imagine you had such a talent for the stage. There, brush away your tears, and let's have a little plain, common-sense talk about the matter, for it is already decided that I am to become an actress."

"Don't mention it again, Agnes."

"Yes, I shall, Belle; and I'll make you one, too. So, come, let's have a little performance right here, all by ourselves, just to see how we shall appear. I'm fond of farces. Suppose we try our hands at a farce."

"A tragedy, more likely, for such it may end. You forget, Agnes, the duty you owe one who has proved such a kind friend to us—yourself, especially."

"You mean Albert."

"Yes, Albert Heywood. You little think how he would suffer under such an affliction—he who has given you his whole wealth of love."

"There, Belle, do not speak of him. What if he has seen fit to cast his heart at my feet? It does not follow that I should accept it. Albert is a poor machinist, depending upon his daily labor. We were born amid wealth, and though I am a factory girl now, I don't feel bound to wed myself to poverty. No, no; Albert may be very good, and while I may like him as a friend, I could never be his. When the theatre leaves here I shall go with it, if I can make an engagement."

The beautiful brunette surveyed herself in the mirror, as if studying her chances of success when brought before the footlights. And while she thus stands, let us glance over her shoulder and

view the same reflection. Certainly, no one would question the superior attractions of her person—the full, almost voluptuous development of her form, the gently arched neck, supporting a head rich in an abundance of raven tresses, which but now had been thrown back in haughty contempt at the serious words of her pale, blonde sister. Agnes Bishop was far from being ignorant of her charms; to the contrary, she knew the power of a beautiful face and form to elicit public favor, but failed to reflect that the same beauty which in some cases might prove a blessing, in others would prove a curse.

As she thus regarded herself before the mirror, the door bell sounded familiarly, and while Belle proceeded through the hall to receive the visitor, Agnes seated herself in a chair, and assumed a studied indifference that ill became her.

It was Albert Heywood—good, generous Albert, a mechanic, to be sure, but with a nobler heart and mind than usually falls to the endowment of man. Tall, graceful, with an expression of firmness and gentleness which combine the elements of true worth; a clear, full eye, beaming with candor and intelligence, and a broad brow—this was Albert Heywood, whose tender regard many a fair one would have given her soul to possess, yet whose love was held in such light esteem by the ambitious Agnes.

The latter bowed coldly as he entered, deigning only a word of welcome, to which the young man seemed only too well accustomed, however, for he took a seat beside her, and talked with the two orphan sisters with the freedom of a brother—free on his part and that of Belle, but Agnes restrained her language to monosyllables and brief rejoinders. This had the effect to increase Belle's entertaining

qualities, and the conversation was warmly conducted till, at last, no longer able to keep back the fearful subject, she fully divulged Agnes' intention to become an actress.

The effect could not be told in words; neither could it be fully known save by the party concerned. He did not prostrate himself before her, and plead with her to desist from her purpose. He did not even reply for a while, but a chained tongue and subdued heart showed deeper feelings than could have found utterance. It needed no avowal now. The story had been told. His devotion was as complete and apparent to its object as human speech could make it. What need of further words? If these were naught, if declarations vain, then come the dark reality of action, and faith in strength to meet it!

## CHAPTER II.

## A VILLAINOUS PLOT.

The theatre had already played a week in Lewiston, with indifferent success, perhaps, but sufficient to draw out most of the community who were accustomed to patronize the drama. And this class is ever larger than it should be, where the hard-earned wages are required to satisfy an unhealthy desire for amusement, the effect generally being to degrade rather than elevate, to dwarf rather than enlarge the moral comprehension.

It was dusk as a young man entered the reading room of the hotel where the manager of the theatre sat conning the daily paper. At first he approached cautiously, but as he neared, the latter looked up, his hand was extended, and a mutual recognition took place.

"By Jove! Clarkson, is this you?" exclaimed the manager, in the brusque manner of a Bowery sport, "and what the deuce brings you away down here in this little city of Lewiston? Well, this is odd, I declare; and the last I saw of you, you was among the careless boys of North end, or bearing a hand at Harry Flemings'. But I'll bet high you left Boston for Boston's good."

"Ah! that I did," replied Clarkson, in an undertone—"a bit of a fracas in which your humble servant was engaged."

"As I suspected."

"And may have learned?"

"No; we theatricals don't mind such things. We've too much business behind the scenes to note events outside. You sly dog, you even feared



I would peach on you, and so kept shady till now. But it's all right, Clarkson; you should know me too well for that, even if I had been familiar with the circumstances. It's for our mutual good that the past be kept a secret with us, eh?"

"Your memory serves you."

"Always. But we sha'n't be overheard. Suppose you give me the particulars of your last, and then we'll go to the hall, for it wants only an hour of the time to open."

These few words had been spoken in a low tone, yet not so low but that a young man, who sat back to them, looking absently towards the window, caught their import, and became singularly interested.

"Well, you recollect, a month ago I met you at Harry's, just before you started on your trip down east?"

"Yes."

"A week later, the young owner of the Dudley Iron Works, while going over Charlestown Bridge at night, was robbed of a cool thousand and this trinket," tapping a pocket evidently containing a watch.

"Ah! I see; and you—"

"Yes; you understand. But the beauty of the thing is, no clue has been obtained, nor is likely to be; for I've kept in the background, and read the papers, which only say the robber was not recognized, and his name is unknown."

"Good! and you are down here, having a flash time on your thousand dollar bounty. Ah! well—it's just like you, Clarkson, for all the world; and I'll venture to say you've got some female or other on the string."

"Female? ha! ha! that reminds me, so I have—a devilish pretty girl, too; but she doesn't seem inclined my way. Do you believe it?—I strayed

into a musical affair, the other night, where she was, (and where I first saw her, in fact,) and tried to force my attentions upon her; but, with all my polished North End airs, the girl fairly disdained my overtures. Zounds! I half believe she knew who I was, by the way she treated me. It seems another fellow escorted her and her sister home, but she treated him deuced coolly, for all that."

"Of course you know her name?"

"I believe so; let me see; yes, I have it—Agnes Bishop."

"Agnes Bishop! Agnes Bishop! that's the name of the girl who applied to me to-day for a chance to join my company, and I told her I would let her know to-morrow."

"You don't tell me, Cool! By Jove! this is most fortunate. Now for a piece of strategy that will discount your finest plays!"

"How so?"

"When she calls to-morrow, engage her—engage her for me! Do you take? I am tired of this one-horse affair, and am going to make back tracks for Boston, which way you are going, I believe."

"Yes; and I told her, if I secured her a place, it must be at one of the Boston theatres, as this is my last night in Lewiston, and I shall disorganize on my return. I rather fancied the girl myself."

"Well, let her go with you, and I'll go on the same boat, unbeknown to her. When we arrive in Boston, I'll furnish her with conveyance and see to her care afterwards!"

"That's cool, Clarkson. You would play the game all your own way, I see. But you're an old pal, and I don't mind humoring you, although you'll have to meet the consequences, should anything turn up. If she has friends, and they learn of her fate, just take care of yourself—that's all."

"Never fear for me, Cool. I can manage a little affair of this sort, you bet! She's only a poor factory girl—an orphan—with only one sister, and a dingy machinist—the one I saw her with that night. I believe his name is Heywood—Albert Heywood—a good-looking fellow enough, but a down-east flat, for all that. You see I have made this case a special study, and know well the whereabouts of the parties. They all reside on B— street. Don't be alarmed for me, Cool."

"Well, I don't mind; it shall be as you say."

"Your hand for it."

"There it is."

And the two villains grasped each other's hand with all that peculiar cordiality which is born of the deepest-dyed knavery.

"And now for the hall. Of course you will honor me with your presence to-night?"

"Certainly; but we mustn't be seen out together where the light would reveal us, for it might put an end to all our fine plotting."

"Just as you like," replied the other, as both locked arms and sallied forth—the dignified manager of a vagabond strolling troupe, and his confederate of the past in the crimes and crookedness about Boston.

As they departed, the young man who had feigned to be half asleep in his retired corner, and had overheard the whole conversation, arose to his feet with an excited countenance, and strode back and forth across the room, his mind evidently stirred to its very depths with a strange agitation. Thus he continued, now and then glancing at the clock upon the wall, till some half hour must have elapsed, when, buttoning his coat snugly about him, he went forth from his transient abode, into the evening air. That he was a stranger soon became

evident from his inquiry of a passer-by for the location of a certain street, toward which he directed his steps.

Not far had he gone in the direction indicated, when, in crossing a street amid the darkness, a runaway horse came suddenly upon him, and would probably have killed him outright had not a young man, coming from the opposite direction, at great risk of his own life, grappled the animal's bit just in time to retard his progress in a degree, yet not sufficiently to prevent a blow which hurled the first party to the stony earth, stunned and rendered senseless by the concussion.

With the assistance of a policeman, his rescuer was enabled to bear him back to the hotel, which was near at hand, and medical attendance was summoned.

The injury was not serious, the doctor remarked, although several days would probably elapse before a full return of consciousness would transpire, as the most dangerous blow received was upon the head in its coming in contact with the earth.

## CHAPTER III.

## A SINGULAR INTERVIEW.

It was a week later, one evening, as Albert Heywood sat in his room at his boarding-place, his head resting upon his hand in deep meditation, that a boy rang the door-bell, and the following note was sent up to him:

MR. HEYWOOD—Sir: I understand that to you I owe my deliverance from an impending death on the evening of the third. For this and your kind solicitude for my recovery, as I learn from the clerk, you have my heartfelt thanks. But I have something to tell you, and I was in search of you at the time of the accident which nearly deprived me of life. Come at once to my room, No. —, and perhaps I may be able, in a measure, to repay the deep debt I owe you. Do not delay a moment; time my prove more valuable than gold. Heaven help it be not too late. Yours, HARRY DUDLEY.

Nervously Albert glanced at the note, read it, wondered at its remarkable language, and with a feeling of concern set out to comply with its request. A short, brisk walk, and he was ushered into the presence of Harry Dudley, who was confined to his bed, unable, as yet, to arise from his injuries.

"Albert Heywood, I believe," said Dudley, giving his hand a cordial grasp, as the former approached his bedside. "Would I could tell you in words the gratitude I feel for the service you have rendered me. But I must not waste time with such. I can better serve you, I trust, although it may be too late. You had a very dear friend in

this city, a week ago—a beautiful lady, who was infatuated with the idea of becoming an actress, and contemplated joining the theatre?"

"Yes! yes! I had."

"And she has gone with it?"

"She has!"

"My God! then it may be too late—too late to save her!"

"To save her! What do you mean?"

"That she is entrapped, and may ere this be the victim of a foul betrayer. Do you know a fellow named Clarkson, who has been in Lewiston of late?"

"Clarkson? Ah! yes, I do—a person who has represented himself as a runner for a large mercantile house in Boston, although no vestige of goods was ever seen about him. He has tried to foist his attentions upon the lady you mentioned, but she detested him for a villain, as she believed him to be."

"She was right. The night I received my injuries I was seated in the reading-room below, and overheard a disclosure and a plot that almost congealed my blood. This Clarkson chanced to be there, and a friend of his—one Cool Graham, who has been the pretended manager of an affair they called a theatre, so recently performing here. They conversed, and I listened; and well I might, for I was an interested party. Some time ago, in crossing Charlestown Bridge, from Boston, at night, I was robbed of a thousand dollars and a gold watch. Clarkson was the criminal party, and he had thus far avoided detection by coming east. He told this to his friend. But this was not all I overheard. The rest concerns you. A plot was laid—a plot fit for fiends, and not men; for when Agnes Bishop arrived in Boston, instead of joining the theatre,

as she expected to, she was to be given over to the tender mercies of that blackleg, Clarkson!"

Albert Heywood heard it as marble, as a corpse, if you will, so cold and lifeless were his features; but as the last words were uttered, the volcano of emotion slumbering within him could contain itself no longer, a cloud of unconsciousness thickened o'er his senses, and he fell prostrate to the floor.

The noise of Albert's fall drew several servants to the room, who chafed his temples and hands till consciousness returned.

Harry Dudley, himself an invalid, had not counted on the effects his words might produce, and now regretted his thoughtlessness in thus suddenly disclosing the whole affair. As Albert revived, he bethought himself to at once propose some plan to rescue the maiden, if possible, from him who probably now held her in his power.

"You must start to-morrow for Boston," he said to Albert, as the latter, now recovered, yet ghostly white, sat at the bedside. "There is a detective, a friend of mine, shrewd and cunning as any of his craft, to whom I will send a note by you, and if the girl is dead or alive he will find her. You must start by the first train; find Trevelyn, the detective, as I shall give you directions, and be assured he will ferret out the whereabouts of the parties. I will have the note ready for you in the morning; and may God help that you find Agnes Bishop undefiled by the crafty villain."

## CHAPTER IV.

## ALONE IN A STRANGE CITY.

What stranger has been through the by-ways of North End, Boston, and not seen indications of depravity, crime and wrong from which he has turned in unfeigned abhorrence? New York has her low slums, to be sure, reeking with poverty and filth, and breathing of disease, corruption and death; but Boston, although cleaner on the exterior, has crime-stained walls within, and black hearts seething with their fullness of sin and woe. To many evils of the former, in past years, may be attributed her unfortunate political management, the treachery of office-holders, and encouragement given to frauds, swindles, and all manner of low pursuits, by a clique groveling in the foulest mire of their own streets, yet powerful enough to hold the reins of municipal control. Ignorance and lack of principle combined have effected this, and the poor dupe of misplaced confidence has found only a confederate of his victimizer in the regulation blue. The support has been mutual; knavery knows its own; and the result has been a daily catalogue of iniquities at which the heart has sickened. But of all these Boston has had her portion. There is no need of comparison. The metropolis of New England, populated in the main by descendants of the good old Puritan stock, we will not attempt to erase the fact of her many faults.

Bound for this city, the steamer which contained Agnes Bishop and the troupe of players, left the rock-bound coast of Maine, on its usual passage—

left the high-reaching hills and lofty pines, where good and true hearts beat with all the freedom, nobility and grandeur of nature. With the other members of the party she refrained from associating, and sought alone the aft deck, to watch the receding land where her life till now had been spent, and enjoy the novelty of her first sail on the broad ocean. Slowly did the landscape disappear from view, growing fainter and fainter as darkness and distance intervened, till finally nothing remained but a seeming wall of water. Thus shut in to herself, her thoughts turned to bright anticipations of the future, which, ere long, became more glowing and animated as strains of music issued from the cabin, and, with the moonbeams playing antics upon the water's surface, suggested to her ardent imagination the presence of mermaids, with pearl-studded hair, engaged in serenade. How more enchanting than anything she had ever experienced—anything she had ever dreamed! Of all the romantic conceptions of the past, the fevered fancies of her girlhood and maturer years, none had so completely filled her with the entrancing sensations of ecstasy and delight. To always live in such soul-born rapture, with music's potent spell to hold the senses willing captive, to paint the vision's canvass with its vivid hues, and set at naught the gloomy vagaries of doubt—Agnes thought this must be happiness indeed—a foretaste of the generous feast in store for her.

At length the music ceased, leaving her again to the quietude of her own musings, and not till drowsiness admonished her of sleep, did she forsake the spot, and descending to the ladies' cabin, seek a place of rest.

The next morning, having made a quick, pleasant trip, the steamer arrived at India Wharf, Bos-

ton, at about five o'clock, while it was yet dark, and gloom nestled down over the silent, sombre city.

There was a jar, as of something colliding with the boat, and Agnes startled from her slumbers, a little frightened at first, but once fully awake, and hearing the commands of the captain to make fast to the wharf, she knew they had arrived at their destination. As she hurriedly threw on her clothes, and emerged into the cabin, for the first time a feeling of bitter desolation and homesickness took possession of her. Sleep had, as it were, dispelled the false beacons that had directed her course, and left nothing but the dreariest, most forbidding darkness around her. Poor girl! She would have given all she possessed at that moment to once more be permitted to perform her usual task in the factory, and enjoy the society of her dear sister Belle and—yes, Albert Heywood. Now she felt the love she could never fully realize before; now she became aware how good it had been to see him, although treating him at the time, perhaps, with scorn. These were but passing thoughts, however, and she had not entered into the arena of action already being prepared for her. As she mounted the stairs the clamorous tones of the hackmen in soliciting passengers fell upon her ear with a disagreeable, repelling sound, and gave her a strange impress of the little soul contained in the world of business.

Cool Graham, the manager, was the first person to greet her as she reached the upper deck, and affectingly inquired after her rest during the night's passage.

"You are looking charmingly this morning, Miss Bishop," he said, gazing upon her with a look of wanton admiration. "You have made a lucky choice, and will create a sensation when placed

upon the boards. I anticipate a great success for you, and scores of lovers will flock to throw themselves at your feet. You will have to bar your heart to the flatteries of the rich young men who will offer their fortunes, or the stage will be robbed of your light at the outset. I am in hopes to see you engaged without delay, and have already sent an agent forward to procure a place for you."

"You are very kind," replied Agnes. "I hope to obtain a place where I shall not be troubled with any suitors. I have chosen the theatre in hopes that I may earn a competence, and place myself and sister beyond the necessity of toil."

"Be assured you will that," rejoined Graham. "Never fear of ever again having to soil your dainty hands with the dirt of labor. Your fine form was not made for such a purpose. Let those who have no better means of obtaining a livelihood use their hands, but one with charms such as yours need not feel compelled to drudgery."

How strange! Even these few words seemed unlike what he had used before—their tone, so changed, struck her as odd and unnatural.

"Wait a moment," he continued; "most of our party have left the boat, and I don't know but that you may have to take a hack alone. I will speak with a driver, and direct him where to carry you."

"But I shall see you ere long?" said Agnes, growing a little nervous.

"You will probably be called upon during the day," he replied, carelessly; and went to consult a driver—an ill-looking fellow, more fit for a guerilla than a hackman, one would think—who was taken aside for a few moments, and the directions given, but not such as would have done for Agnes' ear.

"See here, Bill," accosted Cool, in a guarded tone, "I've got a little extra job for ye; nor it isn't

for me exactly, either, as it happens, but for Clarkson."

"Clarkson! Clarkson! Is he back to the city again? I haven't seen his face this many a day. Where's he been?"

"Of on a wedding tour, I should say, for he's got a piece of calico aboard, and has gone ahead to make ready for her reception."

"Is that so? Then Jake has done it at last," said the hackman with mock gravity. "But where shall I take her?"

"To Moll Baxter's, on Billerica street, up three flights, in the rear."

The hackman put one finger to the side of his nose, and closing an eye, ejaculated slowly, "O, yes, I see."

And the two went back with all the affability at their command, to assist our heroine into the hack.

Their hands did not touch hers, however, for she drew them back as though in fear of being stung by a serpent, and entered almost unassisted, which movement had the effect to make the hackman shrug his shoulders, and cast a quizzical look at Cool, as much as to say, "A dainty piece, this."

A sharp cut of the horses, and away dashed the vehicle over the stony pavement, which rattled strangely to Agnes' ear. Never in a city of any great magnitude before, and Boston particularly, the frequent turning of short corners kept her in a state of uneasiness during the ride, and she had little chance for reflection. If such she had had, with the premonition of evil which had come over her while standing on the steamer's deck, it is possible she would have thrown open the door, and flung herself out, if only to be dashed to pieces on the cruel pavement.

At length the horses were reined up, the driver

opened the door, and Agnes alighted on the sidewalk in front of a brick building, but more than this the darkness as yet prevented her from observing. A quick pull at the bell by the hackman, and an old woman appeared at the door, light in hand, to receive the new-comer.

"Come right in—come right in," she croaked, as Agnes hesitated, distrustful and undecided at the sight of her repulsive countenance; "come right in," she continued. "I've been expectin' ye, and everything's as nice as ye cud wish."

There was no alternative now, and trust that it was yet all right turning the balance, Agnes entered her new abode.

No sooner was she inside than the door was bolted, the key turned, and a rattling noise without told her the hack had gone, and she was now fully consigned to the charge of those around her, whoever they might be. As she was yet somewhat fatigued from her brief sleep on the steamer, she asked to be shown to a room, with which request the old woman, with peculiar delight, complied, leading the way up three long flights of stairs, into an apartment with but one window, and that in the roof, yet spacious, and in other respects quite comfortable.

Hitherto, Agnes had hoped she had not misplaced her confidence, but when the old woman retired from the room, bowing herself out with mock civility, and wishing "my dear lady good morning," then turning the key in the door after her, hope left her as the thunderbolt leaves the cloud, and she sank down with the conviction that she had been betrayed, entrapped!

## CHAPTER V.

### GETTING THE TRAIL.

The next day after the visit of Albert Heywood to Harry Dudley, at the hotel, found him speeding away on the train for Boston—at a rapid rate, perhaps, yet not half so fast as he could have wished. Even had it placed his life in jeopardy, he would have increased the speed, for what was living to him now but a bitter void, a blank, indifferent experience?

It was afternoon when the cars arrived at Haymarket Square, Boston, and without a moment's delay Albert started for the residence of the detective to whom he had been directed. Having been in the city on several occasions before, he found no difficulty in getting around, and in due time had the pleasure of shaking hands with Spencer Trevelyn, whose grasp was all the more cordial from his friendship with Harry Dudley. A few inquiries about the latter, a few words of commiseration at his misfortune, and Albert then gave him the note Harry had sent. The detective read it with marked interest.

"Ah, ha!" he broke forth, at last; "and so Clarkson was at the bottom of it all. How thoughtless of me not to have noted his absence from the city before! A robbery, and now a—well, I must look to this. And you are interested, I see," he continued, turning to Albert.

"As interested as I am in my own life."

"Ah! yes; but keep up good courage, my friend. This Clarkson is a queer dog; it is to be hoped we shall block his game yet. He is bad enough, cer-

tainly, but not so bad as many we have to deal with; in fact, in some places he would readily pass for a gentleman. It is now well along in the afternoon. Between this time and twelve o'clock is the best period for work in the whole twenty-four hours. The sports are out in full feather, and if a clue is to be obtained, then is the time to get it. Let me see: Cool Graham's troupe arrived about a week ago, and Clarkson was aboard the same steamer. I have it." The detective sat for few moments in deep study, and when a course had evidently been decided upon, he arose, and assuming a slight disguise, prepared to go forth.

"You will let me go with you," said Albert, not content to remain behind inactive, when his presence might prove of the greatest value.

"I should be pleased at your company, young man," replied Trevelyn, kindly, "but I think it will be as well for our plans that you remain here. I can work to better advantage single-handed, and when necessity requires I am not at a loss for assistance," he remarked, opening his coat and disclosing a pair of light, richly-mounted revolvers. "At a close scratch I can call these to my aid, and woe to the man that stands before them. We detectives don't use many scruples when once in a close corner. But I must not tarry longer. As Harry says, we should lose no time."

"If I must remain behind, then heaven help you in your undertaking," said Albert.

Trevelyn tarried only long enough to introduce Albert to his family, seeing him well disposed for the evening, when he started out on his singular and dangerous business.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

Sadly did the time drag along with Agnes Bishop. What wild imaginings coursed through her busy brain! Only once was she disturbed the first day in her new abode, and then it was by the old woman, who came with a waiter on which were ample supplies of food to satisfy her appetite, which, however, had almost forsaken her in her peril. At that time she questioned the hag as to the purpose of her detention, but no word of reply could she obtain, save that "He will come soon! he will come soon!" and then she disappeared, locking the door, as before, and leaving Agnes more painfully agitated with conjecture.

The occurrences of the following day made the meaning of the old woman's words too apparent to her. She was startled by a man's tread upon the stairs, coming up, and, she doubted not, about to enter her apartment. Nor was she mistaken. The key turned, the door swung back, and before her stood Clarkson—the man she had met at Lewiston, the one she had scornfully repulsed when he had sought favor at her hands. She started to her feet a moment in glad surprise, thinking he might in this instance be a friend, and have come to her rescue; but she settled back as his chilling words greeted her:

"O, ho! Miss Bishop; and so we've met once more, have we? You didn't think, in your little country city, that we should meet again under so peculiar circumstances. And you are to become an actress—well, well, that's rich; and so you are



—an actress in high life—three stories at that, with one window in the roof,” and the arch villain, having locked the door on the inside, seated himself on the bed which the room contained, and laughed a fiendish laugh which sent terror to the very depths of Agnes Bishop’s heart.

“O, leave me, sir!” she cried in alarm. “What cruel fate has brought you here?”

“The same that brought you, Miss Bishop; I was a passenger on the same steamer. I heard that you aspired to the stage, and as I am something of an actor myself, I propose to introduce you to life behind the scenes.”

The villain chuckled as he said this.

“But I will expose you to the authorities,” faltered Agnes, scarcely above her breath, her terror depriving her of speech; “I will have you brought to justice.”

“That’s fine, Miss Bishop. Your tone and manner are just suited to the stage. As My Lady Clarkson your triumph is assured. Your audience will not be very large, but it will be all the more select.”

“What mean you, sir,” said Agnes.

“That for the present you are to know only Jacob Clarkson and Moll Baxter, the old woman who will attend to your wishes. It was a singular stroke of fortune that led me to your down-east city, for I’ve brought back a prize that will pay me well for my trouble. You are mine, wholly in my power, and at my pleasure. Bear this in mind, and govern yourself accordingly. You are trembling and scared now; I will give you time to compose yourself. A private enterprise takes me out to Dorchester for several days, and when I return I hope to find you in better spirits, and disposed to regard your lot more contentedly. So good-day.”

Again the key was turned on Agnes Bishop. This time it proved a source of relief. She had feared the worst from the villain; but a respite was offered—a few days only, yet might she not in those few days succeed in effecting her escape?

As the sound of Clarkson’s footsteps died away she fell to musing again upon the singularity of events, the rapid changes, strange and unexpected, which had flashed over her life like a cyclone. No longer did the mist of uncertainty rest upon the past actions of her enemies. Her leaving the boat was recalled to mind. Early as it had been, and she dressed and on deck at the first signal of their arrival, yet Graham had told her the other ladies had preceded her. How blind of her not to have seen at once that the statement must be false! No other lady of the party had made her appearance above stairs, and might not have risen, possibly, till an hour or more later. Graham’s duplicity now became more apparent. After these, other acts were noted; but the climax of her realization was not reached till the fact of Clarkson’s presence occurred to her. What subtle power this man possessed that might thus place her in captivity at his will, she could not conceive. It seemed to her that heaven had indeed forsaken her, and thrown her life into the hands of wicked men. O, how she wished that those who loved her could only know where she was, and fly to her deliverance! Yet how could they know—how suspect? To the tearful entreaties of Belle to write at the very first opportunity, she had given a careless, indifferent reply; and now her means of communication were cut off had she felt disposed to correspond. Bitter, bitter thought! that she had let her foolish ambition so blind her for the time, and bid her choose a course so repulsive to the deeper, better impulses

of her nature ; that should turn her feet from the paths of humble enjoyment, to seek that flashy bauble which many clutch at, but few obtain. Untutored, as she had been—unlearned in the ways of the world, its delusions and vagaries, its falsehoods and deceptions, she was now taking her first dark, sad lesson of experience. Might it not be her last? An orphan, in a great city reeking with crime, no friends near, a prisoner without means of escape, and a fate impending to which death were a blessing—Agnes Bishop felt so overcome at these thoughts that she fell upon her knees and implored that divine favor which too many forget till the dread hour of adversity and distress comes. Yet her prayer was not altogether actuated by fear and peril. At heart pure, good and noble, she had breathed true piety from those lips before, and now felt the same relief from oppression which had answered her supplications in times past. The clouds of her perversity were obstinate at first, but she implored more fervently, and at length the sunlight broke through, and hope lighted up the firmament of her life, till the glad hour of noonday beamed with all its wonted glory. She arose. Could it be possible there was a chance of escape? or was all this promise held out to her only to be withdrawn again to leave her in the darkest midnight? Was it the foretoken of something real, or the delusion of an excited imagination? O, that it might prove substantial and abiding!

Going to the door, she examined the lock, the hinges, and exerted her powers to test their strength. As well might she undertake to remove the house from its foundation; not the least effect was perceptible. Then she viewed the window, but that was up out of her reach, and she saw that it was securely fastened, and in all likelihood could

not be removed, if she were able to reach it. The place was a prison indeed; and who could tell, thought Agnes, how many victims had been there before her? how many an one, like her, had been entrapped, and perhaps set at liberty only when robbed of that which woman holds most dear, or, slight difference, not permitted to leave alive? She had read of similar cases—of bodies taken from the docks, cold and lifeless, whose identity no one could prove. Might they not have been allured from dear New England homes, been betrayed, and thus met a dreadful fate? The thought chilled her.

The room contained a light-stand. Moving this in position, and getting on top of it with the aid of a chair, she could just reach the window. An iron rod attached to it projected down a foot or more, and by this she tried to force the sash upward, but all in vain.

While standing thus, a step was again heard on the stairs, and in her haste to get down she lost her balance, falling to the floor, as the door opened and the wicked phiz of Moll Baxter grinned upon her misfortune.

This was evidently a rich treat for the old hag, and she had to hold her bloated sides with laughing. Beastly, coarse, depraved; what a contrast was here between two of the same sex—one lost to all that was good and virtuous, the other pure and spotless as the falling snow!

Agnes was not seriously hurt, and she arose to her feet without assistance, disdaining the extended hand of the hag. They were in the middle of the room, the door open; quick as thought, Agnes sprang towards it; but there was no lack of watchfulness in those bleared eyes, for a brawny hand grasped her arm with a vise-like grip, and she was forced back into the room—back, and hurled vio-

lently upon the bed. Moll Baxter had been faithful to her trust.

"None o' that, none o' that, my dainty miss. I've jest caught ye tryin' to 'scape have I? Faix, and ye'd broken iv'ry bone in yer body if ye'd gone out by the windy. Well, guess I'll lock the door now," and she turned the key in the lock, and held it up before the girl in tantalizing defiance. "O, no, my lady, ye can't get out o' here—not till he says so—not till Clarkson takes ye out. He's a fine gentleman, is Clarkson; has lots o' money, and says he's goin' ter marry ye. What d'ye think o' that? A gentleman the likes o' him marry ye! Why, ye ought ter be proud o' it, though I don't s'pose ye are. 'Tisn't iv'ry one a gentleman like him would marry. Faix! but I'm thinkin' ye'll be glad enough ter do it when he gits back with the nice bit o' money he's gone for. A fine gentleman is Clarkson, and he pays me well for me trouble—so he does!"

The voluble old woman had brought up some victuals for Agnes, but had left them outside the door as she heard the noise. These she now brought in.

"Look at this, will ye? See the nice dainties Clarkson gits for ye. Och! but I've er mind ter taste 'em meself, if I'd think he wudn't know it."

"Take them if you wish," said Agnes; "take it all—only set me free from this place, and once at liberty, I will see you well rewarded."

"That's kind, my lady; but I cudn't do it; Clarkson wud finish me if I did. No, I wudn't dare ter do that, Ate yer vittels—ate yer vittels. I must have ye lookin' nice an' hearty when he gits back."

And Moll Baxter, having executed Clarkson's latest orders, once more left the apartment to its lonely occupant.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A CHAPTER IN PARENTHESES.

The next evening after Albert Heywood's departure from Lewiston, Harry Dudley had so far recovered that he was able to walk out, and he at once sought the boarding-place of Belle Bishop, where he took the liberty of introducing himself to her, and explaining the object of his visit, which was to allay, if possible, her fears in regard to Agnes, of whose peril she had been partially informed by Albert. Strange as it may seem, he found her outwardly quite composed over the matter, exhibiting but very little alarm in her countenance, and not disposed to give way to the force of her feelings. Did some Power greater than her own sustain her? Doubtless. Although Belle Bishop's was a peculiar nature, and discipline had developed within her such a remarkable strength of will, that, however deep or poignant her emotions, she could command and maintain composure.

Yet she did not refuse the proffered kindness of her visitor, who manifested such heartfelt interest in the fate of Agnes. She at once saw the sympathetic soul which prompted it, and thanked him with all the gratitude she felt. That Harry Dudley was a gentleman in every sense of the word, she soon became aware, and having been reared in refinement herself, the young man's company was, to say the least, quite agreeable to her. Nor did hers seem less so to him. Unforgetful of the events which had brought them together, these two persons were not prevented from recognizing in each other the embodiment of congenial natures, minds

running in similar channels, and actuated by similar tastes and dispositions.

"There are certain characters that do not change with circumstances," said Harry, at length, after the more important subject had been talked over—"characters moulded with the very beings who possess them, and are not dwarfed or inflated by the fickle tide of fortune. Such characters are rare, but when found form the really true type of our humanity. Let adversity come, and they are the same as when favored with prosperity; they are ever above the reach of such accidents, and prove themselves rulers rather than serfs in the world of chance."

"True, Mr. Dudley," replied Belle; "but poverty has its restrictions, and the elements that might otherwise be of service are obliged to remain passive, and so, we may say, rust and decay from lack of employment."

"To a degree, I acknowledge it; but so far as I have studied human nature in this city of factories since my brief sojourn here, I find but little indications of rust and decay. Action, action is observed on every hand, and few deem it compulsory or falter at their places, however humble. Give me New England for representatives of these traits of character, for she is their nursery and abiding-place."

"You think New England superior, then?"

"I do; and thank the fates that I was reared upon her soil. My father was born in England, and was a prominent iron-master there till some years ago, when he came to Boston, and established his business in that city. His death, two years ago, left everything in my hands; and it was upon business connected with the factories that I came to Lewiston."

"You have visited the factories, then?" said Belle, blushing slightly, to think she was herself an "operative," and might have been observed by him while at work.

"I have; and have seen in them happier faces and more contented lives than one can see in a large portion of the so-called first circles of our metropolis. Many persons possessing millions would gladly give all their riches for the cheerful hearts which abound so generally here. Of course, there are bright and dark sides to nearly every phase of life. I find it true that happiness is not always the attendant of wealth, although I have no doubt that wealth, when properly disposed, may be made conducive to happiness."

"You philosophize well, Mr. Dudley," said Belle. "We are all apt to find sunshine in the lot of those whose condition in life is unlike our own. Had your words reached the ears of sister Agnes in season, they might have averted the misfortune that has befallen her. Reared in the pride of wealth, she could not bend her will to accept the situation which adversity had forced upon us. Rejecting, as she did, the love of one who would have made her happy in a humble sphere, her false ambition prompted her to seek retrieval of fortune through the perilous medium of the stage."

"A mistaken idea, certainly," replied Harry. "Your allusion to Mr. Heywood reminds me that he is a skillful workman in the iron department of one of the factories."

"Ah! you know this, then," said Belle, wondering at his knowledge of Albert's occupation.

"Yes, my business brings me in contact with men of his class, and I make it a special object to learn more or less of the capacities of those who perform the work in detail. This study has been

both interesting and profitable. It has afforded me pleasure to learn that Mr. Heywood is a superior mechanic, and is competent for a far better position than that he now occupies. I became aware of this previous to our interview at the hotel, and since that time the facts of his skill and acquirements have become more favorably impressed upon my memory. He probably has no knowledge of this, however."

"As a friend, I most heartily thank you for the interest you have manifested in him, Mr. Dudley."

"I might well feel an interest in him now," continued Harry, after he has saved my life. But further than this, if you will pardon me, I must confess I have conceived an unusual interest in the future of yourself and sister, and whatever may be the sequel to this at present seemingly unfortunate affair, I trust it will be the means of establishing an acquaintance which may tend to our mutual good."

No school of deceit and artifice had educated Harry Dudley's tongue in the use of unmeant expressions, but open candor and spontaneous sympathy for a deserving object were the natural outgrowth of his feelings and impulses. When he sauntered towards the hotel, shortly after, two minds were engrossed with thoughts of a kindred nature. Who knows what will come of it?

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FALSE HEARTS AND TRUE.

The evening Detective Trevelyn started forth in search of Agnes Bishop, or some clue that might lead to her whereabouts, Clarkson returned from Dorchester, where an adroit burglary had been committed by a league of desperadoes of which he bore the leadership. The haul had been a rich one, and as he entered Moll Baxter's, elated with his success and the wine he had imbibed on the strength of it, he felt as good as one possibly could under such circumstances.

"The girl—how's the girl?" was his first inquiry of the old woman, who greeted him with a grin of welcome.

"Ill, Mr. Clarkson, ill. She's been nearly sick these two days, and hasn't ate enough to kape a rat alive."

"O, ho! she hasn't eh? Well, I reckon she'll revive when she sees me. I didn't intend to be gone so long, but the job was exceedingly difficult to get at. You know I have a fine job now and then, Moll, that requires my particular attention."

"Ah! well I know that, Mr. Clarkson," replied Moll, who knew about as much of his affairs outside of her domicile as the man in the moon—"ah! well I do, Mr. Clarkson; and you're a gentleman, so ye are, to be sure."

"Yes; that'll do, Moll," replied Clarkson. "Now give me a light, while I visit the bridal chamber, and see how the bride will receive me."

He took the light and mounted the stairs to the room which contained Agnes Bishop. As he opened

the door, she started up from the bed on which she had thrown herself, her loosened hair falling in wild disorder over her partly disrobed person, and with a half-crazed air gazed at him.

"So you have returned," she murmured, just audibly. "I had prayed you would never come back; but no, no!" and her head sank down again upon the pillow, while tears coursed over her pallid cheeks.

"There! there! enough of that!" said Clarkson, fiercely; no whimpering here. You are to be a bride to-night; so dry your tears; they ill become one in such a relation."

"O, you will not, you will not kill me!" moaned Agnes, scarcely knowing what she said. "Let me go free from this place, and you shall not be harmed. O, spare me, spare me!"

"Stop your noise, or I'll smother you, you blubbery baby. Enough of it, I say. You should know by this time that I am ruler here, if you did spurn me in Lewiston."

Agnes was in a sort of stupor when Clarkson entered, but she soon became wholly aroused to the impending peril of her situation.

The unchecked fires of licentious passion now flashed from the villain's eyes, and he moved toward the bedside.

"Back, sir; come no nearer!" shrieked Agnes, with affright.

Clarkson's deep interest in his intended victim had prevented his catching a slight sound which occurred in the hall below a moment before, and as the girl's cry rang through the building, there was a cat-like tread upon the stairs, a quick movement in the door-lock, and Detective Trevelyn stood face to face with the would-be despoiler.

"Nabbed at last," he said, quietly, as the wretch

glowed towards him; "nabbed at last, Jake Clarkson, and in the midst of your villainy. I caught your trail to-night, and have followed you. A highway robbery, a burglary, and now a—"

Clarkson whipped out a pistol and fired, but the detective's eye was upon him, and his own revolver spoke at the same time. The result was that the former only was wounded, though not dangerously, yet enough to render him senseless till the handcuffs were placed upon his wrists. Then Trevelyn turned to Agnes, but she was unconscious, having fainted away. From this she shortly recovered, however, and at once became aware that her rescue had been effected, yet how and by what means she could not conjecture.

When Clarkson found himself completely at the will of Trevelyn, whom he had ever been careful to avoid, his prudence could hardly suppress his rage and curses; while old Moll, who had always held him in such high esteem, now that a revolution was likely to take place, adopted a little diplomacy in trying to forstall it.

"The wicked skamer that he is, Mr. Officer! Bad cess ter him fur the disturbince he's after causin' an inoffensive female like mesel', and all fur his wicked dades, so it is. The poor, dear lady, too, what he made me b'lieve was his wife, when I knowed she wasn't! O, worra! worra! that the likes er him should pertind sich a thing!"

"Hold your jaw, you old witch!" growled Clarkson, striking her a blow with the handcuffs that felled her to the floor, she having imprudently approached him in her demonstrations. "Take that for your blabbing tongue."

The old woman doubled herself up in a ludicrous heap, and sent forth howls of imprecation upon the head of her aggressor, who regarded her

with a look of mingled contempt and amusement at the result of his blow. Both of them were now in a fit condition for recrimination and exposure—he wounded in the arm and suffering with pain, and she ornamented with a gash on the head from which the blood was freely flowing.

Without loss of time, Clarkson and Moll Baxter were placed in the custody of some faithful policemen, and sent to the station-house. This part of the business off his hands, Trevelyn again directed his attention to Agnes, who had hastily resumed the articles of clothing she had worn there, and bade her accompany him from the place.

"But where shall we go?" she asked, innocently, yet now rid of all fear of evil.

"To a good place, my dear girl. Don't be afraid when you are in the care of Detective Trevelyn; there shall no harm reach you."

"O, you are very kind—you are very good," said Agnes, joyfully, as they wended their way through the dimly-lighted streets. No one could tell the joy she felt at her opportune deliverance. Now, indeed, had her petition been answered, and Providence had interposed in her behalf. An unspoken thanksgiving rested upon her lips during the remainder of their walk, unmindful of the bustling throngs that they shortly encountered returning from the theatres, till at length they turned up into a more quiet thoroughfare, and entered a house which the gaslight opposite revealed as one of elegance and respectability.

"This is my residence," said Trevelyn; "we will go in here."

"As you wish," replied Agnes, in tones of gratitude, following her companion without hesitation up a short flight of stone steps, into the detective's home.

## CHAPTER IX.

JUST AS IT SHOULD BE.

Spencer Trevelyn ushered Agnes Bishop through the hall, and into a parlor where sat a young man, who glanced up anxiously as they entered.

She recognized him at once, while he, with ready perception, read in her joyous countenance the happy assurance that she was yet unharmed.

"Agnes!"

"Albert!"

There was an embrace, a—but the indulgent reader will pardon a slight omission of details here. Suffice it to say, there were two most grateful hearts under the detective's roof that night, and Agnes Bishop was satisfied in loving, and being loved by, Albert Heywood.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are ordeals which must be borne in nearly every life to at length attain any great and lasting good; trials, severe, perhaps, in themselves, yet necessary to the development and exercise of a better nature which may have remained dormant beneath the influence of less potent agencies. This had been the case with our heroine, whose heart had ever been a mystery to herself till the storm of adversity lowered its threatening clouds over her head; then the truth burst upon her in its fullest effect, disclosing the hidden secrets she had never before sought to fathom. Happily for her, the storm passed away, the clouds disappeared, and she was permitted the fulfillment of those affliction-wrought hopes—as will be observed in the closing scene of our truthful story.

A private sociable is being given at the elegant residence of Harry Dudley, on one of the most aristocratic avenues in Boston; and, believe us, it is a sociable affair, despite the exclusive character of the locality where it occurs. Nor will one wonder at it when told who are the principal persons in the gathering. To begin the list, there is Harry himself, and his bride, whom we so recently knew as Belle Bishop, a factory girl; next comes Albert Heywood and his bride, formerly Agnes Bishop; and then, though by no means an unimportant personage in the assembly, is Detective Trevelyn, and with him his wife and family.

Albert Heywood now has the oversight of the Dudley Iron Works, a position for which his capacity and experience eminently qualify him. Harry and Albert occupy a splendid brownstone, and an attachment exists between them which time cannot sever, but which grows stronger and stronger in their brotherly intercourse. Having everything at hand to promote comfort and happiness, and two sensible partners to share these with them, the prospect is that they will partake to the fullest of the enjoyments of this world.

Do not wonder at this remarkable transition of our characters. When we remember the worth of Belle Bishop, there is nothing strange that Harry Dudley, with his quick faculties of observation, should have seen in her the realization of his fondest wish, and extracted a promise from her that she would be his. This was after Albert had returned to Lewiston with his rescued Agnes, and the hour was so auspicious for such a consummation.

And the present gathering was more to talk over the affairs of the past, perhaps, than anything else, an occasion where only intimate friends were invited, where stilted formality was quietly dispensed

with, while social chat and intercourse engaged the hour. It was as pleasant as genial hearts and smiling faces could make it.

Trevelyn, whose experience as a detective had furnished him with a fund of material for storytelling, entertained the company with incidents in his personal career while engaged in the dangerous and uncertain business of searching out the more adroit class of criminals and bringing them to justice. To these reminiscences all listened with interest, and especially Agnes, who imagined the narrator must be little more than human from the part he had taken in her own rescue.

"I have had many odd adventures in my day," he said, finally, "but never one which has afforded me greater satisfaction than that to which an item in the evening papers seems a proper conclusion. I have no doubt you all would like to hear it."

He produced a paper, and read:

"**BOLD ASSAULT.**—While officers were conveying Jacob Clarkson to the Charleston prison, in irons, to-day, they were assailed by a party of roughs, evidently bent on effecting his rescue. Several shots were fired on both sides. Of these but one took effect, however, and that was from the assaulting party, aimed at an officer, which, singularly enough, struck the prisoner in his custody, inflicting a fatal wound. On beholding this, the assailants were filled with consternation, and fled, though not till one of their number, Cool Graham by name, and Bill Caffers, who had a hack in waiting for them, were captured. It is now known that the party are a gang of burglars and midnight marauders, of which Clarkson had been the leader until his arrest several months ago, and their exploits have been numerous and daring. This Cool Graham, who so suddenly changed



places with Clarkson, will probably have a chance to taste prison fare, as his complicity with the latter can be easily proved.'

"All of which is respectfully submitted," added the detective, turning to his deeply-interested listeners.

"And goes to show that the play is a tragedy, after all," said Agnes, looking askance at Belle.

"Yes; and you may congratulate yourself on being withdrawn from the boards at the time you were; otherwise—but it is all over now, sister dear, and I have no fear you will ever again have a desire to become an actress."

"No, Belle; be assured of that. I have too much regard for the heads of my friends," laughed Agnes.

"A thoughtfulness worthy of commendation," said Harry, good-humoredly. "As for me, I am satisfied with the result if Albert is. Broken heads may be very bad in their way, but they don't begin to compare with broken hearts. Happily for us all, our hearts and heads are safe, and it is hoped they may continue to remain so."

"The prospect never seemed better," said Albert. With our good friend Trevelyn near at hand, there is little to apprehend from the schemes of villainy."

"While to God we should render praise for the kindness He has shown us, and the happiness we are now permitted to enjoy," remarked Agnes, with a sincerity of feeling that bespoke the truthfulness of her character, and made the detective inwardly rejoice that he had ever interposed a hand to rescue at *the peril of beauty*.