

WAS SHE ENGAGED?

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BY "JONQUIL."

[J. L. Collins]

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WAS SHE ENGAGED?

CHAPTER I.

I WAS moodily looking on two concise notes, written by the same fair hand, when two lines from Meg Merrilies' incantation entered my mind; and, twisting the scented notes together, I lit them with a match, and threw them into the grate, humming, fiercely,—

"Twist ye! twine ye! even so,
Mingled shades of joy and woe!"

One of them was a written acceptance of me for better or worse, and the other dismissed me forever, as worse only.

The writer and myself had become so accustomed to each other's sallies, bantering, and repartee during the early part of our acquaintance, we were hopeless of understanding each other's real feelings by word or look, and were, therefore, compelled to pen any words of serious import, in order to make them worthy of the attention due to truth. Though, when face to face, we would

say more in a day than we "would stand to in a month," yet when anything was set down in black and white each one knew the other would abide by it at any risk or expense.

Therefore, when I was determined to end an uncertainty that made Sarah Carroll sometimes my beloved and sometimes another's, I wrote to that effect, or else she would not have believed that we must have a formal betrothal within two days, or see each other no more; and when she desired me to understand that our love-life was at an end, she wrote my sentence, fearing I would not have taken it from her lips. As friends we would have endured for life, and blessed each other with our sympathy, but in love we failed each other, and when we found we could not be all that we should be in our new characters, it was too late to be contented with a weaker bond.

Having seen the blue-and-white flame of the notes curl and twine to my satisfaction, I took up another, and read it over and over to drift my thoughts from the troubles it was the innocent cause of, to those it contained in itself. It was a metaphysical application of the homœopathic theory, checking sorrow by sorrow; for the letter was written by my sister, informing me of the death of the heroine of my school-days, and inviting me, in her mother's name, to be present at the funeral. It had arrived too late to enable me to attend, as I received it the day the funeral took place; but, as the next best thing I could do to show my respect

for her memory, I postponed going to a concert with Sarah that same evening.

I sat at home, thinking of my boyhood's first love, and all the childish dreams and petty cares which attended it, and moralizing on the uncertainty of life and the vanity of earthly schemes, while I sent a note to Sarah, saying that I could not, without violence to my own feelings, and disrespect to the living and the dead, be present at an evening's entertainment the day a true and tried young friend was being laid into her silent grave.

As the concert was to be repeated, I proposed extending the engagement to the next one; but that, as I expected, did not meet the case. She had never heard me speak of a female acquaintance, and was unreasonably jealous when she heard I had one whose death would grieve me, and therefore she replied, excusing my escort altogether.

Though the term "true and tried young friend" was rather strained, as I do not suppose the deceased thought six times of me in as many years, and she had never been tried at school without being found wanting, yet I looked upon myself as a martyr to friendship when I read Sarah's cold letter, and prepared my mind for any consequences that would follow, with a morbid feeling of indifference.

Next day I called in person to make an apology, and, notwithstanding the smiles of welcome that greeted me, I could see by the red spots on either cheek that I had fully aroused her resentment.

As soon as I was seated I began by saying,—

"I am very sorry that I disappointed you, Sarah; but you must come to the next one, which will doubtless be just as good."

"Oh, I beg of you to forget it; I was not at all disappointed; but before I make another engagement with you I would like to be informed how many 'true and tried young friends' you have whose death might interfere with it," she said, with a meek smile that was always used to mask the ugliness of her temper.

"Several! every friend I have, Sarah! I love them all too well to hear their requiem in a concert-hall!" I exclaimed, hurt at hearing what I considered a slur on the innocent girl who had just been buried, and also at hearing my own words which I knew were affected, quoted back to me with so much sarcasm.

"Then I will not risk another, lest an epidemic should break out among them," she said, with the same provoking, hard smile.

I must not pretend that I was a submissive lover, or that I would overlook or smile at anything, while courting, which I would resent when married; and my looks did not help to restore peace.

I did not speak until I could command my voice as easily as she did, and then I said,—

"I had better go now, and call again when we both feel more amiable; for if we suffer this cold-blooded warfare to proceed much further, there will be an end to our friendship."

"Oh, no! nothing can prevent you and I from being *friends*, Mr. Pearson, and the very best of *friends*; but, if you have other engagements, do not let me detain you, sir," she replied, with a polished evenness of modulation that was irritating when the meaning of her words was so hostile, and emphasizing friends and Mr. Pearson to convey to my mind the thought that we could never more be more than *friends* to each other.

"Amen, with all my heart; let us be friends, or anything else that will end this bickering life we have lived, Sarah," I said, bowing myself out, and vainly endeavoring to return the calm assuring smile that followed me to the door.

Next day a polite letter was handed to me, which ended with a hope that we would ever be friends, and remember the pleasant hours we had spent in each other's society to the end of our lives, however far apart destiny should diverge our paths.

Such was the end of our love-life, about one year from the time it had begun; and I could hardly realize, as the flame died away and left only the black remains of the two notes covered with slate-colored hieroglyphs, that so many promises and hopes as were twined in that life lay there, twisting and twining in the ashes, as if my lines from Meg Merrilies had bewitched them. As they finally flew up the chimney, my mind was carried back to the first impressions I had formed of her character, and I wished I had saved the words and thoughts that followed close on our first acquaintance for

the one destined by Providence to be my wife, by never letting these first impressions be effaced. "You must not judge by appearances," is a much-abused maxim; being laid down so often to us in our youth that it is a wonder we ever afterwards believe the evidence of our eyes, or that some of our courts will admit sight as evidence; but if I had retained the thoughts I judged by Sarah's appearance when I first saw her, and not let myself be charmed out of them by the brilliancy of her wit and beauty, I would have been better by many a night's careless rest, and many a friend neglected for her sake.

But the very stars conspired to mislead me; for before I was deeper than my ankles in love our attention was caught by a meteor shooting across the heavens one evening as we were out walking, and bantering in a way that approached the abuse of our most sacred and serious feelings.

"Wish! wish, while that star is falling, and you will get your wish!" exclaimed Sarah, pointing to it with the hand she had withdrawn from my arm.

"Well, I wished for something. Did you?" I asked, after the meteor had vanished.

"Yes! What did you wish for?" she asked, coaxingly.

"Tell me what you wished for first, and then I will tell you," I said, to get time; for I had not wished at all, the movement was so rapid.

"Oh, with a gallant beau by her side a lady can

want for nothing, so I merely wished that you might get your wish," she replied.

There was so much cunningness and skill displayed in her pleasant acting of happiness and generosity, I was no longer at a loss for a wish, and I hurriedly replied, as if afraid the thought would escape me, or discretion would hold back the words,—

"That was very good of you, and I think that must have been my lucky star; for it is in your power to grant the wish, Sarah," I said, recovering her hand.

"Well, what was it, then?" she asked, eagerly.

"I wished that you might love me half as much as I love you. Will you grant it?" I asked.

There was a pressure on my arm in appreciation of my ready speech, but otherwise she was not the one to be surprised into the betrayal of any weakness or feeling; so she merely chided me for the moderation of my wish, since I might have just as cheaply wished for a great deal more.

"But half as much as I love you is a great deal to begin with, Sarah," I said, with a gravity that ought to have choked me, considering how big a lie I concealed in it; and then, after a little more bantering, she said she would grant it, seeing that I was contented with so little.

Thus our flirting began in earnest; for she so often denied and acknowledged the binding of her word, that our courtship was no better than flirting,

until I at length insisted on having her promise in writing.

Only the first and last of the many letters of our love-correspondence were burned; and to complete the work I took all that came between those two from my writing-desk, where they had been filed with counting-house precision, and, twisting them all by twos, burned them, repeating Meg Merri-*lies'* lines over and over, while I touched them off with lucifer matches.

As there was to be no return of anything, such as usually follows a sentimental quarrel, but each one left the other to dispose of them according to taste, I made a dramatic display over my share that proved how little heart was ever in the engagement.

As I came to the last of her letters I found some written to me by the one who was now dead, and began to read them to divert my mind from the work of destruction I had now completed. From the polished non-committal notes of a city belle to the hasty compositions of a twelve-year-old school-girl was a change that was interesting; and if they gave me pleasure at the age of twenty-four, they must have caused my cap to fly up with boyish glee and enthusiasm at the age of fourteen. The first one, containing several blots, announced the startling intelligence that *Willy Manville had proposed to carry her books home from school for her*, and my brow must have darkened with wrath against Willy, as I read it first; but then I must have sent my cap to the

ceiling with a three times three for Mary, as she added that she replied *she could carry them herself, as she was as strong as he was*.

I read the few letters she sent me after that one, and thought of the boyish effusions I sent her in return during the first six months, and then of the occasional visits I paid my native town, until I had almost persuaded my heart that it was Mary and not Sarah it had lost.

So earnest was I in my determination to drive the memory of my broken engagement from my mind, I tried to think myself bereaved by the death of my betrothed bride; though I was conscious that she did not long hold out against Willy Manville's attack, and that, as she had been engaged to him before she died, I lost nothing but a schoolmate by her death.

But the feeling continued, and grew for a week, until I thought of the cold clay settling around the form that I loved, with an intensity that left me indifferent to every other care, and I looked into the grave as the place where my hopes were buried, and read "Gray's Elegy" and "Young's Night Thoughts" until Narcissa seemed a bride that Death had taken from me.

When I could sustain the delusion no longer, and my bubble grief had burst, I was totally indifferent to the real loss I had sustained, and Sarah was as a stranger to my mind.

Though this was the first writing of dismissal I had received from Sarah, it must not be under-

stood that it was the first time I had been dismissed by her; for our quarrels had been frequent, and often led to temporary estrangements, as the following extract from a letter will show:

"My duties to other friends were neglected for more than a week, that I might copy the 'Culprit Fay' for Sarah, who had declared to me that she could not read it with any satisfaction in print, as the witchery of the tale was lost in the prosy type of the book.

"The care and patience I had bestowed in writing and punctuating it, that I might make it as presentable as possible, led me to anticipate a tender scene at the presentation. With the full assurance of her thanks, I walked toward her house, repeating in my mind, 'If receiving gives you as much pleasure as I receive in giving, it is all I ask,' which little speech I had composed to be in readiness the moment the first word of thanks had escaped from her lips. She is very fond of complimentary speeches and ready retorts; and this was not the first time I had formed a polite sentence and held it in reserve for a proper occasion.

"Alas! how my fond hopes vanished all, when, with a look of surprise, she exclaimed, 'Well, what a goose you are to waste your energies in transcribing a poem like that from plain print into a business hand that destroys its romance, and would ruin my eyes and wrinkle my brows to decipher it!'

"Rather than such a heart-rending catastrophe should happen, Sarah, I will remove it from your hands, and preserve the beauty of the eyes and brows that would become a diadem,' I replied, taking the manuscript from her hands before she was aware of it, placing it on a chair, and seating myself securely upon it.

"She was slightly taken aback by such a peremptory movement, but instantly rallied, and said, with coquettish indifference,—

"What was your object in writing it, pray? Some lady asked you, to try your patience, and in your weariness you dreamed that it was I! Won't she feel complimented, though, when she learns the mistake you have made in bringing it up here to me?"

"Not more than I feel, after having banished myself from court for a week, that the task might be completed before I returned,' I replied.

"Oh! I beg pardon, Sir Knight; and since it is such a task for you to do me a favor, I cannot do otherwise than appreciate it. Welcome back to court!' she exclaimed.

"No; I do not wish you to appreciate it for the pains I have taken with it, and I do not think you will for the trouble you will have in getting it from me,' I returned, sullenly.

"Philosophy says we prize everything in proportion to the labor we employ in securing it,' she said, with a mischievous expression that I well understood.

“‘That is poor philosophy! The pains we take to secure a prize only proves how much we think it is worth, or how much we desire to keep others from getting it; and when we have it, the question will surely come up, Is it worth what it has cost us? and then comes the reaction of feeling,’ I retorted.

“‘Then I should say it were better for the prize not to be secured, since “the pleasure’s in the chase,” as the old song says,’ she said, looking at the manuscript, but, by the flashing of her eyes, betraying the ambiguity of her meaning.

“I have not been near her for three days, and I know trouble is brewing; but I deserve it for letting her whims control me, and herself despise me for it.”

I hope the reader’s patience will be as inexhaustible as the person’s to whom I wrote so confidentially of my scenes with Sarah; but I give the letter here for the sake of introducing the life I had led with her before the opening of the story. I have begun with the end of our engagement, to save the story from the dull monotony of a year’s cooing; but I must give some clue to an engagement and a person exerting an influence through the whole story, and, before I introduce other persons and other engagements, dispose of those on hand.

No one, except a misanthrope or a jealous critic of her own sex, could look at Sarah without feeling, whatever her faults were, she was a very supe-

rior girl. She had lustrous black eyes, and a brow so high and noble-looking that the diadem I had said it would become was not introduced for the purpose of flattering her; for it had often occurred to me as a suitable ornament, as I gazed enchanted on the high-born style of her beauty. Her mouth was so delicately and firmly cut, a person could imagine that the keenness and force of her repartee was owing to the shape and temper her sentences must have acquired in passing between her lips. The greatest charm of her beauty was, however, in her unconsciousness of it, or, being conscious, left to weaker minds the foolishness of being vain of anything given by nature for a short season, while she made her wit, and the intelligence of her conversation, her greatest attraction to her admirers.

This, I must say, had been her greatest attraction to me, who held beauty in distrust, unless I thought the mental and moral as well favored and developed as the physical person. With others it was mostly the same, for while her beauty attracted them to her side, her bright intellect bound them fast there.

Knowing her power of making and retaining admirers, she often abused it, by spurning and recalling them at her pleasure; so that, though I had many rivals, none of them feared her less or suffered as little from her caprice as I did; and now that I had resigned all claims to her favor, I could not feel that my loss was some other man’s gain.

During the first few weeks after our quarrel, I

tried to disperse any regrets my lonely hours would awake in me, by recalling the many outcroppings of selfishness and heartlessness I had observed during our intercourse; for, while her manner of saying a heartless speech softened the hardness of the sentiment at the time, I only remembered the spirit of her words now, and wondered why her pretty way of saying them could ever make me forget their true meaning and intent.

Wit, in the mouth of a beauty especially, is the *ignis-fatuus* of truth; and, while we are deluded by it, we fail to discover the worth of her words or herself. With it Sarah could parry a heart-searching inquiry, turn aside an accusation, leave a question of ethics unanswered, evade any grasp made at her opinion, and with the skill of a diplomatist search out another's mind, while she veiled her own from the most critical scrutiny.

I may as well end it by saying that Sarah was too much for me, and I could not love her as one that I could admire less and trust more.

CHAPTER II.

A MONTH had now elapsed since I burned my letters (and with them all the evidence necessary for proving a breach of promise against Sarah), and I was as cheerful and contented as a man need wish to be.

The number of my friends in the great city in which I had struggled for years did not exceed the fingers of one hand; and counting those only to whom I opened my heart, the number could be reduced to two.

One of those had been Sarah, of course, and the other one was the person to whom I had written the letter quoted from in the last chapter; as he had been absent from the city at that time. As the monotony of spending every evening over "Gibbon's Roman Empire" was beginning to become wearisome, I received word from my friend, informing me that he would be in the city the day I would get his note, and he would be glad to see me at his rooms as soon as my engagements would let me call. As I had no engagement on hand since my engagement to take Sarah to the concert, there was nothing to prevent me from calling on him that same evening; and I was rejoiced at the return of one who for years had contributed so

much to making my evenings the happiest part of my days. Very soon after dusk I stood at his door, thumping with all my might over a plate as long and as wide as a brick, with "Robert Heberton, Artist," engraved in copper-plate style on it.

I rushed past the dull-eared old negress who answered my summons, and bounded up the stairs, three steps at a stride, until I heard the artist shout from the top,—

"Bravo, old fellow! I knew it was you by the way the

'Quivering drawbridge rocked and rung;'"

and we met with the noisy demonstrations usually indulged in, in a building let out for offices; with no one besides the old janitress there after six o'clock. Here he led a sort of Bohemian life, painting, sleeping, and spending such evenings as he expected my visits on, and every other evening for aught I knew to the contrary. As he was always cheerful, and moderately fleshy, I suppose he fared better than Bohemians are believed to fare generally, and his living so apparently lonely was a matter of choice rather than of necessity.

Though we had known each other for years, I had no knowledge of his affairs beyond that he took his meals at a first-class boarding-house close by, and carried on a slight flirtation at the table with an old maid who sat near him; and he knew as little of mine, except that having once asked his opinion of Sarah's picture our relationship was

explained, and left open to discussion ever afterwards. With the pursuits and annoyances of our daily lives we were much better acquainted, and conversed with each other about them until we knew by report every person and duty agreeable or repugnant to each other's tastes.

After a few words of greeting, and many repetitions of shaking hands, we agreed to consult our comfort and taste by ascending to our usual place of retirement,—the roof of the house. We had not sat on it for two months, or more, and, quickly doffing our boots and putting on slippers, we crept out the trap-door to the slanting roof. It was well adapted to our discussions, and I always followed him out there with pleasure, and sat, or stretched out, beside him, star gazing, and ventilating theories that had been ventilated a hundred times by us on similar occasions. Yet they always seemed new to us, and whenever we paused in an argument, the hum from the street below, and the music from a neighboring hall, where a band conducted their rehearsals every evening, supplied us with fresh thought, and gave a tinge of sublimity to our feelings that would be missed in a different situation.

During the summer nights we often lingered on that perilous position until "The Bear" had made a half wheel on its faithful pivot, the "Polar star;" for up there both in a measure felt above the vexations and trials which chafe the youthful spirit ere it is broken to the drudgery of life. We were cer-

tain of each other's sympathy when we complained of anything that made our pursuits disagreeable to us; he in the studio and I in the counting-house had our sensitive parts often touched by a rough hand, and he was as quick to hate the meanness and trickery of "trade" as I was to despise the consequential upstart who insulted him while pretending to patronize the fine arts.

In four previous "misunderstandings" with Sarah he had been made my confidant, as her friends seemed to be set on our separation, and had fomented and laughed at our quarrels whenever they could, and I had no one besides Robert to condole with me; for though Sarah's mother had been my ally, I avoided her whenever her daughter had a quarrel against me.

It was, therefore, only natural that Robert should lightly regard our pique about the "Culprit Fay," and have supposed, instead of leading to a decided quarrel at the first excuse, that it was all smooth sailing again; so we had been scarcely stretched on the roof before he said,—

"Well, it is all up, I suppose, between you and Miss Sarah? I mean *made up*, of course: it must be six weeks now since you devoted yourself to that delightful employment, which in the German is properly expressed by the soft and musical word *abschreiben*."

"Yes, Bob; you may laugh at me now, for it will be your last opportunity: Sarah and I have agreed to have no more scenes for the benefit of

our admiring friends; for, though fun and amusement to them, they were pain and unhappiness and death to us. We will never again see enough of each other to be offended at each other's want of appreciation, or be made miserable by the chills and fevers of love," I said, with pathetic verbosity.

"A final quarrel, is it?" he asked in surprise, being more impressed by my manner of speaking than the meaning of my words.

"No; but a final reconciliation: we can be friends, as the term goes, without seeing each other, I am sure," I replied, with an effort at indifference, being conscious of having made a useless display of feeling in my other speech.

He plucked a nail out of a shingle, and, after having demonstrated a few mathematical problems on the moon-lit roof, he said,—

"Well, if it has come to that at last, I can tell you I have long expected it; and if you have made yourself a laughing-stock for any of your friends, you have not for me; for a man so devoted to a woman as you were to Sarah is not an object to be laughed at; men have lost their heads by losing their hearts first, before to-day, and will after our time."

"I do not blame you, or any one, for making merry at my expense; I could do so myself without much effort," I replied, trying to look as if I had a merry time over it already.

"Well, so you may, now that you are out of it; ever since the world began men have loved and

married and died, and will to the end of time; and the greatest and wisest of them all have often turned out to be very *little* and very *foolish* when tested in the crucible of love by some girl of not more than seventeen summers' growth," he added.

"That ought to be a source of comfort to me; but still I cannot say it is: I feel utterly disgusted with my experience, and I was never fond of making friends with my foibles because they had been the guests of great men before they were mine."

This will illustrate our way of dealing with a subject that had often before been under our treatment, and upon which we had exhausted all our practical and theoretical knowledge. The theme which has exercised the pens of so many authors, and been the soul of all romance and poetry from the time there was any romance, could not have escaped us; and though our arguments were not confined to that subject, yet they often waxed warm upon it. He, being well read in history, poetry, romance, and metaphysics, was entitled to be heard for his borrowed lore, and I could not be denied the credit of having experience for my Mentor. I asked and was not refused, I pleased and was rewarded, I offended and was punished, I rebelled and was discarded.

Like the Moslem tyrant, who in a passion exchanges a lifetime's power over a slave for a momentary indulgence of the bowstring, Sarah crowded into a diminutive note the wrath and vengeance she might have for years eked out to me.

This evening the news I had to tell Robert, and the questions I had to ask him, were alike forgotten in the one great topic he started our conversation on; for we talked of it to the exclusion of everything else.

By criticising Sarah more freely than he had ever before done, he had aroused a championship in me that I did not think myself willing to undertake, and when I could no longer combat the force and truth of his strictures, I cried,—

"Oh, bother! I give up; I do not care now whether she has a lump of lead or a piece of charcoal where her heart ought to be; so let us go below and look at your new sketches, if you have any!" for I was annoyed at the ground he took to prove that Sarah, if she ever had a heart, had let it before my time, and that I was not the first who had been "passing" dear to her.

"Well, let us go down; I have a good many new sketches; for this is my favorite season, when the woods, instead of being green all over, are (to use the language of an old housekeeper up there) like a great, patched bed-quilt: the oaks turning red, the maples brown, and the other trees yellow, or every shade between red and yellow," he replied.

Half an hour was spent in looking the sketches over, and when we had examined them all, he said, as if he had been thinking of it during his descriptions,—

"You will have no place to spend your evenings

now, and as a man will become boorish when cut off altogether from female society, you had better come with me some evening and let me introduce you to some of my old friends. You will like them, I know, and I would have asked you down there before this, only you had not many evenings to spare. It is the family of my guardian, a kind-hearted man, who took me from some indifferent relatives after my parents died, and made my life and youth more pleasant to me. As he is an artist, it was under his fostering care I learned to paint; but he has been bedridden for some years, and as I knew myself to be more trouble than help in the house, I moved my lodgings up here out of their way. I usually spend two evenings of each week there, and they will be glad to welcome you, too; for they know you already almost as well as I do, as I tell them who my acquaintances are, and everything else that would interest them in their retired life."

"You have not interested them with my love affairs? they have been interesting to too many already," I said, alarmed lest in telling them about me he had told them what I considered the most interesting thing in my life: with the egotism the reader has doubtless observed in all persons who call themselves lovers.

"Oh, certainly not: you will never find me guilty of a breach of confidence; besides, there is a young lady in the house who, I am sure, has a different idea of love from that which you found

upon Mulberry Street; and would, in her love for truth, and faith in the genuine article, object to hear it spoken of in that way," he said, in a sarcastic way he had with him.

"You are slightly disrespectful, but, as I am not in the spirit to preach on the sweetness and ecstasy of the articles of my faith, I forgive you, Bob," I humbly returned.

He had by this time packed away all his sketches; and, taking down a case of miniatures, he said, "I will show you pictures of both father and daughter, for there are no other members of the family living; so that, when you go down with me, which I suppose you will, you can distinguish the one from the other."

The last words were spoken with an attempt at pleasantry to efface, perhaps, the sarcasm of his former speech.

We looked at the maiden's first, a sweet and lovely, rather than a handsome, face; and when I exchanged it for the father's, he replaced it in the case, among others of the same size and style. I was soon satisfied with the father's, as it had nothing remarkable in it,—a benevolent face, luxuriant gray hair, glasses through which intelligent eyes looked out calmly,—and I returned it to him, and asked him to let me look more attentively at the daughter's picture.

He took one from the case, which in size and general appearance resembled the one I had seen,

but, when I took it to the light, it proved to be a picture of Sarah, painted when she was more girlish than I had ever seen her, but still a likeness that could not be disputed, however he had happened to have it among his friends.

I looked at it for some time with intense admiration, tracing every lineament and every change that had been made in her by time; and then, my astonishment increasing, I cried, "Why, Bob! this is Sarah's picture, and not that one I had a moment ago. Where did you get it? and why have you got it, pray?"

He colored, and laughed as he saw the mistake, and, viewing it at a distance with the air of a connoisseur, he carelessly said,—

"That is the picture of a young lady whose portrait I painted six years ago. I made it clandestinely, for I think she was very handsome, do you not?"

"Yes, to be sure I do! But are you in the habit of making duplicates whenever you paint a handsome young lady's portrait? Don't you see that this is Sarah's picture, though it is not so much like her now?" I asked.

"No, I should not think it is so much like the picture of her that you showed me; photographs are a bad invention, they cannot be bribed to flatter," he evasively returned.

"Oh, artists can, you admit, then?" I retorted, as I turned the picture over and over, to catch

every shade of light on it, and every change it admitted.

It was the loveliest picture I had ever seen, and though I was conscious that Sarah was no longer as young and as soft looking, yet I felt all the old feelings come swelling back to my heart again. Whether the original was like it or not did not matter then; the mind does not wait to reason when the eye lets a flood of pleasure into it.

The purest style of Italian beauty was before me; the eyes and brow, which were queenly in Sarah proper, were softened in the picture by an air of pensive innocence that did the artist great credit; for no one but a true-hearted genius could throw so much delicacy, sensibility, and womanhood into ivory.

Sarah had once shown me one somewhat like it, but ashamed of the change that time had made in her, she took it away before I could well examine it. How long Robert had this one, and why he had never before shown it to me, were questions I forgot to ask in my great desire to dispossess him of it; and I pleaded and promised, until, glad to escape from more questioning, perhaps, he yielded to my importunity. The moment he consented I rushed out with it, lest he should repent; but I paused to look at it by every lamp-post I passed on my way home; and such was my infatuation with it, that nothing but the lateness of the hour prevented me from seeking, that night, a reconciliation with the original.

All night long I lay thinking of the past and the future; and now and then got up to turn the gas on that I might have a fresh view of the Madonna; but an hour's rest towards morning restored reason, and I put the picture away.

CHAPTER III.

I FEAR some doubt will exist in the reader's mind as to who is to be the hero of this story: and to prevent any misunderstanding on that important question, as well as to save myself from the charge of egotism, let me, before I further proceed, say that Robert Heberton fills that dignified but, to a modest mind, embarrassing position. Yes, these pages are before you merely for the purpose of introducing him as a candidate for your sympathy; and if I am obliged to intrude myself too often upon your notice, please remember that I only come for the purpose of presenting him,—the master of the ceremonies introducing the lion of the evening, or the fashionable modiste preparing the bride for the bridal. As he lived a great deal in himself, I cannot be expected to do more than follow the circumstances which reveal him; for, though we were old acquaintances, yet there is always a limit to the intimacy between men, Damon and Pythias though they may be. To be sure, they know how each other stand on moral and political questions, whether they are generous or penurious and mean, philanthropic or cynical, modest or assuming, but their hopes, their embarrassments, their disappointments they safely

lock up for their own cogitation after their school days are over. Then they might confide the no great secret of whether they intended to be a professor, a president, or a sailor, and which of all the girls in the school they would fight for; but even in the story of the love of David and Jonathan we read of generous, self-sacrificing affection, rather than of confidential interchange of heart-thoughts.

Samson and Delilah, whose bonds were those of lust on the one side and cupidity on the other, could more easily ask and give the heart-secrets; and so can two women, even though they may lack the confidence in each other's love and honor which men have.

As is generally the case, I condemned all her sex with Sarah, and did not expect to derive much pleasure from Robert's kind offices in introducing me to his friend, since the honors of the house were in the keeping of an agreeable-looking young lady; but I consented to go, hoping I should find him a lover there, and have an opportunity of finding him unworthy of my confidence, since he had kept her existence and Sarah's picture secret from me, while he knew all my love affairs.

As we proceeded towards the street the house was located on, I said to him,—

"We will have an opportunity of comparing tastes at last, for I know by the way you looked at the picture you like her, Robert."

"As the picture was made by myself, I may have

been admiring my own handiwork, as artists do sometimes. But how do you think our tastes will agree?" he returned.

"Oh, the past can answer that. We have never yet seen a beauty on the street to whom we both gave the palm, and we never need fear a rivalry, and kill the one who would come between us, as the Indian brothers are said, in the story, to have done," I replied; forgetting for the moment how well we were agreed on Sarah, since he thought her picture worth having.

"Our ideas of beauty may be different, and yet our appreciation of character may be the same; so while a passing face may speak differently to us, a full knowledge of the owner would create the same likes or dislikes with us," he insisted, earnestly.

"Yes; but as all this has reference to the young lady we will see this evening, how can it apply, since you have a more thorough knowledge of her than I can have for years?"

"Very likely; I have known her since she was eight years old, and am still learning something new; but yet it will not take you many hours to see that she is modest, sensible, and gentle, and that will give you a good start with her," he replied.

"Well, then, tell me what are her tastes, her habits, and her favorite books, so that I may be able to interest her, and coax her to let her lamp shine from under the wings of her diffidence."

"No, I will not; you must find all that out for yourself; but I will tell you something that you cannot learn from observation,—a little of her history.

"Her father has not been out of his house during four years, and during all that time she has been his companion, his nurse, and, I may say, his protector. He is rather impatient, and cannot bear to let her out of his sight, or allow any one else to assist him in the slightest matter. She has thus been kept at his side the four best years of her life, and deprived of all the social enjoyments and privileges so dear to her age and sex, and yet without a word of complaint, or anything else except expressions of the most agreeable duty on her part. They have no relatives worthy of the name, and, consequently, she has seen as little of the outside world as a nun immured within the walls of a convent; but you must not think I say this much to ask your charity, or deprecate your criticism."

We had by this time arrived in front of a block of three-story brick houses, where white doors and shutters, and marble steps and window-sills, were set as uniformly as new pins in a row, and he hurriedly said we had time to say no more.

The door he selected was opened by a servant, with the cheerful, self-satisfied smile of one who had guessed, the moment the bell rang, who was at the door, and with a bob which was a cross between a bow and a courtesy, she said,—

"They are in the library, Master Robert."

"All right," he said, half in reply and half to me, as he passed her and led the way up-stairs.

He had ascended the stairs about half-way when the door was opened at the head, and a graceful female figure stood in the bright light, and called out a welcome to him in a pleasant voice. I was behind him ascending the stairs, and had kept step so well since we entered that the presence of a stranger was not known; and she stepped forward and kissed him in a glad, sisterly manner that was at once distinguishable from the greeting of two lovers.

As I was discovered in a moment, he turned around and presented me to her, and the surprise as well as suddenness of the introduction created a momentary confusion of manner that was more becoming under the circumstances than otherwise. It instantly passed over, like a cloud in April, and then her hand was offered to me with a cordiality of manner and expressions of welcome which were as graceful of her as they were grateful to me.

Doubtless I was indebted for much of it to the fact that I was witness to the tender greeting Robert had received; and, with womanly quickness of apprehension, she feared I would interpret its warmth as meaning something more than friendship, and received his friend nearly as well, to disarm me of suspicion.

Character is the most charming feature any place, if it be good, and especially in a book it is the only feature we can recognize and admire; yet, all being

more or less physiognomists, we naturally desire to know how the outward and inward man can compare, for we have our own ideas of their consistency. Well, then, to satisfy this natural desire, I will tell how Lucy Davenport looked as she stood in the light from the library, though I do not expect to do it successfully, as, while all right-minded people agree in that which is good, not many do in that which is beautiful.

She appeared to be about twenty years old, and somewhat above the medium height of a woman. Her complexion was fair and rather pale, but it deepened in color a good deal when animated by conversation. Her eyes were of a clear, changing blue, very bright and moist and full, and only framed in a grave, thoughtful face, would be always laughing, as nearly all her gladness and mirth were expressed by them. Her nose, though purely Grecian, did not seem to add any beauty to her face; but it had an odd expression of coyness about it that was very coaxing; so striking, and yet so concealed, that it required close scrutiny to find out where the expression came from.

Her mouth, chin, and throat were in harmony with the moderate fullness of the rest of her face; but that which added most to her beauty by its shade, and to her simple dignity by its arrangement, was her hair, which was of a pale golden color, and coiled and bound around her head like a chaplet.

There was so much grace, suppleness, and simpli-

city in every movement, I could not help forgetting her face sometimes to watch her actions, as the old metaphor of man being the oak and woman the vine would often occur to me, and it would be delightful to imagine myself an oak with such a vine as Lucy Davenport twining around and clinging to me for support.

My stability as a lover may be called in question if I betray so much enthusiasm so soon after the loss of Sarah; but it must not be imagined that I made all these observations and experienced these feelings while standing at the library door; for she led the way into the room as soon as I had been introduced, and gave me no time to fall in love with her, even if I had felt so disposed.

I was presented to her father at once, but as he figures only as an old man in this story, I will merely remark of his appearance that he was exceedingly like Robert's picture of him.

I drew my chair near him as soon as Robert had answered a few leading questions about his absence and return, and prepared to be pleased with whatever conversation he would favor me with, seeing that Lucy's eyes were asking more questions of Robert than her lips could get opportunity of setting forth to him.

"We owe Robert a big apple for this agreeable surprise, it is so seldom that we see any one besides each other; and you are especially welcome, because I know you are not, like me, always thinking of pain or paint, but keep up with the spirit and

enterprise of the age; something that I have fallen sadly behind in," he began.

Making a brief reply, I directed my eyes to the paintings which I supposed he was always thinking about; for they hung in tiers on three sides of the library walls, leaving only the fourth side for the books and door.

Many were landscapes and fancy sketches; but some portraits from life stood out prominently, as much by the plainness of their features as anything else.

There was one exception, however, for while it had all the beauty that fancy and genius could adorn it with, its strong resemblance to his daughter was manifest at the first glance.

"What do you think of that?" he asked, as his eyes followed mine to it.

"I have never seen a better picture; no one would deny Miss Davenport's right to claim it as hers," I confidently replied.

"I suspected you were thinking so," he said, with a hearty laugh that attracted the attention of the other two.

"And am I not right?" I asked.

"Not exactly; it was painted before she was born," he answered, looking with a critical eye from it to his daughter.

I supposed it was her mother's, then; but did not like to say so, fearing that I would be wrong again; so I merely maintained the likeness was very remarkable.

"It is a forced resemblance, and merely consists of the doing up of the hair; for to please my father have I sacrificed my own taste and adopted her style," said the daughter, with a modest effort to deny her likeness to the beauty.

"That picture is no one's in particular; it was merely an ideal of my own that I used to be in love with when I was too poor to think of a real living woman, for whose comfort and existence a butcher and a baker would be necessary," he said, with a genial smile, as if he had been always above the folly of looking upon women as angels, and continued:

"We very seldom see our ideals, much less marry them, and despairing of meeting a being which existed only in my mind, I transferred my fancy to canvas, and romantically resolved to devote myself to its adoration. When I met Lucy's mother, I did not think the hair, complexion, and eyes of this ideal so essential to my happiness, for that is her picture above it; but still my old love was allowed a place in the family, for my wife was not jealous of it, though she had been told its romantic history. She had a Quixotic notion of justice, and having robbed this picture of her lover, she gave it her own love in return, and was so constantly looking at it before our girl was born, I believe Lucy's strange resemblance was due to it. Such phenomena of nature have remarkable precedents, sir: I had an uncle, who was consul in Turkey, and his wife held the black

slaves of the town in such horror and disgust that a son was born unto her with the heavy, repulsive features of the Abyssinian, only perfectly fair in complexion."

His tongue seemed tireless, and while my eyes never left his face, my ears were with Robert and Miss Davenport, who had again relapsed into a pleasant *tête-à-tête*.

The old gentleman probably noticed the vacancy of my expression, and addressed himself to the children, as he fondly called them.

"Your letters never informed us why you left the city before the expected time. I thought you were sick, and wanted Lucy to run down to your room and play 'Sister of Mercy,'" he said, as soon as they had faced him.

The "Sister of Mercy" did not apparently think that her visits ought to be spoken of before a stranger, for she turned to me and stammered in explanation,—

"Whenever Robert does not come in his regular calls, my father thinks nothing but sickness detains him,—just as if a young man had no medium between sickness and visiting! About three years ago he failed to put in appearance his usual evening, and my father becoming alarmed for him, sent me down to his room to look after him, where I found the poor young man very sick indeed. I did not know whether he had the blues or a fever; but I gave him half a dozen different medicines to make sure of the right one, and brought him home and

nursed him so well that he has never since needed either a doctor or a nurse."

"Then, I must say, he is very good, as well as very healthy, if he has not been taken sick often since under the temptation of such tender nursing: your patience and goodness would be greatly abused by many whom I know," I said.

It was an unfortunate return for the effort she made to clear herself in my estimation, and it appeared to create more confusion than her father's remark did at first; because, being unaccustomed to society, the little compliments which are given and taken with ease there seemed flattery to her, and she doubtless thought I was quizzing her.

Her politeness, however, helped her to overlook my apparent ill manners, and she rallied, and said,—

"Oh, he knows that as far as my skill and knowledge goes medicine is medicine all the same, except that I have an idea the most nauseous is the best; and also that, as it was the first offense, we were more tender of him than we would be if he imposed upon our benevolence too often."

She paused a moment, and then thinking she had said quite enough in explanation, she continued to Robert,—

"I hope my father's apprehensions were unfounded, and that you were not sick the week before you left the city."

"Oh, no. I was unexpectedly called away in another direction, and did not get to my intended destination as soon as I expected; so you would

not have found me at my lodgings had you called," he replied, with some difficulty, for he had been laughing all the time at my stupidity, in regarding himself and Lucy Davenport in the light of lovers, and also at her unsuccessful efforts to clear herself from the apparent indelicacy of calling at the lodgings of a young man merely because he had failed to call on her.

Mr. Davenport was also made conscious of how much he had compromised her feelings, and hastened to make what amends he could by saying,—

"The girl is no longer as obedient as she was three years ago, Robert; for then she did whatever I told her, without questioning its propriety; but since she was eighteen she has sometimes brought her womanly notions of decorum in direct conflict with my parental authority, and as she can beat me at these fine points, I am always forced to yield to her. The poor child is deprived of her best parent, and an old man cannot make his own ideas the criterion for her."

There was a sadness in his last words that was felt by all alike, and the subject was immediately changed. It, however, left a depressing feeling behind it on his daughter's mind, which was not removed by the anecdotes that followed through the evening. She withdrew from her conversation with Robert, and let the male members of the company sustain it with each other.

Robert related all his adventures in the country for their amusement, and with so much system

that I could see he treasured up everything he observed, and arranged it in his mind for the entertainment of his isolated friends, who listened to him with an interest and appreciation that would flatter a more conceited and egotistical narrator.

He had thus made himself almost necessary to the happiness of his friends, who were entirely dependent upon him for their information of the outside world, as their knowledge had been for years confined to the people who inhabited the bookshelves, and they were not very modern.

The old artist was the philosopher of the party, of course, as well as the moralist, for he never failed to deduce a wholesome moral from each incident. When told of any deed of meanness or treachery, or word or act of impiety, he would stamp on the floor, and say Oh, oh! as if it seemed incomprehensible to him how the world was still as bad as it used to be. With a little capital, safely invested in a paying stock, he had not cause, like Robert, to complain of meanness. He even referred to his domestic as a "faithful creature, who had for eight years served them as if love was the motive-power." And then, like an observing young man, I made an item in my mind that Lucy had a good temper and a yielding, easy disposition, or the servant would not be so long there, and so faithful in her service, even for love.

His daughter was merely an attentive listener during the narrations, for, by jesting on the temptation of getting sick, I had changed her manners

for the evening, and I felt punished as well as humiliated in my own mind for it. Her natural frankness and innocence had received a chill, and instead of hearing the smooth sentences which followed each other in such harmonious intonations, as she conversed with Robert, I was compelled to listen to the more familiar voice of my friend, or to the surprising volubility of her father.

I being a stranger to her, and she being a stranger to society, she could not help feeling that I was laughing in my sleeve at her unusual freshness, as those who have not mingled much with the world are apt to be too sensitive, and imagine that anything which distinguishes them from the multitude is derogatory rather than otherwise to their reputation.

CHAPTER IV.

As we took our leave of them, Mr. Davenport cordially invited me to call again with Robert, and as often as I pleased without waiting for him.

I looked towards his daughter to see whether her face seconded the invitation, but she was busily engaged in getting a book for Robert, and I was ignorant of her feelings as the lady of the house.

It was much earlier than Robert and I usually separated, and we entered his lodgings to discuss any subject that might present itself to us for the next hour.

Our boots were pulled off, and we went out on our lofty observatory to catch sublimity from the black clouds which were chasing each other in the heavens.

But before we were long there the rain in large drops began to patter on the roof, and we reluctantly took refuge in the rooms below.

There was a large, old-fashioned fireplace in the studio, and as it was chilly enough to make a fire very cheerful company, he kindled one of hickory in it, and in a few moments it pleasantly blazed up.

With our feet placed against the andirons, as if we expected them to become conductors of the

genial heat, we waited for the fire to impart its glow to our minds.

Neither spoke for some time, and when a thought was interchanged it was only on the comparative merits of a wood and coal fire; but as both gave the preference to wood there was no room for any argument, and we again relapsed into silence. Both were no doubt thinking of the people we had just left, and Robert waited for me to say something about them.

I thought the old gentleman, though polite and warm-hearted, was somewhat egotistical, while I knew I had given offense to his daughter; so I did not like to say much about either, as there was a compact between us to state our real feelings on any question, without fear of giving offense to each other.

My first impressions of Lucy Davenport, as the reader knows, were very favorable; but when I saw she took exceptions to the very natural speech I made I became defiant, and set her down for a prude, who had not grace enough to receive a compliment pleasantly, though her good sense had told her it was light and meaningless. Then again I thought she and Robert were betrothed, and was somewhat out of humor because he had never said anything to me about it; so I was inclined to resent it by utter indifference.

We finally looked at each other, and laughed, saying, in echo to each other's words, "Why don't you say something?"

"I have nothing to say, except to repeat that I like the wood fire very much, and, if you wish it, I will show you some verses in its praise," he replied.

He found them in a few moments, and placed his fancies in my hand, as follows:

LOG-FIRE MUSINGS.

"Come, sit by the log-fire if grieving
For wealth the affections desire;
Come, care and cold earthliness leaving,
And seek a new world in fire.
Oh, there for the needy is treasure,
Where truth and devotion untold,
And friendship and love, without measure,
Are won without silver or gold!

"When lured by the visions that dance in
That magical mirror, the blaze,
A fairy will lead you a trance in,
Through many a revel and maze.
Hopes vanished you'll see there refining,
More bright and assured than before,
And if sensitive, sad, or repining,
You are lonely and cheerless no more!

"A thought builds a castle of pearl,
Secure from earth's covetous eyes,
And gives it a bright, loving girl,—
Ideal of love's vision and sighs.
Call her Lucy, or Ellen, or Mary;
Ask for eyes of black, hazel, or blue;
Wish her sober, or pensive, or airy,
And she comes to your mood ever true.

"The prosy may censure such musing,
Say time is too vainly employed,

And tell you such treasures in using,
 Wear longer when by earth alloyed.
 But, what? shall we plod on in sorrow
 Because a world melts them to naught?
 You may think of them still on each morrow,
 And happiness lives but in thought."

"It is very good to think that becoming happy is only an action of the mind, a mere metaphysical condition, independent of the wants of the poor body; but the real estate dealers and Lotharios will never say with envy, that 'You have a fine house, and splendid wife, by Jove!' if you keep them over in Spain; though I dare say it cost but little to maintain them in undecaying freshness there," I remarked, as I handed the lines back to him.

"Yes, *very* little, and that is why I can afford to have them: a cord of hickory, sawed and piled up outside the door, at six dollars, will maintain a wife and establishment in any splendor or style I fancy for a month, or will take me up the Rhine or down the Amazon, or to Venice, Milan, or Munich; and I do not see why I ought not to go that way, rather than be fretting because I cannot go at all. To be sure, I do not sit here to muse while I have an order for a picture; but it is better to have hopes to lure on, even though they are never realized, than have no hopes at all," he replied.

"Yes; but is it not better still to have hopes which we can reasonably expect to see realized?" I asked.

"All hopes are part expectation, expectation and desire; and when we desire a thing, we might just as well unreasonably expect it as not, as it will come just as soon, if it comes at all; and why not, then, hope for all things which we desire? We cannot measure the power of the Providence that gives us as much as is for our good, and we do not know what things are for our good, so I say let us hope for all things."

"We think alike, I am sure, Robert; but you have not expressed yourself as clearly as you might. You do not mean to say that I could hope to be President, and at the same time live on without making any effort to attain that distinction; while, at the same time, you would not advise me to waste my time and energy in seeking what I could not reasonably expect to obtain. But to leave this abstruse reasoning and come to the practical facts: you desire to have a wife, and a house to put her in, and because you do not wish to lodge her up here, you get one like Mackay describes in his *Salamandrine*, and build castles in the air for her. I had no idea you were so much in the real estate and matrimonial line; but since you have let me in part into your secret, please tell me what has tempted you to throw open the gates of your paradise to me. Is it anything your fair *vis-à-vis* has said to you this evening?"

"Well, yes, in some measure. She told me they will in a day or two have an additional member in

their family, and from what I know of that member elect I can predict trouble."

"Well, you surprise me, old fellow! Is it a son-in-law for the old gentleman or a stepmother for the daughter?" I cried, with unfeigned concern; for I thought it a pity that such a tender bond as existed between them should be weakened by a stranger.

"Oh, no, not as bad for either as that; it is a daughter to Mr. Davenport and a sister to Lucy, but also a plague to all easy-going people. They, and even I, will be turned upside down by her; and so will you, if you like the family well enough to become a regular visitor there," he said.

"I do, most certainly. But what must I prepare to suffer from the new member? Anything more than I suffered from the daughter this evening?" I returned, a sudden interest being created by the promise of one more friend.

"Everything that a young lady most pleasing and most provoking, most frank and finesse, most docile and intractable can inflict upon you. She is a mass of contradictions, and will coax and cut, pet and snub, and tease and throw you in spite of all you can do. She is Lucy's cousin, and used to live with them six years ago. She was claimed by a nearer relative, but now is coming back to them free, and an heiress."

"Well, I am sure gratitude to those who were her friends when she was not so independent is a good trait," I said.

"Yes, that is what makes her so dangerous; she has so many good qualities, as well as some which are not so lovable. There is nothing negative in her; for her traits are all positive, demonstrative, and aggressive. Though there was many a happy day while she was at Mr. Davenport's, there was never a quiet one; and I must say she generally had things her own way there, and made the water hot for every one, and I got my share of it, for she was a continual torment to me."

"Ah! I see, she played mischief with your heart, old fellow, and you fear she will do it again. 'A burned child,' etc., saith the old proverb; and now, though you dream of fine houses up in the air, you are too proud to ask an heiress when she comes within your orbit. Do I judge correctly, my dear sir?"

"Very nearly so, Ned. You know me well enough to read my thoughts afar off. A person to love her must lay his reason aside, and blindly yoke himself with a woman who can and will exercise the power of making him happy or miserable with equal ease and energy," he said.

"But, my dear sir, are you not meeting trouble half way, and more, too? She has not yet asked you to marry her, and even you do not know whether she is at liberty to do so, were she so disposed: an heiress is not often compelled to resort to such extreme measures to get a husband."

"She is at liberty, at least, for I have read her letters the last six years, and she is too frank to

keep anything like an engagement a secret; but the danger that I fear is that I may be so incautious as to ask *her*. I believe if the girl would only lay her pranks aside she would make a splendid wife; but too often men of my profession seek to wed a fortune only that they may be able to follow their art mistress with more ease and independence: I not only wish to avoid this, but also the very appearance of it," he replied.

"Well, leave all those things in the hands of the future, and if you should fall in love, come to me for advice. You have given me good counsel when I was in trouble, and now, that I am out of it, I will be as faithful to you; in fact, I will retail your own words back to you, so that you cannot refuse them, because they are yours."

"I railed at love, because there is a subtle philosophy in calling high grapes sour; but, as you say, let us leave all these things to the future," he said, giving the fire a furious poking, as if to cover up again all the castles he had that night for the first time exposed to me.

I looked into it, and thought that Lucy was free for me, if I could find a heart to be in love again; and she was one who would not lead it such a thorny road as Sarah had done.

Then the truth flashed on my mind, and I mentally cried,—

"Ah, Bob, my dear fellow! I am more far-sighted than you think I am! All this talk is for effect. You are too sensible to be afraid of meeting a

young lady friend, however great her attractions are, and you merely tell me in this roundabout way that you are not engaged to Lucy, and if I like her there is no one ahead of me."

The young lady who was the subject of so much conversation came, and the next time we went to Mr. Davenport's we had an opportunity of judging how much danger was ahead of us.

Going up-stairs, we found Mr. Davenport alone in the library, where he always sat or reclined when not confined to his bed.

After he had greeted us, and motioned me to a seat near him, he said to Robert,—

"Rosy Heywood is here, and is down-stairs with Lucy, looking over her music."

"Oh, is she? I must run down and see what she has turned into, the little imp!" he said, and was half-way down before his sentence was concluded.

I was entertained with a long discourse on Bonaparte's retreat from Moscow; for it had been the subject of his reading that day, and his reflections would have been instructive at any other time; but the hilarious greetings below, in which "Bob and his mustache," and "Rosy and her waterfall," seemed to rise above all the other elements of their admiration for each other, drew my mind away, and his round periods fell on the ears of a dull, inattentive listener.

He did not detect the want of intelligence in my eyes this time; but continued, while my heart was down-stairs, where the sounds grew fainter and

fainter, until they finally died away in music. As he was sublimely saying "Kings trembled for their crowns and nations for their existence, but God compressed the mercury a few degrees below zero and annihilated the terrible army by the breath of his nostrils," Lucy entered, and, having greeted me, said that Robert and her cousin were finishing a duet down-stairs, and would be up in a moment.

Soon afterwards there was a rustling of silks, and some half-smothered laughing on the stairs, and after a pause outside to compose themselves, Robert threw open the door, and a well-dressed young lady swept into the room.

Maybe I would have said sailed into it, if I had been disposed to be florid; for the stately curve she made in order to reach her end of the center-table was certainly like that of a large river steamer coming into her wharf. She seemed wholly unconscious of a stranger's presence in the room, until her majestic, though graceful, sweep brought her face to face with me, as she came to a right-about at the other end of the library.

As she caught the startling idea that there was a gentleman with whom she was not acquainted in the room with her, Lucy came to the rescue and introduced us. When she had recovered from the becoming surprise she was careful to manifest, she dipped quite low, and then we were acquainted.

Unfortunately for me I had forgotten to seem overcome by her grand manner of entering the

room, and without looking deeply impressed (though I was by her affectation), I felt as easy and indifferent as one who had seen women before would naturally have felt. I addressed a few words to her as I would to Lucy; but they were received with such a formal, dignified, and chilling air as froze the kindly smile on my face, and the temperature of my feelings suddenly fell as low as the mercury had been a few moments before, when Mr. Davenport used it to freeze Napoleon's "Army of Invasion."

The face and tone of the newcomer were strongly impregnated with the air of a Western village, and the vain self-conceit of a belle showed itself in her stiff manners.

She was no sooner seated than she drew forth a newspaper clipping from her pocket, and said,—

"Lucy, you are a French scholar, and can appreciate this prime joke!"

This piece of pedantry, which, after she had assumed the airs of a belle and heiress, now summed up her claims on our regard by saying that she knew French, sorely tried my gravity, but it stood the test.

The "prime joke in French" was read aloud by request of Robert, and it consisted in the word *ans* being pronounced *anes* by an American, in Paris, who wished to say that Nebuchadnezzar had eaten grass for seven years, but unluckily made his hearers understand that he had "eaten grass for seven asses."

As it raised a general laugh among us, Robert triumphantly exclaimed,—

“There! I thought I would let Miss Rosy see we all are French scholars here. She must not think that learning and the appreciation of jokes are confined exclusively to her own sex.”

This opened a battle between Rosamond and Robert at once, who pitched into each other with praiseworthy zeal for their respective sexes.

Both showed keen wit, and excellent skill at repartee, with an unlimited command of sarcasm; and while Lucy and I followed them as their squires, occasionally putting in a sly blow, Mr. Davenport laughed aloud at the unusual excitement.

Peace was at length restored; and apparently satisfied that she had lost no honor in the conflict, she addressed several remarks to the company at large, and took the lead in the conversation, showing herself advantageously all the time, as if accustomed to admiration. Though her words were addressed to no one in particular, her looks were always turned to me, when any one made answer, as if to read my thoughts or approval, and I would have felt flattered by her apparent desire to make an impression, only I knew that ladies of her coquettish disposition tried to attract more for the novelty than for any special value they set on a stranger's good opinion.

I had a sentiment, which was perhaps the cause of my stubborn determination not to be conciliated, and that was to never let myself be carried

away by admiration for a stranger while there was an older acquaintance present to feel slighted by my preference. I thought the guest clearly betrayed a desire to outshine her hostess; but late in the evening, seeing that Lucy did not share my feelings, but rather admired her, without envy or suspicion, I gradually softened, and towards the end of the visit we agreed, dissented, and conversed with the greatest animation.

I regarded Robert as her admirer elect, however, and whenever an opportunity offered I turned to the gentle, unassuming Lucy, who courted no admiration, was reticent when she could have won it, and modestly received it when thrust upon her.

Mr. Davenport, contrary to the opinion I had formed of him, seemed content to listen to others; and while he evidently enjoyed our spirited, if not noisy, talk, he seldom joined us in it.

I could see that he was classing our several minds, and maybe was pairing us off, if he had any of his old romance left. He seemed highly amused whenever Robert and Rosamond clashed, for clash they would all the time, as neither expressed an opinion that was not disputed by the other, and being compelled to support every assertion by argument, they amused us all while they sharpened each other's wits.

There was an entertaining retrospect of their youth exploits, and quarrels, and adventures, which Miss Heywood recounted to us in the most graphical language and manner.

The day she and Robert were beside a brook, breaking the calm waters into sunny ripples with their birchen switches, and Robert accidentally wet her with a few drops of spray, she repaid it with interest, and he retaliated, until, becoming so wet and heedless of the consequences, they pulled each other into the stream, and came out dripping like water-fowl. The advantage was hers, as she could change her clothes when the sport was over, while Robert, being at school in the city, and out to spend Saturday and Sunday, had only one suit, and was compelled to go to bed until it was dried.

The day they were fishing together, and she wandered up the stream and climbed up into an old overhanging willow, throwing her hat on the water and screaming to see whether Robert would dive for her, like the heroes of romance; but, discovering the ruse, and having two suits of clothes, this time, he shook her off into the stream, and swam about in it with her to show his chivalry and skill.

The day she sat under a cherry-tree, while he climbed it to fill her apron with cherries, and getting out on a dry branch fell head-foremost himself into her lap, and nearly killed both. These rude sports and romantic ramblings by the classic Brandywine, when she was a strong, romping girl, between thirteen and fourteen years old, kept us laughing, interested, and unconscious of the fleeting hours till it was midnight; and when at length we discovered how late it was, I boldly declared to

her that I had never before heard of the flight of time with so much surprise and regret.

She had, as Robert said she would, upset the quiet order of things at Mr. Davenport's; for they usually retired at ten o'clock, and several had headaches next day. But I would blame my head, rather than her; she was so untiring and interesting in talking, and I could listen with pleasure to her the whole twenty-four hours.

All my prejudices and thoughts of getting even with her had vanished before I left the house, and her words, her frankness, and vivacity had conquered. Her mind seemed healthy, vigorous, and buoyant like her body, and the latter was such that she need envy none of her sisterhood in form, health, and charms.

Her large, round, dark-blue eyes, which at first sight impressed me as indicating a spirit that would not be controlled by reason or decorum, softened from their wildness to constancy while she was relating her riding, fishing, and rambling adventures, and I read in them then an undisguised, courageous soul, such as would seek and suffer for truth with unflinching devotion.

When she looked at Robert sometimes, there was a fullness of feeling, an intensity of expression, in them that awakened in my breast even feelings of envy, and I hoped it would be my fortune, some day, to meet one whose eyes could look at me with such an overflowing wealth of candor and affection.

As we walked home, I communicated the sense of the last sentence to Robert, and found not only that he was much less impressed than I was, but also that he laughed heartily at me.

When I told him he ought to feel flattered by being remembered so long and so well, and, above all, by the glances of whole-souled interest she regarded him with all the time, he exclaimed, with irreverent skepticism,—

“Bah! that was all put on for the occasion; just for effect and nothing else. I know her natural tone well, and could see, though she looked at me, she was only speaking to you through me, as she saw that her first effort had not succeeded.

“Though it is not agreeable to be made a cat’s-paw for any one, yet I could feel flattered for you, my friend; but I suspect she would just as willingly use you for a mouth-piece to-morrow to call some one else’s attention to herself.

“As for her memory, I wish it had not been so good, for she doubtless remembers much more than she has told, and will call me to account for it yet, or visit her resentment on me in some way, for she never forgets or forgives. Ten years from now she can recall every word and look exchanged in there to-night, and though she is a generous, whole-souled girl, she has her own ideas about being even with every one in some way.”

We parted for the night; but until near day-break my brain, half intoxicated by the excitement of the evening, could not compose itself to

rest. She had, by her witty, independent, and sometimes extravagant language, as well as by her natural lively gestures, raised my fancy to such an elevation that it required hours to get it back to the level of repose.

After I arose in the morning and took a good sponge-bath, my head began to get cool again and my ideas to clear; and then I derived more pleasure from thinking of the few words Lucy had said to me than from all the glowing speeches and animated pictures with which Miss Heywood charmed me.

Inconstant man!

CHAPTER V.

As Rosamond Heywood had become one of the family at Mr. Davenport's, and had promised at our first meeting to become a very interesting acquaintance, I made some inquiries respecting her previous history the next evening I spent at Robert's studio.

She was deprived of her last surviving parent, he told me, by the death of her mother, who was sister to Mrs. Davenport, and had died when Rosamond was ten years old. The orphan was then taken into Mrs. Davenport's family, and while she shared their city home, they all repaired during the hot summer months to the large farm, which she had inherited from her mother, by the Brandywine. By some technical obscurity in the wording of an old will, the farm really belonged to Mrs. Davenport; but neither the artist nor his wife ever thought of taking advantage of these obscurities, which are at once the reproach of our intellects, and the delight of our lawyers and romancers.

No sooner had Mrs. Davenport died than a brother, with less generous feeling, challenged the right of Rosamond to the farm; and though Mr. Davenport at great expense defended her claim, the selfish uncle succeeded in dispossessing

(62)

her of it, as it was decided by the court that it belonged in rotation to each sister and brother, and to the heirs of the last of the occupants.

This uncle had a brother in a distant State, who had no children; and ashamed of his brother's churlishness, he came to claim Rosamond for adoption, and indemnify Mr. Davenport for his losses in the contest.

The latter offer was refused, but Rosamond was given up; and now both her uncles having died, and he who had adopted her being the last owner of the farm, she legally inherited it this time, as well as some wealth which her uncle had divided between her and his childless widow.

The widow returned to her own relatives in Tennessee, and Rosamond gratefully came back to the guardianship she had enjoyed when she was less an object of speculation.

Six years' absence, which, as they had discovered at meeting, had brought Robert a "mustache" and Rosamond a "waterfall," had also developed other qualities in her, which now promised to become a pleasing contrast with Lucy's unobtrusive beauty of person and mind, without making either less interesting.

This account of her interested me a good deal in Miss Heywood, and, as I did not feel sufficiently well acquainted with the family to visit there on my own responsibility, I waited impatiently for Robert's second semi-weekly visit, not wishing to go with him every time he went there. Maybe my word

will be doubted when I affirm that her frank, un-studied way of speaking, and her good sense in returning to the artist's quiet home, heiress though she had become, recommended her far more to my esteem than the mere fact (which I may have already laid too much stress on) of her being an heiress, and being a handsome one into the bargain.

The next time I called, Rosamond was apparently up-stairs dressing, instead of down at the music, and, good friends though we had parted last, all my anticipations of a pleasant greeting were disappointed the moment she entered the room.

Even Robert was not cordially greeted, I thought, as she came into the room with a dignified air; and she seemed so wholly unconscious of having seen me before, that Lucy was deceived, and introduced me again, supposing that she had really forgotten me.

The low bow, the same majestic curve in taking a seat, the introduction of her hand into her pocket, and, not finding anything there, into her work-basket, for something to start the conversation on, were all repeated; and though she gradually became lively and sociable with me, she did not, during the entire evening, by a word or look, indicate any knowledge of a previous introduction or conversation. As my admiration of Lucy received a fresh stimulus from her friendly manner of receiving me every time I went there, so my detestation of Rosamond's unnatural stiffness increased by a repetition of it every time we met. The girls

were so unlike each other it would seem almost impossible for them to become rivals, and yet each one alternately reigned uppermost in my thoughts. After being an hour or more in her company, my dislike for Rosamond would melt away before the animated and sunny expression of her face as she warmed in conversation; and while I had met her several evenings before she laid aside the coldness and stateliness of her receptions, she made amends for them always ere we parted, and her voice thrilled my dreaming ears long after the music of the evening had been hushed.

But then again, after my dreams were over, there was no pleasure left to contemplate, for the unnatural stiffness of her manner was remembered against her with increasing dislike, and I was ever arguing from it to her prejudice.

I have, however, strayed far ahead of time in this digression, for it was only at the fourth visit I had made to the house that something happened which calls an old acquaintance back to the stage.

It was customary for the girls to go down to the parlor and sing after tea, leaving the doors open, so that Mr. Davenport could hear the music in the library, where tea was always served.

One night we arrived before this evening anthem was over, and turned into the parlor to enjoy Rosamond's rich, cultivated voice (for she was the singer); but besides the two we expected to find, there also stood Sarah Carroll, singing with them.

While Robert, who I thought was a total stranger

to her, greeted her as an old friend, I turned to the other two ladies, hoping thereby to gain time to collect my wits, which were not a little scattered by the sudden and unwished-for collision. The time was sufficient for the task, and when I was presented by Lucy I was as calm as herself; thus we met again to begin a new acquaintance, without a prejudice being suspected by or a sign of having met before visible to the others.

Robert, who had so often listened to my praises of her without ever betraying an acquaintance, turned to her again and expressed his pleasure at seeing her, and she replied to him that she had only that day heard of Rosy's arrival from the West, and could not delay calling on her.

Of course this required an expression of thankfulness from Rosamond, and while they were, probably for the fourth time, exchanging expressions of mutual good will, Robert and I exchanged looks of pathetic dismay over their shoulders.

It could easily be seen that Rosamond was not over-sincere in her professions of regard, for she turned to us in a moment, and left Lucy to listen to what more Sarah would say; though Lucy could not feel flattered by the speech that called up these "twice-told tales" of affection.

Robert, with Lucy in every thought and word, as much as he combated Rosamond's sayings and doings, asked Sarah if it were possible that she did suspect Lucy and himself would be glad to hear that she cared something for them too.

It was asked in a merry tone of feigned reproach, which enabled Sarah to make reply to the question in a laughing way.

"Truth compels me to say that I did not know whether *you* were dead or alive, though whenever I thought of you I sincerely hoped you were."

"Either dead or alive? Well, I should think you might feel certain I was, as the intermediate state has not been discovered yet; and as I was never good enough to be translated, I must live and die like any other sinner, my fair cousin," he replied.

"I see you are as quick as ever, and I pity Lucy for having near her one so ready to contort and retort as you are," Sarah said.

"Oh, Lucy bears it very well, I thank you; in fact, she has so much patience with me I should not have been surprised if you had said you expected to learn that she had been translated."

"No; I took pains to inquire how Lucy was, and knew that she was well; and I know her still to be too generous to think I meant to slight her because I gave her guest the first place in the explanation your bantering has called from me."

"That clearly proves you have not forgotten me, Sarah; and I think you left me for the last only to give me the best part of the pie. Robert was too impatient, and pulled out a plum that has set his teeth on edge," Lucy replied, with a smile of satisfaction.

"I wish Luce would exchange some of her gen-

erosity for some of my selfishness, as we both would then be better adapted to the planet we inhabit," said Rosamond, joining them.

"Spare me from further flattery, or I shall think you have conspired to mock me," cried Lucy.

"Well, I merely wanted to say that I can never forget my own interest, or good, or dues so far as to give precedence to those of the public, or to take pleasure in anything that benefits others but leaves me in the cold," returned Rosamond.

"Bear that in mind, Ned, and whenever you give compliments to the sex in general, remember Rosamond must have one for her individual use, or else it does not reach her at all," said Robert to me, who had been silent all this time.

"As for you, you provoking cynic, I know how left-handed your compliments are, and fear more than I covet them; and I hope Mr. Pearson will be guided by his own strong sense of what is due to us, each and all, rather than by your advice. If, however, I may be permitted to offer a suggestion where I am principally concerned," she added, with amusing coquettishness, "allow me to say, that three compliments for me, two for Miss Carroll, and one for Lucy is about the proportion our vanity requires."

I promised to remember her advice, but hoped that, as I was very sincere in my speeches, my compliments would not be received as the flattery of a courtier.

"Oh, no, sir! if you are so *very sincere*, we shall

hear from you so seldom you may be sure the rarity of your compliments, if nothing else, will insure them our regard."

"Then, if they should be rare, attribute it to the fact that our deepest feelings are seldom expressed; partly for the want of suitable words to convey them, and partly because we fear they will not be heard with the veneration which, in our own estimation, they deserve," I replied to her.

"That certainly is a handsome speech to begin with; and I doubt not that you will be able to invent some means by which those ineffable sentiments can be conducted to our ears, if we only give you the encouragement you deserve," she replied, asking Sarah, at the same time, "if she had ever seen such a ready man?"

Of course Sarah replied that she had not, and at that moment our eyes as they met could not conceal a look of intelligence which nearly betrayed us.

I felt some confusion at being found in such fair society, and in such good spirits, so soon after the time when my compliments were for her alone.

Only about two months had passed by, and now I was "a ready man" again, to compliment a stranger as I had her before.

These feelings were deepened by the sedate, if not pensive, expression which had taken the place of the gayety and buoyancy of her recent manners; and, though I had been released from our engagement by

her own wish and action, yet I felt now somewhat chagrined at the thought that my character for stability was compromised by the position she had found me in. There was a sudden but earnest desire to assert my right to her respect, if not to deserve her friendship, though I had no wish to recall anything that was now among the past.

She had wasted the best years of her life in flirting, trifling, and quarreling, and when a woman, who is thoughtful and intelligent enough to know that youth and beauty are tolerated in power scarcely longer than a presidential term, sees her jealous, fickle, and exacting subjects waiting to depose her, the consciousness that her freshness is fast fading, and her power approaching its end, must prey like a vulture upon the vitals of her peace and hasten the decay she fears.

Though one of those years had been wasted upon me, and I was a party to many a foolish quarrel, yet I could not accuse myself with being an accessory to the flirting and trifling which led to them, or that I was equally guilty of playing with that dangerous bird of prey,—time.

I could forgive her, because she had violated her own good sense as much as she had my feelings; and I pitied her, because by her sex the loss of time was the more deplorable to her.

These were the self-complacent thoughts which passed through my mind while Robert and Rosamond were enjoying their customary tilt with each other, and I was left to my own reflections; for

Lucy had excused herself, and taken Sarah upstairs with her, immediately after our general conversation.

I was greatly surprised and annoyed at Robert's manifest duplicity. He had called Sarah cousin, and had yet heard from me all our affairs; and for the confidence I had reposed in him, had not only kept me in ignorance of his acquaintance with her, but had also often said things calculated to turn my mind against her.

I was framing a severe speech by which to make my displeasure fully known to him as soon as we left the house, when Lucy returned and said that her father wished to see us all up in the library at once, in order to count how many friends he now had.

As Robert and Rosamond preceded us up-stairs, I said to Lucy,—

"If you keep on multiplying your friends you will have a house full in a week or two, and, lest we should interfere with your privacy too much, you will be compelled to appoint a reception-day each week for them."

"Oh, there is no danger to fear from that, for you are really the only addition we have, as Miss Carroll is my cousin, and, like Rosy, is an old friend come back to us," she replied.

"Is she Miss Heywood's cousin, too?"

"Yes, we three are first cousins; all Carrolls in fact, descended, and maybe I should say degenerated, from the Revolutionary Carroll. Cousin

Sarah is more sedate than Rosy, but I am sure you will like her none the less for that; in fact, I believe you admire dignified people, do you not?"

"Yes, when the dignity is natural; and, if I may say so without egotism, I am philosopher enough to like whatever is natural in the human character, as well as in any other part of nature. It is in the pleasing variety of character society has its charms, and it would kill society in a short time if all the people which compose it were dignified, or, at least, if they had that reserve and self-esteem which pass for dignity. But the most killing thing of all would be to see each person, thinking the character and manners of some other person more becoming, lay aside a habit which was natural and easy to himself and assume a borrowed one."

My philosophy, such as it was, set her thinking, and she said in a half-audible reverie,—

"What a serious blunder I made when I told Rosy you liked dignified people!"

"Eh! Did you tell Miss Heywood that? And mistake me so much?" I asked, catching her words up quickly.

"Yes, I thought so," she said, starting and blushing, and then added, with a candor and confidence which proved she was already forming a more favorable opinion of me,—

"I thought you were very severe and critical, and feared you might judge her harshly at first. Robert does not mind her pungent pleasantries,

because he has known her so long; but she could not hope to be understood as well by a stranger."

Poor Rosamond! her curves, and dips, and stately airs all put on for me! I felt amused and flattered as we entered the room, and was glad to know that her natural spirit and vivacity would not be restrained longer than an hour at a time, in spite of all she could do to make herself dignified.

After a few general remarks, the conversation assumed the character of *tête-à-têtes*. I kept near Lucy, Sarah sat down by Mr. Davenport, while Rosamond and Robert, who seemed to enjoy a continual tilting of wits, engaged each other in a corner.

Lucy, being innocent-minded, was very easily "pumped;" and since Robert was so thoroughly conversant with my love affairs, and the family acquainted with Sarah, as well as having heard of me through Robert, I felt anxious to learn whether he had not mentioned our relations to them before the engagement had been broken off.

"Miss Carroll's dignity is as natural to her as Miss Heywood's sprightliness is to her also, and between them you will enjoy a pleasant temperature of social atmosphere," I said, with a view to the aforesaid "pumping" process.

"Oh, yes, my father used to admire Miss Carroll very much, and so used Robert; and though we have not seen her for many years before to-day, I presume she is as much, if not more, admired than ever in the circle of her acquaintance. We did not hear a word of her since we saw her last;

but she has completely won father's esteem and affection by coming here to congratulate Rosy upon her accession to fortune, under circumstances which are very delicate and peculiar."

Her innocent, silvery voice kept on, winning its way to my heart by its sweetness, above all by the implicit confidence I had in the truthfulness of every word she spoke. I was soon satisfied that if Robert had kept me in the dark he had also kept his own counsel, when the temptation to tell them of Sarah's engagement with me was great. He was forgiven on the spot for his discreetness, and in fact I admired him all the more for being able to listen so often to my praises of Sarah's beauty and accomplishments, without betraying by a look his amusement at hearing me describe her to him; and also for his tact in accounting for the picture I found in his possession without telling me a falsehood. The last hour had added much to my already great respect for his qualities, and he was fast becoming a hero in my estimation.

I was aroused from my reflections by a remark Lucy made which was so far-fetched that I knew she had become embarrassed by my silence; for, being diffident, she lost confidence in herself the moment her conversation had ceased to elicit remarks.

"You have also a good opportunity to improve the time in Miss Carroll's way; for you have a very considerable and well-selected library here," I observed, in reply to what she had said.

"I am glad you and Robert think so, for Rosy

has made me ashamed of them; she says they are a very dry and dull collection, with the exception of a few historical novels. One of them I read to father lately, and it has left a sentiment on my mind ever since; and, though the words were uttered by a wild, lawless character, they have been ringing in my ears all the time. Otherwise I did not like the book much; yet I would rather read a book barren of incident, but with one noble sentiment to attract the attention, than a mere tale of love and adventure which left nothing except a dull, mental lassitude behind it."

"What sentiment was it, pray, that you admired so much?" I asked.

"Many a law, many a commandment, have I broken, but my word never!" It is encouraging to know, that however a man may be steeped in crime, he can have one sentiment of honor, one principle, that has never been violated, and which, being appealed to, could make him a man again. Especially is there something to hope for and trust in a man when his word is his honor; I could forget everything else against hope when I knew his word, being once pledged, was sacred to him, and could be relied upon."

"Ah, it was the Knight Templar you met with! Was not Miss Rosamond equally impressed with the tale?"

"Yes, she liked it; I was only interested in the fate of Rebecca, and her poor, persecuted old father; but Rosy liked *Ivanhoe* and *Robin Hood* most."

"What about Rosy and her contemporary, Robin Hood, my dear?" asked Rosamond, who had caught her own mellifluent name, mingled with the celebrated archer's, above the rest of the conversation, and immediately broke off her own sentence to make the inquiry.

"We were speaking of your literary taste," I said, replying for Lucy.

"Well, I must confess it is very contracted; for I cannot endure any of the graver classes except history," she answered.

"What histories have you been reading lately?" asked Robert, archly.

"Indeed I cannot remember; for I do not even care for history unless it comes in the shape of the 'Days of Bruce,' 'Tales of the Crusaders,' Scott's novels, or in some way flavored and colored with the cream of romance."

A general laugh followed this candid acknowledgment; and, piqued that her frankness and taste had been made a subject for laughter, she fired up against Robert, and hurled in his face invectives at his disposition to ridicule.

I was surprised at seeing her so openly betray the quick, passionate temper her physiognomy indicated; but no one else appeared so, or seemed even annoyed by the sudden ebullition, and she continued until it had spent itself.

As her eyes emitted the last sparks of anger, Robert soothingly said,—

"There, now, be calm and forgive me, like a

good girl, and I will confess my fault, and admit that I was tempted to tease you, because you look so spirited and dangerously interesting when you get angry; in fact, something like that Flora MacIvor we are introduced to by Scott, your favorite *historian*."

The rapidity with which this speech acted, like oil upon the troubled waters, showed the susceptibility of her mind to flattery, and the electric flashes of satisfaction it called up betrayed vanity to be the most assailable point in her character. She confessed how fond she was of romance, and how tame she found the real incidents of everyday life, and all the while her eyes expressed more appreciation of Robert's motive, in calling forth her warm temper, than mortification in having so publicly exposed it.

The conversation had scarcely been resumed by twos again before we heard the door-bell ring, and Sarah arose, saying that it was a servant whom she had directed to call for her at that hour, and she would now wish us a good-evening.

Her manner of taking leave was suited to each one of the company, with her usual discrimination; and she so acquitted herself that we all felt a perfect mistress of deportment and good breeding had left us, however much our private opinions differed in regard to her real character.

The opinions were not expressed then, of course, but I think they stood thus,—Robert and Rosamond believed the worst; Mr. Davenport and Lucy

believed the best ; while I held medium views, hoping she would judge me as charitably from her standpoint as I tried to judge her from mine.

We both wore masks in the family, but our previous history did not concern the good people at Mr. Davenport's; and we could not do otherwise than we had done; and, though deception had been practiced, I do not think they would have condemned us for it had they known it, more than we would have condemned others placed in the same situation as ourselves.

CHAPTER VI.

I HAVE now introduced those with whom we will have most to do in this story; but I find I have inconvenienced myself somewhat by adopting this autobiographical method of writing about them. Most authors have the advantage of ubiquity, by being impersonal in their tale; but I have unwittingly forfeited that by making myself as any other character in it.

It is no trifling advantage, truly, when with it an author can follow each person in a separate path, become acquainted with the thoughts and motives of each, without waiting for time to reveal them, and report conversations which would not have taken place had the presence of a third party been suspected. All this my oversight has lost to me, rightfully; but as I did not undertake to write an autobiography, I will not wait to explain how I came to know it whenever I tell anything that was said or done when I was not present.

But Robert can be quoted as my authority at present, because I learned from him, on our way home from Mr. Davenport's, more about Sarah's relationship to the family than Lucy had told me.

She was cousin to Rosamond and Lucy, and the

daughter of the man who had taken Rosamond's farm from her by the force of the law.

Though more aristocratic in feeling than the artist's family, on account of greater wealth, she was almost a daily visitor there, until the time Lucy's mother died; and Robert, living then in the family, was as intimately acquainted with her as if she had been his own cousin.

She was four years older than either of her cousins, and patronized them in consequence, while they allied for mutual sympathy and defense against her pretensions. To be old enough to set up for a young lady was the greatest extent of ambition and happiness their youthful minds could encompass; and with no little envy they saw the precedence Sarah's age gave her to the attentions of Robert, their joint squire.

Robert, too, was not insensible to the attractions of her maturity, and willingly paid her the attentions she was so rigid in exacting, both in the most approved forms of etiquette, and on the most trifling occasions for gallantry.

Rosamond was sensitive of these claims to an excessive degree, for her natural precocity rebelled against a slight, and almost while a child she imbibed a jealousy of Sarah which lasted for life.

When the lawsuit for the farm at last put an end to the peaceful flow of family intercourse, the girls' intimacy was discontinued, and had never been renewed until this time, three years after the

author of the discord had mingled with the dust of his coveted earth.

Sarah had made the only amends she could by calling on Rosamond, if indeed a child can be said to be amenable for the actions of its father, in a country where attainting is forbidden by its constitution.

After the company had withdrawn that night, and with Sarah's parting kiss yet warm on her cheek, Rosamond showed her appreciation of the visit, by saying, exultingly, to Lucy,—

"Eh, Luce, my dear, now has *our* time come to be the young ladies! What a difference four years do make, after all! I could not realize it when we were only fourteen and she was eighteen; but circumstances alter cases now, when she is twenty-four and we are but twenty! Ugh! It makes the blood cold in my veins to think of being twenty-four years and not yet married! How the thought that she can no longer overshadow us and monopolize the beaux must prey upon her beauty! What is it somebody tells us about an old maid? 'She never told her love, but let concealment, like a worm, prey upon the damask roses of her cheeks!' Something like that. *Twenty four years, and we are only twenty!* Hurrah for the young ladies, now! Hurrah, Luce, I say!"

"Rosy dear, do not be so severe on Sarah, she is not so old yet, and I am sure four years do not make so much difference at our ages now as when we were so much younger," replied Lucy, entreat-

ingly, lest her father should overhear the uncousinly exultation.

"*Twenty-four years, and we are only twenty!* Who will command the attentions of the beaux now? Lucy, *ma chère*, we played our parts well without a rehearsal! You kept Mr. Pearson from saying two words to her all the evening, and I labored quite as hard, and almost as successfully, to keep Bob from wasting any of his old smiles on her. *Twenty-four—*"

"Cousin Rosy, you are going mad, I fear! I did not labor to keep Mr. Pearson or any one else from speaking to her, and I am surprised that you should be so ungenerous to——"

"*Twenty-four years, and we are only twenty—*"

"To one who has called on you the moment she heard of your arrival in town, though your gain was her loss. My father and Robert both think it is very handsome of her to do so," persisted Lucy.

"Your father entertained her with his history and philosophy all the evening, and he can do so again if she comes, while the other two attend to our wants. His solid conversation is well suited to her advanced age. *Twenty-four years!* Who would have thought six years ago that even the revolutions of the earth would so change the order of things that we would be ever counted anything except children! Oh, oh, my blissful soul! how it makes me laugh to think how majestically she used to wave her fan, like a scepter, and say '*the children*,' whenever we wanted Robert to do anything for us!

I guess he will not mind her scepter now! *Twenty-four years old, unmarried, and without a beau!*"

The wayward girl had exhausted her breath for a moment, and Lucy replied,—

"As much as he ever did, and more, too, if he thought she was so desolate and hopeless as you describe her. How could he say much to her to-night, when father monopolized her altogether?"

"Would he, indeed? Well, then, hear how he now treats the 'Queen of Love and Beauty' of his extreme youth," she gleefully exclaimed, thrusting her hand into her pocket, which was the receptacle of all the curiosities of floating literature that came in her way before she transferred them to her scrap-book. "I cut these lines out of a magazine, for I saw they were signed with my initials. Of course I need not say I am not the author, but 'R. H.' answer for Robert Heberton as well as Rosy Heywood, and he blushed like a culprit to-night when I asked him whether he was acquainted with a lady named 'May Merle.' It is a true prophecy of this evening's events. Here is ye sorrowful story of ye antique maid:

'May Merle is silently sitting
Midst maidens and gallants so gay;
And why sadly bend o'er her knitting
While others around her are fitting,
And flirting, and laughing away?

'Ah, well! there's a short reign (but merry),
For each fair and winsome young maid;

And May, with eyes black as a berry,
And cheeks round and red as a cherry,
Was queen for one rosy decade!

'Then May of all hearts was the center,
And her smile would assemble the beaux;
But the scepter of power Venus lent her
Favored all the gay courtiers who bent her
Their salaams in admiring rows.

'Yes, one there is yet who remembers
The time lovers lingered near May;
For still in his heart there are embers
(Burned low by a dozen Decembers)
Of a fire she alone could allay!

'With a youth's ardent passion he met her,
Seeming holy, and gentle, and wise;
And, oh, then for both it were better
Had she gave him a frown, not a fetter,
And spared him a draught from her eyes!

'But vain in the triumph of beauty,
She sought every heart to subdue
That paid to her grace passing duty,
Nor prized she the one humble suit he
Modestly held to her view.

'And while others came and departed,
An inconstant, varying train,
He remained ever true-hearted,
Now glad when kind glances she darted,
And by a slight saddened again.

'Maybe young, and alone in a city,
His steps by her worship were stayed,
And her smiles were of kindness and pity;
But ah, she was tender and witty,
Whenever his love was betrayed!

'It was vain to plead love, so he let her
Vaguely guess at the anguish he bore,
While he left the gay hosts who beset her,
And fought to be free and forget her,
Till it cankered his heart to the core.

'At length came avenging Nemesis,
In one to whose suit she inclined;
But faithless and brief his addresses,
He soon spied another's brown tresses,
And left May an embittered mind.

'Long with lovers the question she parried,
Whether maid she would be or a wife;
For while she had youth left they tarried,
Then fled one by one, or got married,
And left her to eke a lone life!

'And now, by her father escorted,
May marches to church very staid,
While other nymphs, flattered and courted
By beaux, once to her that resorted,
Hold the scepter of love which she swayed.

'And May Merle, could she live over
Her life, by its lessons inspired,—
Could she youth and her heart now recover,—
*Might rather have one faithful lover
Than thousands who only admired!*

"There, now, what do you say to that? Robert is a prophet! It cannot have been written more than two weeks, and to-night it was fulfilled before our eyes. Oh, my inspired friend Robert, how 'coming events cast their shadows before,' to thee!" she exclaimed.

"I say it has no reference to Cousin Sarah."

"Yes it has! 'May Merle is silently sitting,' listening to your father, of course, 'Midst maidens and gallants so gay,'—which means us,—you and I, Mr. Pearson and Robert: could anything be more explicit? The first time I saw him after I came home to you, I asked him about Sarah, and twitted him because he did not get her after all his attentions. He told me he had heard of her lately, and she was not married yet, so that it was not too late to renew their old acquaintance; but *it is*; and he knew it. 'Could she youth and her heart now recover;' but she cannot—and the muse broke down here at the impossibility of such a thing; for a woman has no heart or youth left her at twenty-four; the *girl* has squandered both away if she had enough of charms to make her prodigal, which Sarah had, my dear." And here she was compelled to pause for breath.

Lucy was looking at the lines, when her opportunity of saying something came again, and she mildly retorted,—

"Rosy, I am glad no one besides a cousin and a friend hears you speak thus; if any one else had heard you treat a relative and a woman that way, what would be thought of yourself or your sex?"

"Why, that I spoke my mind without fear or favor; and I would not care if they thought otherwise; for who *is* any one else, that I should mind them? I hate my sex, and am ashamed of it, for fearing to do and speak the truth independently of what any one else may think of it. What do we

learn to repeat the Declaration of Independence at school for if we do not practice it, pray?"

"We learn from it that it was the fruits of a '*decent respect to the opinions of mankind*;' and a person's self-respect, or independence, is never compromised by a modest desire to have the approval of all whose opinions we ought to respect," said Lucy, gravely; for being trained by her father, her mind easily turned upon argument, and what passed as current wisdom or leading moral truths among less careful and subtle minds, was well filtered and analyzed before it was indorsed by her.

"Well, Lucy, we will not quarrel about her! We have always stood by each other against her, and we may be compelled to do it again."

"Those times are past, and the causes of our jealousies were as childish as ourselves; so there is no need to anticipate fresh vexations; for I trust we have grown wiser with our years."

"Maybe we have, but the wisdom that comes with age does not always make us better; all women are our rivals and enemies to compete with, and one that has reached the age of twenty-four is not to be despised, for she generally makes up in experience and duplicity as much power as she has lost in freshness and youth."

Lucy gazed a moment upon the speaker, as if unable to comprehend the spirit of her philosophy, and then said, with her voice softened almost to a sigh,—

"I wish you had never left us, Rosy, for I am

sure that such feelings would not have been engendered here with us. It must make you very unhappy to look upon your own sex as your rivals and enemies, when Providence has made us weak, that we might befriend and sympathize with each other."

"With all respect for your own goodness and opinion, Lucy dear, I do not think that Providence ever had such intentions concerning us. We are made different from all other creatures of the earth, in that the female of man is expected to have all the beauty and accomplishments with which to charm a mate to itself. Look at Audubon's Ornithology, for instance, and you will see that the male bird is always the most beautiful; has the gayest plumage and the sweetest voice, and then with these, the attendant duties of strutting, cackling, cooing, singing, parading, and fighting to attract and please the female saddled upon it; while the female is plain, passive, silent, and sedate, but entirely free from the vanity, rivalry, jealousy, contentions, and cares which appear to be inseparable from the beauty and gifts of the male bird. They are not trained or schooled to act such different parts, or restrained by parents, propriety, or philosophy, so you must admit their customs and feelings are as Providence ordained them. Now, with mankind it is reversed: the female has the gifts and beauties of the male of the feathered tribe, and how can the feelings and duties be different with the same object in view when she got them?

"These feelings and duties compel us to sing, parade our forms, and adorn them with plumage; show off our accomplishments and beauties, fight and intrigue, to be mated; and how can we be otherwise than jealous and envious to the end of our days? For my part, I would rather see my sex like the hen birds, with no beauty to make us jealous, and no duties, save that of quietly choosing, to make us enemies; but, since it is not so, nothing remains for me to do but to accept the disagreeable and distracting situation, and make the best fight I can for myself!" she exclaimed.

This was a standpoint from which Lucy had never been taught to view nature by her father; and, seeing how far astray Rosamond was, without knowing how to convince her of error, she merely put the theory in a practical light by saying,—

"So Providence intends, then, that you and I should envy, annoy, and hate each other in spite of the ties of blood and friendship?"

"No; I could never be jealous or envious of you. You are a thousand times too good for me, dear," returned Rosamond, passionately embracing her. "But, my word for it, Luce, Sarah means mischief by coming here,—I saw it in her eyes; so be careful, for you are a dove compared with her, my dear."

Maybe Rosamond was right in her caution, and Sarah's visit was not so disinterested after all. She was free now, and perhaps thought the boyish preferences of Robert could be developed,

and so made Rosamond's return a cover for her attack.

If this is what Rosamond meant, it was very creditable to her acuteness, though not to her simplicity and innocence; for the woman that can search out another's secret motives so well has not a guileless heart herself.

And if this was Sarah's true motive in calling, how *malapropos* was my visit!—seeing the one she had lately acknowledged as her lover the companion of him whom she designed for her next lover must have rendered her plans abortive and made further visits unnecessary.

She was too self-possessed to betray it, however, and her visits were continued almost daily; but as she seldom remained to tea, we did not often meet her there.

Autumn and winter had passed over, and as spring was slowly retreating before the approaching summer, the family made preparations for moving out to the farm, which they had not visited for years.

Robert had accepted their invitation to make it his home during the summer, and I had also pledged myself to go out from the heat and dust of the city and remain a week or two with them whenever business would permit me.

A similar promise was obtained from Sarah, who "in view of approaching old maidenhood was learning to paint upon porcelain." These were Rosamond's words, and, if they were intended to

be sarcastic, they had failed, for they awoke a feeling of interest and sympathy for her that would not have been known had she been spoken of with praise or pity. Her father had not left his large and helpless family in independent circumstances; and as she was the oldest of four sisters and one infant brother, she felt it incumbent upon her to do something towards self-sustenance. Perhaps some one has said before me that man is a conceited ape, and will believe anything that flatters his self-love; but no matter whether it is original with me or a dormant sentiment revived by memory, for the failing, though as old as *old Adam*, is discovered by most men by acquaintance with themselves some time in life, and discovered in them by all women at a very early age.

"Perhaps this is all for me, and Sarah has found that she loved even better than she supposed, and now has no hopes that she can ever love again," were words which I whispered to my vanity when I heard Rosamond speak of the provision Sarah was making for "old maidenhood."

They were followed by fears that I was too illiberal in making allowances for the vagaries of love, which exacted at one time much more than it countenanced at another. I used to argue that friendship, like the atmosphere, became light by too much expansion, and when limited to a few the heart could love them better than when divided between too many; but Sarah always contended that as the muscles were developed and

strengthened by constant and varied exercise, so were the affections, and that loving a great many only increased the heart's capacity for loving them better.

She illustrated her principles by opening her heart to every handsome beau she met, and demanded a like consistency from me by requiring me to keep my heart closed against even sorrow for the death of a friend.

Thus it seemed that no more than a sentiment had come between us; but it was as hard to get over it as the "great wall of China."

To return to the Davenport family: Robert and Rosamond had made several visits to the farm to ascertain what repairs were necessary to make the house comfortable, and found it needed much less than they had anticipated, as it had been in the hands of a careful agent and a good tenant.

At a family council, it was proposed to sell out all the furniture in the house in town, after selecting family relics and such articles as would add to the comfort of a country home, and then rent or sell the house, and make the one in the country a permanent residence.

This was discussed by the four who were considered one family,—Mr. Davenport and Lucy against it, and Rosamond and Robert for it. Probably Mr. Davenport and his daughter argued with themselves that when Rosamond got married they would have to replace the furniture at a loss,

and it would be better to close the house until Fall, and move back again, so as to leave Rosamond free.

The generous mistress did not think of that, I know, or she would have laughed at their prudence; and Robert, economical and farseeing as he mostly was, might have purposely overlooked it, for no one was paying Rosamond any attentions, and he was getting quite fond of her himself.

The question was settled by a compromise at last; the furniture was to be stored, and the house rented for six months or a year, and the time for moving back left open.

The afternoon they had appointed for selecting and packing such articles as they were to take with them was made known to Sarah and myself, and we both were on hand to assist them. Robert and I attended to the books, while the young ladies selected those things pertaining to housekeeping.

Once or twice Rosamond came to caution us against forgetting those books in which she was interested, and at last she was prevailed upon to stay with us. She was silent and moody when with her own sex, but with us she resumed an account of her adventures and feelings, which were characteristic of her fearless and somewhat impatient disposition, and tinged with a satirical humor that made her a very entertaining companion.

Horseback exercise seemed to be especially her delight and *forte*; bareback, side-saddle, or, I believe, any way; and, as I expressed my admiration and interest in her accomplishments as undisguisedly

as Robert did, she said she would insure me a "gorgeous" time when I came out to see them, and would ride the wildest horse in the country over the highest fences on the farm for my amusement. This led me to say that I would be there often to see what I admired so much in a lady,—a firm hand and a fearless heart.

"The hand that can hold the reins firmly is firm in friendship, and the heart that is elated at the prospect of adventure and danger, will never shirk the duties and responsibilities of life when truth and affection are the horses," I said, widely and wildly moralizing.

I could not, however, have said anything more acceptable to her fancy, and she adopted my words with such eagerness I thought she suspected herself to be wanting in constancy, and was glad to get something to reassure her; but she then turned a look so full of meaning upon Robert as she repeated my words, I guessed, in a moment, that they had had discussions on the subject of her constancy, and thought the conversation which had led to such a discussion must have been of a very confidential nature.

Her graceful form, which was wisely left to nature's moulding, was the personification of health and beauty, and I could not wonder as she moved about the library that Robert, who had a horror of those delicate females overcharged with sensibility and nervousness, was hourly becoming more and more attached to her.

We were joined by the other two, and Rosamond repeated my speech to them, adding that she thought it was as sound as it was original. Lucy laughed at it, and asked whether I had arrived at that conclusion by analogy or observation; but an expression of scorn and incredulity passed over Sarah's pale face, as if it were too absurd to be repeated before any person of good sense, which, perhaps, it really was.

The expression only rested an instant, but long enough for both Rosamond and myself to observe it; the two persons her politeness would fain have concealed it from, for each one would take it all as a personal insult, being conscious of her secret disdain.

Rosamond's face, which was as readable as a book, betrayed so much resentment that she was compelled to turn it aside lest we should see it, and the inherent rivalry of those two cousins was not soothed by this interchange of expression.

Robert had been silent on the new idea, so far, but now took sides against Rosamond and myself, by saying that if there was truth enough in it to make it a rule, yet he knew the exceptions would be quite numerous, and he thought the present instance belonged to the exceptions rather than the rule.

Though pleasantly said, Rosamond took it much to heart, and exclaimed,—

"Yes, that is just your way; you give me credit for nothing worth having, and if Mr. Pearson had

said it in connection with any one else, no one would have been more ready to indorse it than you."

He laughed at her pout, and replied,—

"I grant it, because its weakness might not then have been so palpable; but in yoking it with you he very awkwardly coupled its contradiction with it, and forced an objection on my mind that might not have otherwise occurred to me until after I had given it my assent."

While Robert was joking, and in fact I said it as a mere gallantry, Rosamond was in earnest from first to last, and said now, in an impatient tone,—

"Robert, you know nothing of my character, notwithstanding your boasted knowledge of human nature! Do you think I am fickle, Lucy?"

"Well, no, I do not think you are, Rosy," said Lucy, with the manner of a witness who was in doubt of the correctness of her own evidence, and thought it her duty to give the prisoner the benefit of her doubts.

But the prisoner did not notice the feebleness of Lucy's demonstration in her favor, and exultingly exclaimed,—

"There, Lucy knows me better than any one else, for we do up each other's hair night and morning; but I know where you get your ideas from: you get them from what I sometimes say to tease you. I told you the other day of a girl who had engaged herself to six men, and had promised to marry two of them on the same week, which promise she

kept with one, wearing at the wedding a set of jewelry the other had sent her for his own nuptial adornment. You pronounced her a thief, and said she ought to have spent her honeymoon in the State prison; which was very harsh and ungallant of you, for you should have considered how often men are as false and undecided to the very last moment."

"No, I do not know of any instance I *could* consider; gallantry would not forbid people to denounce such a base and false act if a man had done it, and I think when it comes to a question of truth and honesty, it ought not to be considered from such a standpoint."

"And please, then, tell me what proof has a woman that the man she is marrying is not as false and dishonest as this bride was?"

"When a man asks a woman to marry him, he gives her a guarantee that he loves her better than any one else, because, as Lamb says, he practically refuses every unmarried woman of his acquaintance whom he does not ask, while *he* has no evidence that she has, or would have, refused any one for him, or that he would have been the object of her choice were they to exchange places with each other! So this prerogative of man's has two drawbacks to its convenience: the first is that he is in danger of being refused, and the next is that he may be accepted—to be kept in reserve until a more eligible party is found to displace him, or because no one else is expected to offer himself;

and the old maxim, 'If you can't get what you want, then take what you can get,' seems a wise one."

This brought the other girls up to Rosamond's aid; for the reputation of their sex was menaced, and they attacked Robert's position with a united front.

While Lucy denied his statement in toto, and said "*Lamb was a wolf in sheep's clothing*," Sarah accepted it as fact, and adroitly used it to his discomfiture; by saying that since custom and man's incredulity had denied to woman the credit of a preference, he ought not to blame this girl for using five other skeptics to prove to the one she married that he was really the man of her choice.

The labor of packing was closed with a festival, and next morning Mr. Davenport and the two girls left the city, while Robert remained behind a few days to attend to the storing of the furniture.

CHAPTER VII.

THE discontentment Robert had felt, or feigned, the evening he exposed his log-fire visions to me had at last become real and chronic. He had become tenderly attached to Rosy Heywood, and fully aware that she was not exactly all his fancy could paint her, being neither lovely nor divine in the strictest sense of those terms, he was not satisfied with himself.

She was unquestionably a fine, cheerful, ardent girl, one that any man who did not look farther than twenty years ahead could see a good, suitable wife in; but Robert looked fifty years ahead, and then beyond that into eternity, and Rosamond appeared to be wanting in those qualities necessary for such a prolonged companionship.

But he had not power to withstand the aggressive character of such qualities as she had, being exposed to them every hour, and at a place where she could revel in that wild freedom so delightful to her and becoming to her peculiar temperament and style of beauty. Lucy was very much confined by her father's indisposition, for her cousin, however well disposed, was not thoughtful enough to lighten her duties. As she was always cheerful and happy, Rosamond doubtless thought patient nursing and parental society as well suited to her

disposition as active and exciting employments were to herself, and was not, therefore, conscious of any selfishness in leaving Lucy so much alone with her father.

Robert was, therefore, with her a great deal; they walked together, rode together, and sung together, and she laughingly excused her monopoly of his time by saying that he was the only young man available, and the first beau she could catch out there in the country should relieve him.

Perhaps he thought there was some truth in her jest, and in their conversations, which were always of that dangerous character peculiar to a couple who half love and half distrust each other, he would, in the same spirit, accuse her of being fickle and inconstant.

She was too cunning to remain on the defensive, and would generally parry his thrusts by charging the same character back on him; and then a truce would follow, which each party would improve by blowing a trumpet in its own praise. In this way she would assure him that she was the most constant creature in the world, that she never forgot a friend, and that as he was the only one who had formed such a poor opinion of her, justice to her demanded its surrender.

A third party hearing some of their conversations might think she was forcing herself on Robert; but he never had such a thought; for however unmaidenly her words might appear on paper, they were greatly modified by the speeches

which led to them, and the light, careless tone they were uttered in. Robert, too, was always the aggressor; for, as his knowledge of her character was not satisfactory to him, he was anxious to hear her deny its accuracy, or even prove to him that she was not more unstable than himself.

She very often accompanied him on his sketching tours, and surprised him by her insensibility to fatigue when they ascended the heights which surrounded the farm.

While he sketched she usually roamed about, gathering mosses, herbs, or wild flowers; and if he had often laid his pencil down while she was absent, and gave himself to thoughts wholly unconnected with his occupation, no one who knew the strait he was in would blame him.

Where all this would end, and whether it would end in anything, or in disappointment to one or both, were questions which he often asked, but never answered himself; for, notwithstanding she engrossed so much of his time, he still questioned whether he loved her, or whether it was not to circumstances, rather than to choice, he was indebted for her society and friendship.

Often he used to argue with me that love, marriage, and everything else were governed entirely by circumstances; that a thousand women, which would suit a man just as well as the one he loved, had been passed by mere accident, and were not known to exist, merely because circumstances threw them apart instead of together. But this

theory did not satisfy him now. Rosamond had no opportunities of seeing any one else, and judging how worthy he was of her regard by comparison.

He wished there had been some one to contend with him for her smiles, though his natural modesty predicted the worst for himself if there had been. But no one, as far as he knew, had crossed her sequestered path, and he was far too generous to wish to profit by such a disadvantage to her.

But, besides his doubts of there being love between them, and of her disposition, hopes, and aspirations being such as he had hoped to find in a wife, there was one more thought which seemed more oppressive to his feelings than all else.

He was very independent, and, as a husband, would be very jealous of his self-respect, and he did not believe that any woman could feel that she had made her husband wealthy, and at the same time respect him. The fact might not occur to her during the freshness of her love, but it would before they had been long married; and feminine vanity would not think lightly of such a matter.

If his income was enough to provide for her, so that her money was not wanted in the family, and entirely at her own disposal, the trouble might be averted. But Robert had always solved the marriage problem by the "rule of three," and could never believe that plenty for one would be plenty for two.

This state of things could not last long; for

though, when alone, he made many a resolution to avoid the subject of constancy, and look to his ideal to prove Rosamond was not what he wanted, his heart betrayed him into the same speeches every time they were together.

One day he was amusing himself with his pencil, and Rosamond, becoming tired of watching its movements, left him and stole up to a favorite horse, which was resting on the sward. Seating herself on his back, and starting him from his bed, she drove him round and round the field at a gallop. Robert dropped his pencil and gazed enraptured at her as she made evolutions which would have done credit to a Comanche. As she approached him, after making half a score circuits of the field, with hair broken loose from its confinement, and flowing in dark chestnut waves over her shoulders, her cheeks glowing and eyes flashing with exercise and excitement, he lost all command of his prudence, and jumped up, overcome by his admiration.

"Come here, Rosy, and let me tell you something that ought to interest you," he said, affecting a gay, careless tone, which ill accorded with the passionate earnestness of his feelings.

She checked the horse's speed, and using her hat, which she held by its strings, to turn him, she walked him up to where Robert stood.

He seized the hand by which she held the hat, and, bringing his other hand quickly to her waist, drew her off the horse by main force.

"Not half so graceful as you could do it when a boy, Bob! Isn't it strange that your sex always grow awkward as they grow old?" she said, attempting to free herself as she touched the ground.

As he still held her half caressingly, she looked into his face in surprise, and saw reflected in it the struggle which raged in his breast, the desire to ask her love and confess his admiration (for he did not even at that moment of excitement think that he had so far given up his ideas of what he wanted in a wife as to say at once he loved her), and the generous feelings that forbade him to speak of it.

After a moment he mastered his feelings enough to make a compromise, and said,—

"I have been very sad all day, Rosy, for an old man over there guessed at my age, and thought me so much older than I really am, I fear that by the time I am rich enough to get married no one will have me."

"Pooh, nonsense! You will always be able to find some one glad to get you, Bob," she said, in a lively, reassuring tone.

"Yes, maybe *some one*; but what kind of a one will she be, when I am so old?"

"A real nice one, too; such a one as you will like, I'll warrant you," she cheerfully said.

"You will guarantee that, will you, Rosy?"

"Yes, I will guarantee it," she confidently said.

He was not saying just what he wished to say,

for he thought if Rosy would wait awhile he might have an income large enough to leave her portion out of the question; but, at the same time, his generous mind cautioned him against asking her to bind herself so long before he could marry her, and deprive her of the chance of other offers for an uncertainty.

Hoping he might be explicit enough to assure her of his love, and at the same time leave her free to wait for him or to accept a better offer, he made another attempt,—

"I will never marry without consulting you, Rosy, if you will promise to give your consent to my marriage with such a person as would suit me, no matter who that person shall be."

"Yes, you shall have her with my consent, whoever she may be, if she is worthy of you, Bob," she unhesitatingly said.

"I being the judge of that, of course?"

"Oh, no,—I being judge; for love is proverbially blind, and I should be sorry all my life if I allowed you to marry one undeserving of the honor of being your wife."

He had not yet shaped his speech so as to leave himself bound and her loose; but there was a steady, intelligent light in her eyes that satisfied him that he was comprehended, and he exclaimed,—

"Give me your hand on that; it is a real *bona fide* bargain! I will never marry without your consent, and you will not refuse the person of my

choice to me, when I get richer, and can afford to marry."

"Yes, *you have* my hand on it," she said, laughing, seeing that he had been holding both her hands for some time.

He pressed them so warmly he could not know whether the pressure was returned ever so slightly or not, and, drawing her arm within his, they walked up towards a hill.

"You see what you have done now, Rosy,—made yourself responsible in the eyes of the law for a wife when I want her," he said.

"Oh, but you would not go to law with me, would you, Bob?" she asked, as if frightened.

"You know you have, by guaranteeing me such a wife as I shall want, in a manner indorsed a note which may be returned to you protested any day at all, and you must pay it according to law," he said.

Rosy was much interested in commercial forms and transactions, and, at this moment getting an idea of what would be expected in a case of this kind, she said, with an archness that pleased Robert,—

"Yes, but you are bound by business principles to do all you can to get it accepted by some one else before you fall back on me!"

"I am bound by honor to ask no one to accept *me* whom I do not love, or with whom you could not consent to my marriage; but I will be this liberal with you: if you are married when I am rich enough to look for a wife, I will not keep you to

your bargain; you will have so many cares of your own you will not think of me then."

There was a few moments silence, and then Rosamond, who, perhaps, thought she had let herself be entrapped too easily, said,—

"You have fallen in love with some one you have seen lately, Robert, or you would not ask my advice; perhaps you would like me to become your friend at court. Is Sarah the favored one?"

He was not so easily deceived; and, without answering the last clause otherwise than with an impatient look, he said,—

"No, Rosy dear, I need no friend at court, for I like courting well enough to do my own share, and if I was not too poor to get married now, no one could more willingly and energetically apply himself to the courting part; but I do not think it is right to monopolize a girl's time and affections so long before marriage. No one can tell what may happen; and, besides, our tastes are always changing, and a girl should have the advantage of celibacy to the latest moment that she is denied the security of marriage."

"Perhaps she would not care whether you were rich or poor," Rosamond thoughtfully said.

"If I thought she did, I would not want her; but I care a great deal, for it is my business to think of that; and both manhood and independence require that I should be able to provide for her before I got her."

"But she may have some money of her own,

and could get herself the extras, after you had provided her with the necessities; then you would not need to wait so long."

Here was trouble with a vengeance, and he did not know whether to blame it on her perverse coquetry or on the obscurity of his speeches; for he did not believe she would be so forward as to make that proposition if she thought, or wished him to believe that she thought, he had reference to herself. He had his choice now,—to go over it all again, to please her coquettish disposition, or to let the obscurity of his proposition conceal his feelings, and leave them both free from any claim upon each other, leaving her real or pretended ignorance of his sentiments towards herself to be used to cover his retreat. He chose the latter, and said,—

"No, Rosy; when I get a wife I shall expect to provide both the necessities and extras." And then made some careless remark upon the horse she had been riding.

But marrying was now even more interesting than equestrianism, and she was not willing that he should change the subject; so she returned to it, with Sarah for a medium of attack.

"Sarah will be out here next week, and then you will be much happier than you are now," she said, expecting to be contradicted.

"Yes, very much," he replied.

"Well, she ought to feel complimented, when I shall tell her how unhesitatingly you have confessed it," she said, evidently disappointed by his answer.

"You always liked her so much better than me; for she has not so many faults, and can be more entertaining, besides."

"Yes, a good deal," he replied, without knowing what she was saying, he was so much occupied with his own bitter reflections.

"Well, you are very much in love, indeed! She has everything you admire in a woman, even that constancy which I am so sadly deficient in, and she is not half such a heartless flirt as you think I am," she added, looking into his face with affectionate interest.

"No, Sarah is very fine; there are but few like her," he said, still looking up the hill.

"Well, indeed! I never heard so many ungallant speeches from your lips before! What *has* come over you, Bob? You used to be so nice and complimentary to me!" she exclaimed, at the same time trying to laugh, but failing, she was so provoked at his acquiescence.

Robert was wholly unconscious of the meaning of the words he had heard and uttered; but had he had his wits about him he could not have chosen words to bring her around more effectually; and without more attempts to rally him, she dropped Sarah, as a tool that cut both ways.

The conversation then became friendly and confidential, without alluding to what had been said; and like brother and sister they walked along, sharing each other's thoughts and hopes on almost every subject that interested them.

They wandered up the steep paths they had so often before climbed in search of prospects, making each other happy as friends, and enjoying a respite from the twitting and badinage of their gayer moods.

Once or twice she had forgotten herself, and seemed to betray her knowledge of his love and of her acceptance of his proposition, once so openly and yet so unconsciously that he could have clasped her to his heart for joy at his success.

They were talking of what was really essential to a happy life, when Robert, with more romance than consistency, fell from an income of five thousand a year (the sum he thought necessary half an hour before to get the "necessaries and extras") to a hut upon those heights, where news of famines and failures, or wars and rumors of wars, would never disturb him.

"No, indeed! You are too active and ambitious to enjoy such an ignoble rest as that, even with me, and summer all the year round; you could not be contented," she exclaimed, with her natural energy.

He turned to thank her for so much candor, and to assure her that if he could wish for more it was because he would want it for her and not for himself, when a boyish voice, which had apparently been lately exercised in the recitation of his lesson on natural philosophy, cried,—

"Now, then, velocity versus gravitation!"

They were standing near a rocky eminence, and

as the words were shouted, a stone as large as a good-sized teacup was hurled over the brow by an unseen hand.

As Robert turned around it struck him on the thigh, and with a groan he fell to the ground. The boy followed it to the edge of the rock, to witness the result of his scientific experiment, but when he saw what had happened, he ran away as fast as he could; probably not suspecting how much damage he had done, and fearing pursuit.

Robert attempted to arise, but finding the bone broken, he told Rosamond how seriously he was hurt.

"What can I do for you, Robert?" she cried, in anguish, as she saw the veins swell on his forehead, through his efforts to appear calm, under the excruciating pain.

"Nothing, Rosy, only to ask the boy who threw the stone to run for assistance,—it is as little as he can do; and stay with me yourself, for you are better than a thousand 'pain-killers,'" he said, not forgetting in his sufferings the joy she had given him a moment before.

She looked around for the author of the accident, but failing to discover him she said she would go herself.

As there was no other way of getting it he was obliged to consent, and she left him on the ground and ran down the hillside as fast as its steepness would allow her. The poor sufferer tried to keep his mind away from his pains by following her with

his eyes as her lithe limbs bore her away with the grace and swiftness of a leveret, and he even comforted himself with the thought of being nursed by her while laid up.

"She knows what I meant, and she understands that it is her wealth and my poverty that compel me to postpone a more explicit declaration," he soliloquized, as she was finally lost to his view in the valley; and having once considered her as his future wife, he resolutely set his teeth on every fault he knew she had.

The fears he had were that, as they held different views on nearly every subject, they were not suitable to each other; that having from their earliest acquaintance allowed themselves to use all their wits, skill, and powers to oppose, overmatch, and circumvent each other, the force of habit would not let them live in peace; and that as he always thought a woman with a Christian heart and temper the only one he could consistently take to his bosom, Rosamond would be out of place there.

It had been a long and hard-fought battle, but love in the end had the victory, and his scruples, resolutions, reasonings, and resistances lay dead now on the ground beside him. Alas, a man in love is more to be pitied than one with his thigh broken, even!

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE was one person who had figured a good deal in my misunderstandings with Sarah, but as it was before the time of the opening of the story, I have had no occasion for mentioning his name before this. It was Dr. Leander Boynton, a gentleman of fortune and leisure, who resided in the country or town, as suited him; had studied medicine, and practiced or forgot it, as he felt inclined, and rejoiced in the luxury of having no one's inclinations to consult besides his own.

As his country possessions were near those of Sarah's father, she and he were well acquainted with each other, though she had always, with her own intellectual attainments, looked upon him as a plaything to amuse herself with, or cast away from her, as suited her mood. He was her cat's-paw when she wished to punish me with jealousy; and she would go to lengths with him that her self-respect would not let her attempt if he had been a better man—intellectually. When she wished to justify herself, she would say that he was a "foolish fellow," whom she had known for years before she had seen me, and therefore he could be treated any way with perfect safety and immunity.

He was the nearest, and in fact the only available, surgeon who could be found when Robert was

borne to the house on a hastily-constructed litter by the men who had been called from the fields. There are some fops who are disgusting for their vanity, but others who are infinitely amusing, and Boynton belonged to the latter class, only there was nothing amusing in his waiting to make a toilet of fifteen minutes' length after he arrived, as if he was going to astonish a ball-room instead of to set a fracture.

He was evidently aware that there were two young ladies in the house, having eyed them at a distance several times; but as he had come to that neighborhood soon after Sarah's father had won the farm, he had not had an opportunity of knowing them. When he had set the bone, which had sustained a compound fracture, Lucy and Rosamond met him at the door, and asked him what could be done to alleviate the sufferings of the patient; and he replied, "Nothing but to remain near him, and keep him amused."

He meant Robert well, and added, that with such charming nurses a man ought to be kept down as long as possible, and accompanied the compliment with a great many bows.

"I will write to Mr. Pearson at once to send out a respectable surgeon; Robert ought not to be left to the skill of such an impertinent fop!" exclaimed Lucy, as soon as the doctor was out of hearing; for his compliments were received with still greater disfavor than mine were the first night I went with Robert to see her.

"Why, Luce, the man's professional skill ought not to be condemned because he knows how handsome he is, or because he can make polite speeches," cried Rosamond, who was laughing in her sleeve all the time he had been making his adieus.

But his professional skill was at once condemned, and Lucy wrote to me about the accident, and asked me to dispatch a good surgeon to them.

I had not been out to see them up to this time, but had heard from Robert every week, and was kept well informed in anything which could interest me.

As I wished to avoid Sarah, and was informed when she was expected, I made arrangements for visiting a few weeks later. Robert, who thought I had recovered my misplaced affections, and was rapidly transferring them to Lucy, suggested that the best time for my visit would be when Sarah was there, as she would, in a great measure, increase my opportunities by giving Lucy time to walk out.

Though I acknowledged he was right, I did not intend to profit by his suggestions, for I was in no hurry to lay siege to Lucy's heart,—it was in safe keeping by her father's couch; and, like a winter-apple, would become more mellow and enduring for hanging long on the parent stem. Then, again, I was almost certain Lucy would never get married as long as her father needed her undivided attention. Such a thought as grieving the selfishness of aged infirmity by any step which would lead him to fear an abatement of her care, would be

treason to the opinion I had formed of her dutiful and self-denying spirit. It would be time enough for me to exert myself when the present tenor of her life became changed by the recovery or death of her father, or the appearance of a rival in the field; and, to be candid, I was not yet prepared to say that I could fall in love again. I never expected or wished to become as infatuated as I had been as Sarah's lover; for, when the fountain of love, like a bottle of wine, is first opened, the pent-up fermentation of twenty years sends out a good deal of foam and bluster, though the steady, sparkling stream that is poured into the second glass may be far more desirable for having thrown off its froth.

I could have no doubt of being happy with Lucy if I thought she loved me, and I loved her to begin with; but Sarah's miniature, with its exquisite beauty and pensiveness, was yet in my possession, and against it and the recent change in her deportment my heart was not yet steeled.

One day we accidentally met at the angle of two streets, and turned in the same direction; and, as friends of the Davenport family, we walked together some distance, spoke about them, and wondered whether they would remain on the farm through all the year; and, as we parted again, I told her I was not going out to see them until after another fortnight.

Next morning Lucy's note reached me, and after sending the surgeon to them, I made arrange-

ments for going out there myself that evening, and remaining until the pain and fever of the fracture were over.

As Lucy had suspected, the bone was not properly set, and Dr. Boynton's reputation was not established in the family by his awkward performance.

Though I have not given Rosamond a good character for sympathy, yet she did what she could for Robert, and, between reading and talking, made the time less tedious to him than it otherwise would have been. I sat up at night with him, and, with Rosamond for a day-nurse, he had no reason for complaint. As Mr. Davenport was getting strong again, he insisted that his daughter should leave him more alone, and take some exercise for her own health, by becoming my guide through the pleasant walks in the neighborhood. With her I took many a long walk, and her good sense, delicate perception of what was sublime and beautiful in nature and sentiment, made her company as dear to both hope and memory as a holiday was in boyhood. But there was one charm about her that made her conversation and company like an angel's to me,—I could believe every word she said, and this was much when at that time I had not a perfect confidence in the veracity of womankind. Sarah was not strictly a liar, and I had never known Rosamond to tell a falsehood, though she acted many; but yet I could not believe everything they said,—my mind had become so skeptical; and, in

making allowances for human nature, my charity was almost exhausted by the wide margins given to the statements I had heard made by my sisterhood.

But every word Lucy said was received without the least discount for exaggeration or artifice; and not only were her remarks, statements, and expressions taken at their face-value in the spirit, but also in the letter; for as far as guile was from her heart, so far from her lips was the folly of using the adjectives *glorious*, *splendid*, *elegant*, and *georgious*, until they came to signify nothing except a paucity of words and ideas.

Maybe I expatiate too much upon my heroine; but these days when I could believe all I heard were the pleasantest of my life; and were to my much-deceived heart a sweet foretaste of the time when all liars shall have their portions in the burning lake, and only the true will be left.

Nor was Lucy's good sense and truthful mind of that heavy kind which comes from want of imagination, and is only a dull *fac-simile* of wisdom and truth: wise like the owl, because of its stupidity, and unequivocal like the cuckoo, for having only two notes which it can utter. Girls I knew who did not talk nonsense, and yet were not wise; who did not utter falsehoods, and could not be called truthful, notwithstanding; but were mere vapid, leaden negatives, enough to weigh down the spirit of any man who attempted to be company for them.

Lucy, on the contrary, was a most entertaining girl when thrown on her own resources; lively, witty, and well informed; with a command of language that never left her at a loss for a word, and an elasticity of mind that never left her dull and exhausted, but rather gave its buoyant, spiritual vitality to every subject which she touched.

She could not climb the hills as sturdily as Rosamond could, for she was not so robust; but then that was an additional pleasure for me, as it gave me the opportunity of assisting her up, and then sitting by her side while she rested on the green declivity.

In a few days there was a bloom on her cheeks and a brightness in her eyes which defied the art of Parisian counterfeiters; and her father, becoming proud of her improvement, was the more anxious to keep her out, for it never occurred to his simple heart that we might fall in love.

One day as we returned from our walk, and had crossed the rustic stile into the lawn, a loud shout of,—

"Hullo, Sally, here's your Ned!" welcomed us, and the next moment little five-year old Tommy Carroll bounded up to me, scratching and climbing until he got his arms around my neck.

Sarah had arrived, and thinking from what I had said to her that I would not be here for some time yet, she had brought her little brother out with her.

Lucy was surprised when I told her who he was;

and to partly explain what I meant to clear up altogether to her some time, I said,—

"Sarah and I are old acquaintances, though if we had not met at your house last year we would have forgotten each other by this time."

She gave me a look of intelligence, which was, no doubt, eye language for "lawsuit;" because that was the only reason for broken friendship that her innocent heart could suggest to her.

I took Tommy away with me, and went around the house, that Sarah might not have a knowledge of his treason to make her visit unpleasant for both him and herself.

When I visited his sister I was a great favorite of the household pet, and generally had something in my pocket for him.

Some one had taught him to say "Bully for you!" and the united efforts of the family could not break him from thanking me with those slang words.

Removing the necessity of his thanks did not do, even; for when I was forbidden to give him anything to call for them until he had given in, he still said it whenever he saw me, either through gratitude for the past, or hope in the future.

When we had seen Sarah, now he cried,—

"Oh, Sister Sally, see me with your Ned! I found him out here! Bully for you, Ned! Bully for you! Bully for you!"

With a look of dismay, she rushed up to him and shook him roughly by the arm, exclaiming, angrily,—

"You little plague, you! If you call Mr. Pearson Ned, or say bully for you, or ever say that Mr. Pearson was at our house, I shall take you straight home again. Do you hear me now, sir?"

Poor little Tommy did hear, and, what was more to the purpose, he understood also; for even at five years of age a boy "raised by hand" under four or five older sisters will have a perception of "what's in the wind," especially if, like little "Pip," he is not petted too much.

As she looked up at me, she said that she had not expected to meet me, or she would have left the little traitor at home, and I replied,—

"He is not the only one you will have to silence, for I understand Dr. Boynton is living near by, though I have not seen him."

"Well, he is not as dangerous as Tommy," she said, with a look of conscious power.

At that moment Boynton entered the walk, and was met by Lucy on the porch. As we came towards them he greeted Sarah at once, and would have as kindly remembered me, but as Lucy introduced us he caught Sarah's signal, and the warmth of his welcome was reduced to,—

"Ah, Mr. Pearson, I believe I have heard of you often before, sir."

"Yes; I am spoken of throughout the country, in the press and the pulpit, I believe. 'We, the people of the United States,' and 'Us, miserable sinners,' are the two names I am chiefly known to the public by," I replied.

They all laughed: Lucy, because she thought I had caught up the doctor in one of his flattering speeches, and Sarah and the doctor (who now understood that I was a stranger), at the turn I had given to his salutation.

He had walked over to see how Robert was several times, though he knew that another surgeon had been called in; but, as he had come while I was out with Lucy, I had not until this time seen him.

As he entered the parlor with Sarah and Lucy, I turned to Robert's room, for I was afraid he would forget his cue at any moment, and betray how well acquainted he was with me.

Rosamond was with Robert, and, as I entered, she expressed a hope that I had enjoyed my walk, and then, as I assured her that I had, a fear that between my vigils and my long walks up the mountains with Lucy I would succumb to nature, and become a patient too.

I saw by the quizzical light that played in her eyes that she and Robert had been speculating on my feelings towards Lucy, and, to turn the attack upon themselves, I said that the danger was not as great as the temptation would be, if I could be assured of having a book read to me with her devotedness.

"If no one else had a better right, you may be assured that I would do it," she said, with a frank smile.

"Yes, you may be certain she would, Ned; the trouble is that she is such an impartial, obliging

girl, a fellow cannot flatter himself she is doing anything for him which she would not do for any one else under the same circumstances," cried Robert.

I do not think that Robert was jealous by nature, and, least of all, that he could be jealous of Dr. Boynton; but Rosamond delighted in the fellow's conceit, and encouraged him to believe he was making an impression whenever he called.

"He looked as if he thought every glance penetrated my simple heart," she said once, at the close of his visit; "and it did me good to see the side glance he took of his whiskers as he passed by the mantel-glass."

But, however much she had encouraged his calls and his compliments before Sarah came, she did not waste much time bandying pleasantries with him for awhile afterwards, for she suspected that Sarah had designs on Robert's heart, and she evidently intended to refuse her consent to his marriage with *that girl* before it was asked.

Sarah was not long in perceiving that Rosamond had anticipated her, if such was her hope, but did not seem to enjoy the air of her old home the less for that.

If she came out on a matrimonial speculation, I think Dr. Boynton was the man most likely to be the object of her honorable intentions just then, for he had some qualities which a girl of Sarah's wit would not object to, viz., wealth, a want of intellect that she could easily supply, and a good-

natured disposition that would not stand in the way of her moods and fancies.

A spy in the family had informed me before I had left the city that Sarah and her stepmother had quarreled (the mother of the five younger children being her father's second wife), the old lady having accused her of wantonly playing with time, and having thrown away her matrimonial chances.

All the admirers she had in reserve had made an ungallant retreat the moment they found that she was freed from me, and one of themselves might be expected to step into my place; for, however honorable their intentions were, they were not matrimonial.

The doctor was one of her oldest admirers, and had often, before I met her, followed her from country to town; but he had become more attached to the country air since I had left the way clear for him, and, as is often the case, the pursued had turned and become the pursuer.

Rosamond soon discovered where Sarah's objective point was, and, like an enterprising young campaigner, took immediate steps for her defeat,—maybe as much from a desire to test the power of "Twenty" against "Twenty-four" as from the rivalry Providence had, according to her, ordained to compensate the human male for the plumage and accomplishments denied to him—except by right of purchase.

The doctor found himself suddenly between two

sirens,—the happy recipient of both their smiles,—and all he wanted was the recognition which Lucy withheld to make him the favored of the Three Graces. But Lucy would not bow, and, Haman-like, his pain at Mordecai's contempt outweighed his pleasure at the adoration of the others; so he was relieved from the embarrassment of choosing from between more than two of the cousins.

As has been the case on many a more sanguinary field, the energy and ardor of youth soon triumphed over the strategy and experience of age; for, in a few days, Sarah gave up the contest, and calmly resigned herself to the benevolent duty of sharing Lucy's cares as nurse and housekeeper.

This left Lucy free every afternoon to go out with me, while Sarah read to Mr. Davenport; for though he protested against keeping either of them at home, Sarah would find some good excuse for not being able to accompany us. Her considerate goodness had made us more confidential, and one or two mornings I accompanied her in the walks she took with Tommy.

Perhaps Lucy thought Sarah's motives for not driving out with us were too suggestive of a courtship; for sometimes she would refuse to go unless Sarah took a similar recreation, and then Sarah would consent, but, when the time came, would feign a headache, and send us off without her.

Though Lucy did not suspect this fraud, it was well known to me; for I learned that her headaches left her the moment we were out of sight,

and she read to Mr. Davenport nearly all the time we were absent. But all her kindness could not get me along faster with Lucy than the lapidist cuts into a diamond. We were as happy together as friends could be, but nothing that approached love-making in its usual forms had yet been attempted. I was at a loss how to attempt it, and my only hope was that we would some time understand each other without the embarrassment of courting.

After a time Robert no longer needed my assistance and watching, and I bade them all, including Sarah, a reluctant adieu, bringing away with me convictions of Lucy's matchless loveliness of character, purity of spirit, and beauty of mind.

CHAPTER IX.

IN about a week after I had returned to the city the junior who usually attended to the mail cried out, as he came into the counting-room one morning,—

"Here's a letter from 'Rustic S.' again; I haven't seen one of them for a year."

All Sarah's letters used to come to the office-box, and, being uniformly marked with the initial S, formed by twisting a sprouting bough, they received the title of "the Rustic S. letters" from the youthful wit who handed them to me.

I cut the envelope open, but seeing that it contained several sheets, I put them into my pocket for a more convenient season.

The time arrived at last when I could read them without interruption, and this was *Sarah's story*:

"MY DEAR BUT INJURED FRIEND,—I am afraid the time is past when a letter from me would be acceptable, and more especially do I regret it when I am forced to confess that I alone am to blame for it. No one who pretends to possess the instincts of politeness or humanity can think without regret that a fellow-creature feels wronged or misused by him, particularly when conscience is on the side of the offended; and, as this is my case, the time has

come when I can no longer defer asking your forgiveness.

"I did not do it lately, when you were near, because I could not extemporize words to say exactly what I wanted, and no more; and because your gallantry would not listen to all I would say in condemnation of my past life.

"Since you and I were friends, as the term goes, I have become another creature; and, as God has forgiven a life of wickedness and rebellion against Himself, I am sure you will forgive the few sins I have committed against you. But, dear friend, while I mourn for the words and actions which have separated us by so wide a gulf, do not think that I seek to restore the relations once existing between us; for it is my faults in allowing them to exist that I confess, and not the breaking of them off, *though I wish less violent and unkind measures had been used in doing it.* And while, in obedience to the divine command, which tells us to confess our sins if we want to be forgiven, I send you the following pages, I must request you, before I proceed with this confession, to neither seek an interview with me nor address to me any acknowledgment of them.

"I will be assured of your forgiveness without it, for I know what a good Christian heart you had to exchange for the miserably wicked thing I had when I met you.

"And here I must begin my confession, for I had no heart of any kind, as far as affection was concerned, when I accepted yours. *I never loved you,*

and I blush for the dishonesty which permitted me to pretend that I returned your honorable and sincere attachment. If I sought an excuse for a sin that I bitterly repent, it would be that I did not think you were deceived in me to a great extent. Your frank reproofs assured me that you saw I was no angel, and you had a mentor at your side who was not backward in prompting you. You never told me that you had a confidant, but I knew you had; and though I did not pretend to be without faults, yet I wanted the man that loved me to be blind to them, and deaf also when a third party enumerated and exposed them for purposes of his own.

"This accounts for the vacillation, fickleness, and uncertainty of temper you so often with just cause charged upon me.

"Robert Heberton and myself had been friends from early youth, and when Mr. Davenport and my father had become estranged by a lawsuit, our friendship was not interrupted, as my uncle and his household supposed. He visited me (privily, I afterwards learned), and continued to pay me the attentions which I had with pleasure received from him at his guardian's house, where I spent most of my time with my cousins.

"We were finally engaged, but as he was too young in his profession to think of a speedy marriage, we kept it a secret, and agreed to act before others as if we had no claim on each other more than friends. This agreement was understood to allow me to receive attentions from other suitors,

as if I was free; but when our plan was reduced to practice, he became so insufferably jealous and intolerant of a look or word from any one but himself that we quarreled, and our engagement was broken off, a few weeks before my father died.

"I soon lost trace of him; but a few months after you and I were betrothed I was visiting my maternal grandmother, and she engaged an artist to paint my picture.

"You can judge my surprise when Robert was introduced to me; but pride came to my support, and, greeting him as an acquaintance, I determined to sit as long and as often as was necessary.

"For awhile we were more reserved than if we had been total strangers, but gradually our embarrassment wore itself out, and we conversed on the pleasures and people of our previous acquaintance.

"He soon showed signs of returning to his former fealty, and, to prevent a misunderstanding, I told him that I was engaged to you; for I saw your handwriting in a letter he accidentally drew out one day, and made him confess the writer's name.

"This had not the effect I had hoped for, however; he became angry because I had not preserved for him the place in my heart which he had so voluntarily resigned, and boasted how much truer *he* was to his vows of eternal constancy; for such vows had often been exchanged.

"As he immediately apologized, and seemed sorry for having spoken so imprudently, not to say rudely, his speech made the deeper impression, and

I readily forgave the insult offered by thus addressing the affianced of another; for you know how hard it is to blame a person for loving you, even when there is selfishness and impropriety in that love.

"After that he said no more in a serious way, but often rallied me on being bound to another, and insinuated, while gallantly complimenting me, how sensible he was of his loss, and what *might have been*, had I not placed a barrier between us, with greater haste than romance allowed.

"The meeting left an impression that I could not efface from my heart, and I discovered that I was only pleased with your character and conversation without loving you. I long tried to conquer it, but it was in vain; I was unhappy all the time, and you helped the insidious poison by betraying in your frankness a knowledge of my vacillating and dissatisfied nature.

"If you had only been blind to my failings and a slave to your passion, I could have borne all; but you were neither, and I tried to forget my disappointments by flirting with others, quarreling with you, and gaining for myself a reputation for heartlessness that is far from being satisfactory to me. You are not the one to betray confidence, my friend, not even when so ill requited as you have been by me; and I will confess to you that when I broke off our engagement it was with full assurance of heart that Robert Heberton would renew his engagement with me, as his words, and also his

letters (one of which I inclose), led me to hope he would.

"And again (to you in confidence), when I made Rosy Heywood's return to Mr. Davenport's an excuse for calling there, it was because I thought that you and Robert were no longer friends, and he could not be aware that you and I had separated.

"I was surprised to find you were a visitor there, but more surprised to find how indifferent Robert was to the fact that I was free; and now the end is at hand, for Robert is engaged to Miss Heywood.

"When I saw his duplicity repaid by your kindness and care in nursing him, I said it was my duty to inform you of everything when he no longer needed your aid. And now, as he is getting well, you know all!

"One closing request, in addition to the one I have already made, and I am done: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us' is the prayer that I have but lately learned to know the meaning of; but you have learned it long ago, my friend, and I am not only sure that you will forgive me, but also Robert. Lay this letter aside for two months, and do not seek Robert or write to him during that time, and then you will be calm enough to review the whole thing, if you like. Do not return Robert any letters he may write to you before that time, as I will be here for some weeks yet, and you know how embarrassing it would make my intercourse with him; for it is desirable that we all should

meet in harmony for my uncle's and Lucy's sake. Good-by forever, and Heaven bless you!

"SARAH."

When I had ended reading it, the perspiration was standing in large beads on my forehead, and I was almost deprived of the power of walking to a seat, for I had read it while standing up against a bale of goods.

Poor, injured Sarah! how I felt for her then! The misfortune, the sorrow, the repentance were hers, but the sin and the blame Robert's and mine!

She had never loved me, and I liked her now the better for that; she had a heart that loved too well for her happiness, and I did not believe that of her before. I must have wearied her almost beyond human endurance; for how dull and distasteful must the expressions of love be to one whose heart is given to another than the speaker! I was surprised that she could have borne it so long, and it was a wonder I did not make myself forever obnoxious before she threw off the yoke which must have been so galling to her.

This accounted for the picture of her I had found in Robert's possession, though I had supposed that to be accounted for on two occasions already; but it shows how often the truth can be told, and yet leave a false impression.

The letter, which I suppose she sent to certify her story, was an obscure composition, just such a non-committal note as Robert could write. It spoke

of friendship which time could not change or lessen, and of faith in the eventual triumph of the first true love, though obstacles seemed then to be heaped up between them by conspiring fates. The rhapsody was sickening for its unmeaning rant, and worthy of the pen and bombast of a high-school lover, rather than a young man of Robert's age and intellect.

Alas, this was the friend I had thought the soul of truth and honor, the one of all others before whom I had cast the pearls of my heart to be trampled under foot!

I well remembered the letter to which she had reference, for I sent it to him with a letter of introduction to her when I learned they both were sojourning in the same village, hoping that both would have a pleasanter visit by becoming acquainted. But he returned it to me with a show of thankfulness, and not only declined every offer I had afterwards made of introducing him, but tried to undermine my confidence in her by sarcastic generalities, his knowledge of her character often enabling him to surprise me by the pertinence of his philippics.

There were no bounds to my indignation, for the more I thought of it the greater dupe I became in my own eyes; and the feeling that a man has been a fool, and others have seen his simplicity and taken advantage of it, is not a pleasant one.

And Sarah, who had been more misused than I, how meekly she bore it all! Six of the best years

of her life wasted between a knave and a fool, and yet she could forgive! She had indeed become changed, when she could confess her errors to me, and meet the wretch who was the cause of them every day as a friend.

As the gratification of seeking her or writing had been forbidden to me, I could do nothing but praise her newly-found Christian spirit, and hope that the Friend of the Fatherless would be her protector.

She was, no doubt, afraid I might think she was desirous of renewing our engagement if she did not peremptorily forbid me to address her; but I would never have suspected that; she had helped me to be in Lucy's society enough to shield her from suspicion, and how could I hope that she could love me now, when she had confessed that I had never been loved by her?

For one week my mind was wholly occupied with this bitter experience; every book or writing I looked over conveyed the black crime of treachery to my mind; everything else seemed but a dream, and this was the one great reality that haunted me in business, in society, and in sleep. The hum of voices had treason and deceit in it, the streets were filled with faces that reflected the malice and guile of the human heart, and I spoke to my most intimate acquaintances as guardedly as if I knew they were plotting my hurt, and every word they drew from me would be at some future time used as an instrument to torture me with.

"They are all treacherous, every one is treacherous, everything is treacherous!" I would say, as I walked through the crowds and viewed men with the grim satisfaction of knowing them to be knaves, and myself the only one among them who could hold up his face and say it was not a double one.

I avoided my friends, I gave myself up to morbid meditations, and I brooded over my miseries until I felt a satisfaction in having them for mine.

At the end of two weeks a letter addressed in Robert's handwriting was handed to me; but as Sarah's commands were dear to me, I laid it away, instead of returning it to him with the contempt I felt for the character of the writer.

As he did not suspect how well I had learned to know him, I thought it would inform me of Lucy's feelings towards me if I opened it; but even Lucy could be nothing to me after this. I had been evidently introduced to her by her unscrupulous friend in hopes that my mind would be diverted from Sarah; and, however innocent *she* was, to follow the destiny he had plotted for me was out of the question. Marrying for friendship does not seem a hard sacrifice when a person has been disappointed once or twice in love, and sometimes I thought, with a martyr-like resignation, that it would be the best thing that Sarah and I could do now, since all things had conspired to make the dream of love a delusion to us both.

A fortnight afterwards another letter from him

was handed to me, which was laid aside with its fellow; four days afterwards another, and in four days more a fourth.

The last two were addressed to different places, with a request written on the corner of each envelope to forward if I was not at home. Still, I did not open them, as I intended to return them all as soon as the two months' grace Sarah had asked for were fulfilled. I naturally supposed that some unusual events were transpiring on the farm,—Rosa-mond getting married to Robert or the doctor; Mr. Davenport dead, or on the point of death; or, maybe, Lucy discovered, and already half-won by some fortunate neighbor.

As I had promised, when returning to town, to go back to them soon and take a real vacation, I flattered myself that they were inquiring among themselves why I was not coming out, and wondering why Robert's letters were not answered.

"Does Lucy miss me?" was asked in my mind repeatedly, but never answered; for, though with my late information I had taught myself to look upon her henceforth as a stranger, I was not prepared to be in so short a time as though *I never had been*, to her pure and innocent heart.

Some one who pretends to understand the female sex (and all pretend to it except those who know them best), says that it is better to offend a woman than let her have no cause to remember you at all, as your chances of winning an interest in her heart will be better in the end; and I was willing at

present to let Lucy have my unaccountable absence as a subject for thought; because my last words to her were assurances of a speedy return, and a resumption of our walks and drives.

Rosamond would rally her upon scaring me away; for it would be impossible for that irrepressible girl to neglect so good an opportunity of twitting any one she cared for; and this would set Lucy to reviewing all that had passed between us with thoughtful and distrustful scrutiny.

I would have taken my summer vacation and gone home to forget my sorrows; but female relatives have sharp eyes, and I could not escape those of my mother and sisters. They were acquainted with the virtues and talents I had praised in my friend, and he would be the first person they would ask of; and I could not bear to tell them how mistaken I had been. They would not be so charitably disposed towards Sarah; for they did not seem to appreciate her at any time, and were glad when I was free from her. Her cold self-possession had not made a good impression on them, and Robert had their everlasting gratitude when I told them how steadily he had refused to be introduced to her, and yet was prejudiced as themselves against her.

I was glad that he did not know of this, as he would undoubtedly have laughed at their simplicity, as he did at mine, while he was playing such a deep-laid game.

I was thus compelled to live in my own company,

and very gloomy company it was during those days. I could almost hate myself for my inconstancy in regretting the loss of both Sarah and Lucy at the same time, and I could welcome my woes and disappointments if Robert had not been the cause of them.

I was so constantly and deeply impressed with my folly and imbecility that groans would escape my lips as I walked along the streets, and people would turn and look at me as if they thought I was suddenly taken with cramps or colic; so that mortification in public was added to my private woes, and only for the horror human nature has of losing its identity, I would willingly exchange persons, past, present, and future, with the smallest boot-black I met on the sidewalks.

CHAPTER X.

LETTERS had ceased coming, and I began to get impatient, anxious, and curious, knowing that there had been some unusual excitement on the farm, but not knowing whether it was all over now, or what it had been.

I took the tempting but forbidden messengers in my hands several times each day, as if expecting the news would sprout through; but I did not break a seal. At last the writer himself arrived in a hack, and limped with a cane as he stepped out of it. He was driven to my boarding-house as I was going to tea; and, like the Bedouin, I felt it my duty to offer him my hospitality, even though I should waylay and kill him afterwards.

As I offered him my unwilling hand, he impatiently exclaimed,—

“What in the name of common sense has kept you from answering my letters? Did you not get them?”

“Yes, and have kept them as good as new for you; and you shall have them as soon as you get up to my room,” I answered, sulkily.

He looked vexed and surprised, and said,—

“Well, you appear to take things very calmly! I suppose you were not at all interested in what I wrote you?”

(140)

“What did you write that should interest me, pray?”

“Didn’t you read my letters?” he asked.

“No, not one of them; they are all kept inviolate for you,” I doggedly answered.

“Well! what under the heavens has bewitched you? Not opened my letters; and not acquainted with what has been transpiring the last four or five weeks,—not knowing how much yourself was concerned!” he cried.

“What has transpired in which I am so deeply concerned, please?” I asked.

“Oh, nothing, except that Sarah has blackened you pretty well, stole a march on us all, and inveigled Mr. Davenport into marrying her,” he said, with contemptuous carelessness.

“Blackened me, and married Mr. Davenport! what do you mean?” I cried.

“That Sarah has been playing a very deep game, sending Lucy out with you and afterwards telling her father that she was about to desert him and elope with you. Why, the arch-fiend is not deeper or more deceitful; and you have helped her to deceive Mr. Davenport by keeping away, notwithstanding all my efforts to get you out there to explain.”

I was thunderstruck, for the whole plot flashed upon me in an instant; and I said, more in justification of my credulity than as an article of faith, after this proof that her penitence and confession were false from first to last, and only made to deceive me,—

"Why, how can Sarah be guilty of such a crime against truth and honor if she is a converted Christian girl, as she says she is?"

"Did she tell you she was a *converted Christian*, and did you believe her, Ned?" he asked, with a look of ineffable scorn.

"Yes; and is there anything impossible in that? Could not God convert her?" I asked, trying to justify the act of grace as a possibility rather than as a fact.

"Yes, I suppose God could, if he pleased; but Satan leads her now by the right hand. There never was such a cunning devil. Why, it seems she imposed upon you by talking about conversion and Christianity, because you had faith in God if you had none in herself, and she knew you would be thrown off your guard by such a story of grace. Oh! she would doubtless be an angel if she had not been predestinated to be a something else! Yes, indeed; transforming herself into an angel of light that she might the more easily deceive!"

I had by this time got all the letters in my hand, and I gave him Sarah's letter to read, while I hurriedly tore open the four it had laid embargo on.

From them I learned how the plot had progressed, for Robert wrote me in the most earnest terms to come out as he had detected it at its different stages, but could not leave his room to come to me in person.

Robert read Sarah's letter very attentively, and

said, while he glanced over it a second time, as if counting the pages,—

"Well, there is nothing so remarkable about that, unless that it is partly truth, always excepting the penitential part; for I believe there is as much hope for the repentance of Lucifer as for Sarah's; and when she has counterfeited the currency of grace to pay the Devil with, the gentleman in black may well tremble for his reputation.

"She had quarreled with her stepmother, and had resolved to leave the house, and instead of seeking me, who had no house to give her, I think she came to Mr. Davenport's only for the purpose of following Dr. Boynton out to the farm.

"She made a friend of you by the many ways she contrived to send Lucy off along with you; but, taking her place by Mr. Davenport's side, she took care, with her usual tact, to serve her own ends too.

"The doctor would not be caught, and she next turned to Mr. Davenport as the only one available who had a home to shelter her, and she succeeded better.

"While you were out there she contented herself by saying occasionally that you and Lucy were growing quite fond of each other, and that she did not partake of your recreations because she liked the duties of nurse; but when you came away she ventured further, and poisoned his mind by insinuating that he must expect to be deserted by his daughter for a husband.

"He heard her with so much confidence and

credulity she was encouraged to become more positive, and unfolded to him a plot between you and Lucy to elope, and come back to ask his forgiveness when it would be too late for him to plead his infirmities and his need of her society.

"She pleaded in extenuation how natural it was that Lucy should be tired of nursing and seclusion, and become infatuated with the hopes of a new and exciting life with you; and said that the marriage was to take place without his sanction, because you thought he was too selfish to consent to it. This aroused him thoroughly, and he determined rather than be the cause of an elopement, or the obstacle in the way of his daughter's welfare, to relieve her of the duty of nursing him.

"He was so convinced of being regarded as a hindrance to her settlement in life, and of her determination to marry without showing him the respect due to a guardian even, that he almost became deranged, and gave her no opportunity of exculpating herself; but rather rejected every office she tried to perform, until her heart was almost broken by his morose and repulsive bearing towards her.

"I alone knew what had made the mischief, because he reproached me one day for having ever introduced you into the family; but all the assurances I could give him of the groundlessness of his fears did not avail, for no one but yourself or Lucy could deny it, and he forbade me to mention it to either Lucy or Rosamond.

"You did not come out in response to my re-

peated solicitations, and your absence led him to suppose you were making preparations for the elopement, which made him hasten his own marriage to prevent it.

"How he could ask the niece of his wife to marry him is a mystery, but I suppose Sarah had informed him that she would not let him be uncared for, and he saw no other way to leave Lucy free to marry and permanently supply her place.

"Though I had a week's notice of it, the contemplated marriage was not announced to the girls until one hour before it took place, and they were merely summoned to witness it, with as little ceremony as if subpoenaed to a court.

"The grief of Lucy and the indignation of Rosamond was as violent as their astonishment was complete, and they have not become reconciled to it yet, though the married couple are now off on the mockery of a wedding tour. Resentment must have made Mr. Davenport strong, and I hope he will remain so long enough to find out what an old fool Sarah has made of him, and pay her for it."

"Yes, indeed, she has made an old fool, and a young one, too. Oh, can I feel my humiliation as I should? I could have stopped all this if I had been bright and reasonable enough to consider how incredible her story was," I exclaimed, penitential now when my folly was all paraded before me.

"Yes, and I could if I had done my duty," he replied; "for I do not think I ought to have left Lucy ignorant of what I knew, even at the express

command of her father. But with regard to this letter. I can tell you in a few words what truth there is in it, for there is some truth very cleverly woven into it: she was born a romancer. I did not cease to visit her when the lawsuit divided the families, for, without being capable of feeling a passion herself, she could inspire one you well know. One evening as I was placing a ring on her finger with a wish, I playfully tried it on the right fore one, telling her that if I could get it on that one once she would be virtually engaged to me; and nothing could save her.

"She calmly replied that she was in no danger, because the ring was too small for that finger, and that I knew it.

"I got her consent to try to force the ring on, and her promise to be my mine if I succeeded; and evening after evening, as we sat by the grate, I tried to get the ring over the joint, more for the boyish delight of holding her handsome, well-shaped hand than with a hope of success.

"At last a strategy occurred to me, and I bought a cheap plated ring, a size larger than hers, but like it in appearance; and, with a thought only for fun, I took it with me the next evening I visited her.

"As we sat by the fire chatting as usual, I took her ring off, and slyly substituted the plated ring for it, while she was showing me a new book of engravings.

"Well, Sarah, I suppose it is a standing bargain

that if I get *this* ring on your engagement finger you will marry me?" I said, with affected carelessness.

"I had, however, without intending it, emphasized 'this;' and, noticing it, she looked up from her plates, eyed the ring a few seconds, but, without seeming to detect the fraud, she calmly said 'Yes,' and then turned her attention to her pictures. In a moment I pushed it over the second joint, and, dropping her hand, I clasped her head to my heart, crying,—

"My bride! my bride! I have won you!"

"Calmly begging me not to disarrange her hair, she took the ring from her finger, weighed it carefully in her hand, and requested me to give her back her own ring, as it was much finer gold.

"I was allowed, however, to conduct myself as her betrothed when no one was present; but I was no more than a 'boy' when an older beau was available.

"The joke about the ring soon became stale, and we both dropped allusion to it, and, as other beaux came into the field, I kept out of their way, and finally ceased to visit her altogether. There was no quarrel or ill feelings; but, hearing Mr. Davenport express himself very strongly against her family, I thought it was no better than deceiving him to visit the house.

"It was then I wrote that letter, which, you can see, looks somewhat yellow, with the date recently inked, as she has changed the 3 into an 8,

and made its date five years later. You may decide for yourself whether she was engaged to me or not, for it does not now signify,—neither of us can have her.

“After I had ceased visiting her I did not see her again until I met her when employed by her grandmother to paint her picture.

“She had nothing to do but flirt with country beaux then, which she pronounced the dullest fun in creation; and she tried how far her old blandishments had power over me yet. I told her she was engaged, but she denied it; whereupon I produced your letter and silenced her. Since then you have often entertained me with her perfections; but I did not tell you all I knew about her, as I thought you would gradually learn to know her real character, and would be better satisfied with what you found out for yourself. We both see her in a new rôle now; the witty and fascinating belle has retired in disgust, and become a patient, secluded nurse.”

“Well, what shall we do now, Robert? or do you refuse to do anything in connection with such a senseless dupe as I have become?” I asked, as he had ended his story.

“I do not know what we can do, Ned; they are married, and that cannot be helped, though it could have been helped once, if I was only able to come to town, or you had opened my letters,” he returned.

“I can see Mr. Davenport the moment he comes back, and clear myself and Lucy, and let him know

by what means his wife kept me away, while she slandered me to him,” I said.

“No use in that, Ned,—she is Sarah no longer; and you will only make both Lucy and her father miserable by telling the one how much he has been bamboozled, and the other how readily her father gave ear to the foul story of a home-seeker,” he said.

“Well, what then? what do you propose? for something *must* be done to clear up all this. Why, is it right that she should be enjoying the success of her treachery, and Lucy and I should still be suffering the unjust suspicions she has cast on our characters?” I cried, dropping into a chair.

“You cannot prevent her from enjoying her success, such as it is; she has a home, and Mr. Davenport could not turn her out of it, even if he knew all; and as for you and Lucy, that matter will mend itself, for her father will soon see that there was no intention of leaving him, and will merely think Sarah was mistaken. Except in a case of treachery, like taking her away without his consent, I have no doubt he would be glad to look upon you as Lucy’s future protector; and I know, if this came to her ears, she would never forget that her father’s heart was turned from her by the thought that she was to be married to you,” he replied.

This had some influence with me; for, almost simultaneously with my discovery of Sarah’s duplicity, my recent feelings towards Lucy returned, and, though the knowledge of our joint implication in the elopement plot made her dearer to me,

I knew that *her* sensitive mind would be differently affected by it.

Robert remained with me that night; and, as next day was to be celebrated as Rosamond's twenty-first birthday, he was the bearer of an invitation for me to go out and celebrate it with them. This placed me in a delicate situation, for I could not refuse to go without offending her; and, at the same time, if I visited there during Mr. Davenport's absence, after having remained away while Sarah was weaving her net so skillfully around him, he would certainly hear of it, and it would accord too well with what he had heard before. We debated the question between us all the evening, and finally decided to take the risk of bringing the matter to an issue, and expose as much of Sarah's mendacity as would justify myself, and give me the privilege of seeing Lucy with the same freedom that I had enjoyed the time I was out there last. Robert was of opinion that Mr. Davenport would never know how much his wife had deceived him, but would merely think, after he had discovered his suspicions were unfounded, that she had been misinformed, or, at most, had been over-officious in the affair.

The couple expected to be away two weeks, and had left the girls so overcome with surprise that they were glad of the opportunity their absence gave them to interchange thought freely, and determine what had been the cause of the marriage, and what was their duty in regard to it.

Soon after tea that evening, Robert put a fifty-dollar bill into my hand, and asked me to go out to a jewelry store and invest it in a pearl ring for Rosamond's birthday-present.

I knew, of course, that choosing an engagement-ring was what the lover himself would like to do; and, going to a store in which a friend of mine was salesman, I got a dozen of the most stylish, and took them to Robert, that he might make the selection himself.

During the season he was laid up by his accident Rosamond had been good to him, and had not objected, at any time, to be considered as his betrothed, though nothing more had been said to remove the ambiguity of their relations to each other.

And now, when he was making her a birthday-present, he took the measure of her forefinger, and selected a ring for it which she would at once recognize as the seal of their betrothal; and, by accepting, give a tacit consent.

I will not deny my own foolishness in that I was sorely tempted to get a like one for Lucy, though on speculation, as I had not the same assurance Robert had that it would ever come in use.

We left the city early in the morning, and before noon arrived at the farm, where a flag had been hoisted to the turret of the house by the fair mistress, in honor of the day.

But though the fluttering of the stars and stripes outside betokened a merry occasion, inside the girls looked sad and disheartened enough.

The subject that occupied their thoughts could not be suppressed long; and soon after the first greetings were exchanged, Rosamond told me of their amazement when called to witness the ceremony, and their inability to account for its necessity.

She declared, with a doleful countenance, that it would be unreasonable of Mr. Davenport to expect her and Lucy to yield to Sarah the obedience and respect due to a mother; that she would be in the house all the time, assuming matronly airs, and, maybe, would talk of sending them to a seminary to finish their education.

As this was said by one who was her own mistress, and the owner of the house besides, it is probable that her dislike to the domineering disposition of Sarah was greater than her fears of being interfered with in her own rights, and Lucy intimated that much.

"Assuredly, I do not fear for myself, for she knows I am not meek or submissive enough to be imposed upon; but it is for you, my dove-eyed Luce, that my sympathies and fears are aroused; and if I was you, I would never give her a civil word or myself a day's rest until I found by what means she has usurped your place in your father's heart; for we all know that she has prejudiced his mind against you, and he has scarcely spoken to you for a month," she exclaimed.

Rosamond doubtless thought I was more intimate with the family affairs than Lucy did, for she appeared mortified by hearing the lamentable fact

mentioned in my presence, and she replied, while unwilling tears attested how keenly she felt the slight his sudden and unnecessary marriage inflicted upon her,—

"No, Rosy, my father is justified by everything but the necessity in doing what he has done. No one can deny that he had a right, legally and morally, to marry her; and though I am selfish and self-willed enough to wish it otherwise, he shall never, by a word or look of mine, have cause to regret that he has done so."

"Yes, that is just what I thought; you will submit, and become second fiddle in the family discord! I tell you I would be the first, and make their ears tingle if they tried to push me out of my position as lady of the house; for your father, by the wrong he has done you, has forfeited all claims to your love and obedience!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, Rosy, how wildly you talk! My father has done me no wrong, I repeat, for I am not his wife that I should feel injured by his marrying another. I am as much bound as I ever was to honor and obey him, and I cannot complain if his wife will be more in his love and confidence than I; she would be wronged if she was not," Lucy replied.

"Well, let us have a picnic this afternoon, or do something to make Mr. Pearson's visit more pleasant to him; for all I can say is that it is well for Mrs. Davenport she has not me for a daughter instead of you, as I would let her see that she could not

take the inside track of me with impunity, or keep it without a struggle that she would find both arduous and long. Your father has injured you by marrying; for he has taken another in between you and himself, not only to divide with you, but also to supplant you in that which your relationship to him and your devotedness to him had given you an exclusive right to enjoy and inherit," she said, leaving the room to make some programme for the afternoon.

She was doubtless right in saying it was well for Mrs. Davenport she was not her daughter in Lucy's stead; for she was too jealous of her rights and privileges to tolerate a rival, and especially in Sarah, who had not been a generous rival to her when four years' seniority was more to her advantage than it was considered now.

But Lucy had more to complain of than she acknowledged then.

Since her mother's death she had been more like a companion than a child to her father, reading to him, conversing with him, and nursing him, until there had been an equality of mind established between them that entered into all their plans, discussions, and agreements.

Three years before, in one of those conversations which usually followed the reading of a book, a compact was made between them that neither should get married without the other's consent; and finally, that neither should get married while the other lived, so that nothing could ever come

between them. It was doubtless proposed by Lucy in reply to some remarks her father had made on the biography she had been reading; for it was a most unequal chance they were exchanging, as the probability of any one marrying a bedridden old man was not great, while Lucy was entering into her eighteenth year, with hope and life before her.

It was afterwards alluded to as a standing agreement when any subject of discussion called it to mind, and Lucy felt bound by it with the sincerity and enthusiasm of youth. Her father's marriage seemed a violation of this compact, but she did not then speak of it to any one.

Rosamond returned soon, saying she had forgotten Robert when she thought of the picnic, and asked if croquet instead would be agreeable to the party, as she could place a chair on the ground for Robert to rest on while waiting for his turn to play.

When all had agreed, she enthusiastically said,—

"I like to play croquet so *very* much because one can have partners in it, and that destroys the selfishness of the battle. Though you knock your adversaries away, and disarrange their positions, yet it is because you have some one else besides yourself to consider. You have your partner to get into position and put through an arch, just as you would help a friend through the straits, or to the honors of life; and, however much superior as a player, and able to go ahead to the stake yourself, you cannot win by deserting your partner, and leaving him behind to his adversaries."

"In that case you had better take me for a partner, Miss Rosy; for you will have opportunity to your heart's content of knocking me into position and through the arches, as I am a miserable player; and you will in that way exercise those generous qualities which I know you have, to make life happy, useful, and successful," I said, forgetting for the moment that Lucy was my prospective partner, and that Robert with his crutch, and solitaire pearl in his vest-pocket, was most entitled to Rosamond's assistance.

Her face brightened up, just as I saw it on one occasion before when I had paid her a similar compliment; and selecting her favorite colored ball and mallet, which was the blue, she exclaimed,—

"You shall be my partner, then, for you are the only one that has ever given me credit for having any good qualities!"

She stood by me faithfully through victory and defeat, playing back to me whenever she had passed through an arch, and side by side we went out or were left behind in each game, our balls never more than one arch apart.

Late in the afternoon, while she and Robert were disputing whether a rover had or had not a right to a ball each time he played, whether it had made an arch since he played on it last or not, a carriage drove in between the mulberry-trees, and we all turned to view it; for except Dr. Boynton's yellow-striped gig no other strange vehicle had been driven in there that summer.

Soon Lucy exclaimed it was her father, who had been doubtless taken sick, and was compelled to return; and she ran down the avenue to meet him, forgetful of the enstrangement that had kept him from "scarcely speaking to her for a month," as Rosamond had said.

The croquet-party was broken up, and Rosamond had now "positions" and "arches" to assist Lucy through and maintain against her wily adversary.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. DAVENPORT had not proceeded more than a day's journey with his "young and accomplished bride" when their "tour" was terminated as Lucy had predicted; and after remaining a few days at a hotel, they returned to the farm.

As his wife's love for him was not of that quality which the poet describes,—

' A love devoid of guile and sin,
A love forever kind and pure,
A love to suffer and endure,—
Unalterably firm and great,
Amid the angry storms of fate,—
Forever young, forever new,
Forever passionate and true,"—

her mortification at being compelled to forego their trip, and, ere the first week of her married life was passed, come back and settle down to the work she had hired herself to do, was great indeed.

Though a bridal tour is a powerful inducement to most maids, yet it may be asked what pleasure or pride could a girl of Sarah's caliber take in going about with a sick old man, to be laughed to scorn by all who saw them, and criticised for having sold herself, wherever she went.

But, my dear reader, many a young wife of an old man has enjoyed herself while playing the

(158)

"bear-leader" during her honeymoon, and afterwards, by simply thinking that every young beau she met thought she was the old man's daughter, and therefore eligible to his admiration.

Sarah was denied even this brief pleasure, and had no more opportunities to look forward to; for of all the sales of youth and beauty made to Mammon, she had made the most unprofitable one.

This was not the dream her youthful mind had hoped to realize when she was seventeen or eighteen, and it was not the position and pride she had hoped to obtain by her marriage when she was surrounded by a dozen of gallants, each competing with the others for her brightest glances.

But if she was ever romantic enough to have dreams, they were over now; and who can say, when looking back and comparing the promises Hope had made to their youth with the poor returns Life afterwards yielded, that themselves were not to blame for departing from the truth and purity which inspired hope, and gave the future a rose-color atmosphere? No one, I think; for the youthful heart, in beating high with hopes of future success and greatness, never thinks of fraud and deceit as the means of attaining these: truth, honor, and merit only are associated in the mind with the realization of glory and happiness.

The moment Lucy met them she threw herself into her father's arms, and at first her tender embraces were returned; but, recollecting the unfilial desertion she had contemplated, he checked him-

self, and requested that she would not annoy him with demonstrations of affection, which had already been too burdensome to her.

"My affection too burdensome to me, father?" she cried, but was interrupted by Mrs. Davenport, who gently took her hand and led her away, saying,—

"Lucy, my love, his temper is ruffled by pain and fatigue, and you must not feel hurt at his words. He has made me almost jealous by his frequent and tender mention of you while we were away, and you should for that reason be able to overlook a hasty expression now."

"Yes, but what does he mean by an expression like that? He would not have uttered it, even through irritation, if it had not been in his mind ready to be charged against me," she said, looking with suspicion on her stepmother.

"Nothing, dear,—he means nothing at all; he did not know the meaning of his words, and very likely he forgets them already," was her affectionate and conciliating reply, for she had no enmity toward Lucy; but now when her object was secured, was quite willing that Mr. Davenport's affection should be shared both by herself and her daughter-in-law, in order that the nursing could be divided also, for it was not much to her taste. Lucy tried to think she was right in saying the words were hastily spoken and as quickly forgotten; but Rosamond had awakened suspicion in her unsuspecting breast, and though this was the first

time her father had said anything to betray the cause of his alienation, she could not help thinking it was due to Sarah's undermining and misrepresentations. She looked earnestly at her, therefore, and said, with pathos doubly impressive by her own innocence,—

"Sarah, why has my father become so changed towards me since you came here, and tell me what was his object in marrying you?"

"Well, what a hard question you ask me, child!" she said, looking a surprise she could scarcely have felt. "Old men have often before to-day taken a notion to marrying young wives, and nobody has attempted to explain, or asked them to explain so hard a metaphysical problem; but I suspect it was to get me to help you to nurse him,—not a very flattering thought, but it is given to you in true affection and confidence.

"For my own motives in marrying I could account more confidently, but, as they were scarcely more romantic, it is better to be silent with regard to them. But you are surely mistaken in thinking that he has changed through my influence or agency; and is it not your jealousy that makes you imagine it? You know it is called the 'green-eyed monster,' and it has made you so sensitive that you wrong him with suspicion whenever his pain makes him a little impatient or neglectful."

She touched the right chord; for Lucy could submit to suspicion or wrong herself rather than wrong or suspect another, as, in the first case, she

would have the consolation of knowing herself to be innocent; but, in the other, there were doubts of her own justice and generosity.

"Forgive me, if I have wronged you, Sarah," she said, laying a hand on her shoulder, and calling her again by the name she had used in happier times. "Some one is mistaken, and I hope and trust it is I. I wish I had the courage to go to him and speak plainly on the subject, as I do to you, for I cannot endure this suspense much longer."

"If you *had*, you would both grieve and surprise him, Lucy; for if you will analyze your feelings, you will find that it is 'not that he loves you less, but that he loves me more,' you are really complaining of; and, as his wife, I think I have a right to more love than when I visited you as your cousin," she said, with a look of gentle reproach.

Skillfully as the words of the doughty Roman were adapted, they were suggestive of crime and treachery to Lucy's mind; and, resuming her look of suspicion and reserve, she said,—

"Excuse my petulance and candor, Mrs. Davenport." And then withdrew from the room.

Sarah's meek eyes followed her, with the faintest smile breaking the serenity of her red, gentle lips,—a smile of triumph or derision, it might have been, for aught it expressed; for, ambiguous even in her smiles, her face, yet plump and fair, concealed thoughts as well as its muscles, under its calm, smooth surface.

She returned to her husband, who was resting on a lounge, and said, in a compassionate way, that Lucy had been hurt by being repulsed, and he replied,—

"Yes, I fear I have been too harsh with her; I have not been considerate enough of her feelings; and, unaccustomed to unkindness from me, it may goad her to an extremity I would be guilty of equally with herself."

"Yes, I think it would be better to say nothing to wound her, or betray a knowledge or disapprobation of her designs," his spouse dutifully assented.

It was painful and humiliating to the father to hear even his wife speak of his daughter in connection with reprehensible and dark designs, and he groaned out,—

"Oh, that a child so pure in heart should fall into the temptation of having *thoughts even* that I dare not confess to all the world with pride, but rather must appear ignorant of them, lest I should only hasten their transition into actions!"

No reply was made, for Robert entered, limping with the aid of his crutch, and was followed by Rosamond, who had remained back to bid me a good-by, as I returned to the railway station in the vehicle which brought Mr. and Mrs. Davenport from it; and was excused in my hasty retreat by her, for saying that frankness and truth could not let me make any professions suitable to the occasion.

There was a defiant civility in the greeting of the cousins, which was more in accordance with their feelings than their words; for Sarah was aware of being repugnant to Rosamond, and, true to human nature, she felt more disposed to defy than to conciliate her, however she felt towards the others.

And though drafted into that class termed "old women" by her marriage, and therefore no longer a rival, according to Rosamond's thinking, yet she had offended first by coming into the family, and next by marrying at all, since Rosamond had kindly prophesied an old maid's life for her, and felt injured because her prophecy came to naught.

These feelings were characteristic of the wayward girl, vindictive to those who crossed her, disliking with or without a cause, and devoted and partial to those whom she looked upon as her friends or was interested in.

She turned to Mr. Davenport and asked him where Lucy was, while Robert was expressing his sympathy in his blindest tones with the bride, because she had been compelled to return so soon instead of continuing her travels.

"She has gone to her room, I believe, Rosy, and I wish you would find her, and say to her that if I have spoken unkindly she must forgive me; our life is too short and uncertain to be embittered by unkindness," Mr. Davenport replied, sadly.

Here was an opportunity for Rosamond to serve

friend and foe, according to her desire, and she improved it by saying,—

"Lucy has suffered much lately, uncle, because she imagined your feelings were changed towards her, and your manner cold and harsh without any known cause; and though she has not made me her messenger in the matter, I take the liberty, for which affection for you both must be excuse, of mentioning it to you. If she is not in error in regard to your feelings there is a great misunderstanding somewhere, and I trust you will authorize me to say to her that it is with herself the trouble and error exist."

She bent over him, and ended her speech with a few kisses, like one accustomed to carry her point by some means.

"Go, my child, and do as I first requested you; she may be guilty of a *great mistake*, but I can never wish my daughter less than I have ever since the hour I first saw her," he said, with stubborn dignity and an air of offended authority, which gave the words an unsatisfactory import to the intercessor.

"Then I must convey your words only to her, uncle, if I would bring her consolation, for you speak them as if extending rather than asking forgiveness," was her bold reply; and seeing that her words were not taken unkindly, she added,—

"As you say, there is a *great mistake* somewhere; but since she does not mistake your feelings towards her, it lies farther back; for she could not be

guilty of a thought, word, or act that would merit your displeasure or need your forgiveness." She spoke with pathetic earnestness, and her speech seemed pregnant with meaning to the deluded father; but the step which completed the alienation had been taken, and when it was too late to retreat, he closed his heart against convictions.

The winning and solicitous expression which accompanied her words was changed for a wicked and contemptuous one the moment Rosamond left the room, and she stamped upon the matting in the hall as she denounced the male portion of humanity as born to be dupes, and worthy only of contempt for their simplicity.

"Well, what is the use of trying to set people right when they will be wrong? He is an old dotard, and if Sarah can get any good out of him I do not blame her much for using him. The prefix mistress has an air of respectability about it, even if a woman gets it by fraud. People do not inquire by what means a woman became some old fool's wife, but how much she has got by it. And then 'Somebody's Wife' looks so proper on a tombstone; the sentimental reader will associate more charms in his mind with it than if it had been 'Somebody's Daughter' and she had been as beautiful as an houri," was her charitable soliloquy as she went slowly up-stairs.

She pushed the door of Lucy's chamber open and stepped lightly into it, where she saw the poor girl kneeling against her bed with her face buried in it.

"She will be more calm when she gets up," Rosamond solemnly thought, as she softly stole to a seat and picked up a book, for she respected in Lucy many sentiments and traits of character she did not understand.

When anything troubled her own mind, she either tried to banish it from her thoughts, or fostered it with the strength and intensity of her feelings; but she nevertheless believed that Lucy had a better way, though without any pretense or desire to be partaker in it. Lucy's piety and practice had Rosamond's fullest respect and approval, and she turned her eyes away from witnessing the scene before her, rather because she knew Lucy would not wish to be seen than that it was distasteful to herself.

She read nearly an hour before Lucy looked up, and then, seeing her slightly confused upon finding that she had not been alone, Rosamond said, apologetically,—

"I have not been here long, Lucy. I came to find you at your father's request, and to say to you that he is sorry for his hasty speech when he spoke to you down-stairs."

Lucy's face blushed brightly, and she cried,—

"Has he said so? What were his words, Rosy? Please tell me! Tell me all he said!"

"He merely said that he was sorry for his rough way of expressing his affection, in these words," said the candid girl, repeating the precise words and tone for Lucy's benefit.

"There is not much consolation in that, as I had nothing to forgive; it is no crime to express his feelings; and, since the feelings are still there, I am no better off by his sorrow for having betrayed them," she replied.

Rosamond was not a good comforter, being resentful and independent; and she replied,—

"Why, certainly the feelings are there, or else he would not have them to betray. Have I not told you that several times before to-day? and, what is worse still, Sarah Carroll has put them there by some sleight-of-hand, or how would she become his wife and mistress of the house otherwise? Take my advice, Lucy, and ask your father in such a decided manner that he cannot refuse to listen, why he has thought it necessary to get married; premising your speech by telling him that you wish to say something that may not be agreeable to him to listen to, but which, nevertheless, cannot be left unsaid. That will rivet his attention, and keep him from silencing you by a plea of indisposition; and my word for it, he will tell you, for he is not fool enough to talk of love at his age. If he refuses, insist, and tell him that unless you know the cause of his injustice to you, and see it remedied right speedily, you will not live under his roof."

"Oh, Rosy, you are too violent! How could I address such words to my father, or dictate so arrogantly to him? You could not urge such a course if you had a father to love and respect.

Besides, you seem to forget that my father *has not wronged me by marrying*; it is only an unjust suspicion of my love for him I can complain of, and treating him as you advise would only justify those same suspicions."

"Well, it is all the same; his suspicions of your love and his marriage with Sarah are hand-in-glove with each other,—the one is a sequence of the other; and it does not signify which term you use to begin with. Call it suspicion, if you please, and ask him what suspicions induced him to marry a 'Becky Sharp,' scarcely older than yourself; for that is the point to which his suspicions have drifted him."

Lucy was too well convinced that his marriage was the result of some intrigue of Sarah's to reply to her argument, and she mildly said,—

"Well, it is done now, and complaining of it will make no one happier. I will try to be the same to him that I was always; and, Cousin Sarah being no more, my father's wife is entitled to my respect and assistance; so let us drop the subject, Rosy dear, it only makes me feel wretched and rebellious to brood over it."

"Certainly, dear, if you wish; it is only for you I am concerned: for your father's wife, though a new creature, was an acquaintance of mine in a pre-existent state, and I think she will not attempt to assume a dictatorship over me. No one but a man shall do that, and when he comes into power

I hope he will make me walk a straight line, or mark my steps with my blood!"

"You do?" exclaimed Lucy, diverted from her own cares by the strength and strangeness of her cousin's hopes.

"I certainly do; for I do not think I would be good and obedient of my own accord, and I want a husband who will be severe on my foibles, and terrify me into duty and obedience with a rod of iron."

"Well, you desire a very odd qualification in a husband. I should think, where a woman was anxious to be dutiful and decorous, she would find love and example greater incentives than cruelty and terror," Lucy said, now quite interested in her cousin's ideal.

"I would not; love and tenderness would only make me contrary and aggravating; like the sugarcane, I must be crushed to get the sweetness out of me. The first man that asks me shall have me now, if he has iron enough in his blood to make me quail and quiver when he looks at me," she said, with her usual exaggeration.

"You have been doing very well since you came back to us, and yet we have not ruled you with an iron rod. You get on very nicely with Robert, and he is not an iron-mill to crush you," said Lucy, with a roguish look.

"No, you are all too good for me, and that is why I am spoiling here instead of getting better, as I had hoped good associations would make me.

I am daily in fear of an eruption, for I feel some powerful and malignant element within me boiling and struggling for vent."

"That is what the oldest girls used to say in Miss French's school when we went there," Lucy said, laughing merrily.

"Yes, but those precocious chits meant hearts, while I mean something more of the nature of old Lucifer,—nitre, bitumen, and brimstone, I suppose, or something else that has an infernal element in it."

Lucy made no reply, having no knowledge of the elements and impulses her cousin confessed to; and, after a pause, Rosamond looked cautiously towards the door and windows, and said,—

"Luce, what do you think of Robert and I being engaged to each other?"

"I think it is very natural that you should be; in fact, I know it must be so, you are so much together, and your fondness for each other is so apparent," was the candid reply.

"Oh, did you know it? Well, then, you allowed yourself to fall into an error, for we are not engaged," she cried, piqued that Lucy should seem to be aware of that which she would not acknowledge to either Robert or her own heart.

"Oh, well, I am easily corrected, then. It is because you asked what I would think of it that I anticipated it, for I would gladly congratulate you upon such a happy event."

This generous reply had a communicative effect upon Rosamond; and she continued,—

"Well, there is a sort of an engagement, an understanding, I suppose; for it is not binding upon either, but can be laughed off the moment either of us becomes tired of the other."

"That is convenient enough for the most fickle; but I do not think you will want to laugh it off, as you ought not to get tired of Robert, and I know he will not of you."

"Pshaw! he will be the first to get tired of it; one man is as good as another, and one woman is a great deal better than another, so I do not expect anything more than a short flirtation to come of it," she said, lightly.

Lucy looked earnestly at her for a few moments, and, either angry at her for making so light of it, or else understanding her disposition, she said, with some energy,—

"Well, then, I hope nothing more than a flirtation will come of it! Robert deserves a woman's whole love, and will be sure to get it if there are any true-hearted and deep enough to appreciate him!"

This reproof aroused some jealousy in her heart; for when such an assertion is made between women, the understanding is that the speaker considers herself the person who could and would appreciate so much; and, though Rosamond had acknowledged that Robert was free, she was not willing that he should make use of his freedom just then. She therefore said, in a petulant tone,—

"Why, Luce, if he heard you, he would propose

on the spot, without giving you time to move off the square of the carpet you stand on, or letting me leave the room, though he knows I am no snail in my movements."

"I do not think he would be so rash in a serious matter, or that the engagement, understanding, or whatever term you choose to designate it by, rests as lightly on his shoulders as it seems to rest upon yours."

"Well, suppose it does not? Can a woman who sits at home waiting for proposals to come to her be expected to know her own mind and value as well as a man who is in the market making the proposals, and establishing the price of such wares? I would be more cautious than that if only selling a fine cow; and when it is myself I want to dispose of, I ought to be anxious to make a good sale. Would it not be foolish of a woman to accept or reject a bid unconditionally before she knew whether she was offered enough or not?" she asked.

"Rosy, you are heartless! If I was a man I would feel it my duty both to yourself and to Robert to caution him against one who would enter into a holy state governed by the views of a cattle-dealer," she cried.

"You could not tell him more than he is already aware of; for why should not common sense be applied to the matrimonial as well as the cattle trade? He may look farther and see one that he likes better, and so may I; and then it will be well to know that we have no contracts to bind or break;

and, if we should still remain satisfied with each other, we can feel more assured of our contentment by remembering that we were free at any time to make other disposal of our hearts and hands if we had been so minded," she replied, with some animation.

"It may be fair and prudent in business to do as you say, Rosy; but you are not so utterly insensible to the happiness or misery of thirty or forty years of wedded life to enter into it with so little real love: a curse would follow you all your days, and you could never look back without feeling that it had been merited."

"Well, thank you, cousin, for your defense of me against myself. I am not utterly heartless, I hope; but you know we are privileged to say worse things of ourselves than we would like others to say; and, since you were bold enough to rebuke me, I take it all back. *No bids considered by Miss Rosy Heywood unless they look to a fair exchange of heart for heart, and refusals to be final, whether she gets a second offer or not.* Hear that, gentlemen, and all others whom it may concern, and give attention, that you may understand! *Au revoir, Luce, ma chère!* Our engagement may come to something yet!" And she danced out of the room with a dozen curtsies.

There was a want of feeling and sincerity in her manner that gave Lucy pain, and when she found herself alone again she locked the door to prevent another surprise. The tears flowed as freely and

silently as before; the sorrow caused by her father's words was, for awhile, forgotten, and a fresh grief had been aroused by the very person who had come to soothe the former one.

If Robert had been her brother, or if, as she had said, she were a man, she might feel it her duty to caution him, and could do so without fear of being misunderstood; but, though she did not fear that from Robert's modest and generous mind, her maidenly feelings shrank from so delicate a task.

Rosamond had received the stimulus to constancy that she wished for, but not in the way she had expected. Sisterly love, such as Lucy entertained for Robert, she could not feel towards any young man eligible to matrimony, so long as her own hopes were not secure on that important matter; and she could not credit or appreciate such a feeling in Lucy. Had she seen the tears Lucy was now shedding over her *heartless* theory,—of the interchange of hearts,—she would have ascribed them to selfish feelings; but she fancied she had seen enough to give her an insight of Lucy's heart, and she determined to tighten her hold of Robert, if only for the piquancy of rivalry. After the novelty of her ambiguous engagement had worn out, it seemed too tame and commonplace for her energetic and sanguine temperament, and she spent hours debating the question of her engagement by counting the buttons on her wrapper, and saying, "I am engaged; I am not," after the manner of school-

boys, when determining their future standing in society, by saying, "Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief," as they finger the buttons on their jackets. Now she was certain that she was engaged to Robert; Lucy had helped to convince her of it, and she was glad Lucy knew it.

CHAPTER XII.

ROBERT had scarcely recovered strength to walk without a cane before he became tired of the country life which had promised him so much pleasure. Perhaps his confinement had much to do with his discontent, for people like to rush from one extreme to another; and now, when he could walk again, painting and sketching became too inactive for him, or had too little of the excitement he craved for.

Several interviews had taken place between us, in which the policy of leaving his easel for awhile, and entering into mercantile pursuits, was debated. The motive was very apparent to me,—he was impatient of waiting to become rich by his pencil, and had read in books, dealing more in fiction than in fact, that fortunes were often made by a "stroke of the pen."

Avarice was not one of his sins, or the cause of his discontent. The single-minded bachelor Paul has said, "He that is married careth for the things of this world how he may please his wife;" and in that saying was the key to Robert's worldliness.

He felt married in spirit, and in want of much of this world's goods to please a worldly wife; for the few words he had said to Rosamond while as-

cending the hill that day had wholly changed his wants, his wishes, and his world. He felt now that there was a time, and an event, "a consummation most devoutly to be wished for" by himself, and due to the girl who had promised to wait for him, and that his great duty was to eschew anything that would delay it, and embrace every opportunity of hastening it.

Though I admired his talent, and envied the quiet life he led with it, I did not discourage the change he contemplated; for I knew he was prompted by a desire to fulfill his engagement with Rosamond; and the effort would gain him experience, and tend to make him contented with his professional earnings, if it failed to benefit him in aught else.

After the preliminaries of his new career had been settled, he told Rosamond that he intended to lay his designs on canvas aside for awhile and turn merchant, expecting she would appreciate the sacrifice and say something in commendation of the profession which was dear to him. But Rosamond did not seem to think that herself was at all connected with the change, and had no sympathy to offer, as she thought it was the result of a change in his taste, and a love of adventure.

In fact, she rejoiced to hear of his better prospects; for mercantile enterprise was associated with success in her ardent mind. His romantic profession too tame for Robert, she thought, and not half so attractive to herself as speculation and traffic. Robert felt hurt because she so lightly

esteemed the artist, and would have him exchange art for trade, so he said,—

"I am going away down to Peru, Rosy; and it may be a long time before we see each other again: when we do, I hope to be so independent that I can pursue painting, and leave mercantile enterprise to those who are better fitted for it. When I told Ned that I loaned my spare money to a merchant of my acquaintance at six per cent., and even thought myself accommodated by him in taking it from me, he laughed at me, and said the merchant doubtless made fifty per cent. out of it each year, and showed me a way that he thinks I can double it in yearly, besides seeing much in my travels that will benefit me in after-life."

"Going away down to Peru," where earthquakes, tidal waves, and fevers would endanger his life, and dark-eyed houries endanger his heart, did not appall Rosamond, or even seem to check her mercantile enthusiasm for a moment; bartering, buying and selling, and getting gain were the only advantages she thought of then.

"Oh, if I were a man I should like to do that, above all things! Trading among men, and making a handsome profit every time, would suit my speculative disposition exactly. I would go, too, and be in partnership with you, if you would not object to the style of Robert Heberton & Co., and we would divide our profits every year, and say 'fifty thousand apiece' to each other."

If she was not enthusiastic for his genius as a

painter, she would be at least for his success as a merchant, he thought, and his good humor was restored again by the happy conceit of the partnership; for it was the very end he was exerting himself to bring about, though in a different sense from that which she desired to be understood in—a partnership of joys and sorrows.

"We can go into partnership yet, anyhow,—men and women often do that, and are sometimes more fortunate than two men would be," he said, with a significant look.

Rosamond did not see the look, or notice the ambiguity of his words, she was thinking of capital, and she said,—

"Are you in earnest? would it not be too much trouble for you to do that?"

"Not at all; it would be the greatest pleasure of my life to enter into such a partnership with you, Rosy dear, circumstances permitting," he said, thinking still of marriage.

"Would it, though? Well, then, I have two thousand dollars idle, and getting me only four per cent. in the savings-bank, and you can put them with your money, and we shall be partners, Robert."

He was annoyed and mortified to learn that they were thinking of different conditions, and his pride rebelled against taking some of her money with him, though he was flattered by thinking that the generous girl divined his object, and wished to insure success, and speed the time by increasing his capital. But his independence would not admit

of such an offer, however flattering the motive, and he said, with affectionate earnestness,—

"No, Rosy dear, I have all the capital I can, with my limited experience, safely invest. Keep your two thousand dollars where they are; we can be in partnership without them."

"Oh, no, that would not be fair; I will not take a cent of your profits unless you earn it with my money, and I should insist, only I fear it would be too much trouble for you to bother with it. I have spent many an hour devising some plan for making it yield me more profit, but I cannot think of any. Only about a dollar and a half a week,—barely enough to keep some girls in gloves, and I would do without it, if I could make a venture of it. You have no idea how speculative I am, or how it would please me to invest and be a nabob," she said, with apologetic frankness.

"You are right; I did not think you were troubled with financial schemes, and I would willingly assist you if I was not afraid of making them worse, instead of better, for you," he replied, displeased at finding her so mercenary, and disposed to accommodate her for that reason.

"I know there is risk in all ventures, but I am not afraid of that, if it will not inconvenience you to invest for me when you are investing for yourself. I can get the money for you in a day or two," she replied, her countenance brightening at the prospect of increased revenues from it.

"Well, then, we will be in partnership. I will

use all my money as the active capital, and yours can remain where it is, in reserve, which will insure its safety," he said.

"But could you not make so much more profit by using mine too, Robert?—its safety is of little consequence, as I could do without the income it now yields if it should be lost," she asked, somewhat discouraged at the idea of leaving her money where it was.

"Perhaps I could; but Ned will tell you that all the good firms in the city have money secured outside of their active capital, and the firm of 'Heberton & Heywood' must not be behind them in that respect. If there should be profit, which I hope there will, you will be entitled to your half; but your two thousand dollars must be left secure, if you value my health; for the fear of losing them would not let me eat or sleep," he returned.

She laughed, and slightly colored, as if she was not insensible to his anxiety, and said,—

"But have you no regard for *my* health? I may not be able to eat or sleep when I know that your money is at risk; and if you do not take my share and use it, I will not take any of the profits from you. I would be a nice partner, indeed, to share your profits but have no part in your losses!"

"Well, I suppose I can safely promise to let you bear your part of the losses also, for I do not see how there can be a loss. Ned has made out a list of those articles which will pay best, and, not being staple products, they are mostly overlooked by

greater merchants, and pay double profits, without requiring much capital. He is a partner, too, and will keep me posted on the markets, and watch for my interest in the commission-houses, as he will not be known in the transactions at all. He has arranged it so that I can invest our united capital as often as I have opportunity, will let me know what to ship, and see that the produce is held and sold at the right time, and then, when I come home, I can divide with him."

"Well, I declare, I am as proud as I am fortunate in having you for a friend; you talk like a merchant-prince already, and I have no doubt that we shall make a fortune between us. 'Pearson, Heberton & Heywood!' Whew! Won't that be a heavy signature 'on Change,' though?" she exclaimed, laughing until the tears ran down her cheeks.

Though there was nothing like his art to Robert's mind, and he resigned it now for a season with regret, yet he felt pleased that Rosamond should think he had the tact of adapting himself so readily to circumstances, and he said, with a smile,—

"I should have felt greatly hurt had I known before to-day that the artist was so lightly esteemed; but now since you appreciate me so highly as a man of business, and we are really partners, I must forgive you, and claim the privilege of writing to you as often as I like. What kind of a firm would it be if there was not a regular correspondence kept up between the home and foreign partners?"

"Oh, yes, write to me, Bob! You shall see what a clever business letter I can write you,—'Your esteemed favor is at hand; markets firm, stock reduced, quotations same as last, with more inquiry,' and so forth."

This was a privilege Robert would have asked for, even without the partnership, for he hoped a separation and an active correspondence would satisfy him more with regard to his own feelings as well as hers; for he had too exalted an idea of the holy passion to be contented with a mere warmth of feeling or interest; and he hoped absence would not only try it by removing it from the hot-house of each other's society, but also enable both to free themselves from the habit of airy badinage, which kept in the background the more earnest and exalted expressions of regard, and left him continually dissatisfied with both his feelings and his speeches.

He tried also to believe that Rosamond's love was deeper than her vivacity and coquetry would sometimes indicate; and that, when he was no longer at her side, her heart would speak to him, instead of making herself appear more mercenary and anomalous than she really was, lest his regret, interest, and solicitude, no longer being excited by her exaggeration, he would take her at her own estimation, and think her unwomanly and fickle.

"You must write me something more than the state of the markets, Rosy, or your letters will be dull; for Ned can do that better than you can.

You know that I cannot forget old friends and old feelings merely by going a few thousand miles to invest a few thousand dollars, so you must tell me all about the old house and the family in which we both have been treated so kindly; but above all, you must speak of yourself and your feelings: let us lay aside reserve and deal as truly with each other as we hope God will deal with us in this and the next world. If we do not deceive each other we will have nothing to accuse ourselves of, for we cannot help our feelings; and it is only by feigning them that we have anything to fear or can chide each other for," he said, his voice trembling with emotion.

"I shall be afraid to say much about myself, you will see so much to condemn, for you know how quick you are to discern faults, Robert," she said, awed into seriousness by his solemn charge.

"If I am, Rosy, let me say this much in extenuation: I discern faults only where my warmest interest quickens my sight. Love does not blind me, but rather makes me more watchful and solicitous, lest I should detect anything in those I love to make them less perfect than I would wish to see them; and I am blind to faults and follies only where I am too indifferent towards the owner to perceive them."

"How horrible! What a wretched lover you would make! I hope to get a husband who will be as blind as a bat, rather than he should see my faults, or see me grow old and ugly, and despise

me," she cried, thrown back on her sprightly exaggeration by the compliment implied in his speech.

"That would be a misfortune, as he could not see what a charming bride he would have to begin with; but I have eyes to see that, Rosy, while they would never despise you for your imperfections, age, or decay. Man and woman grow old together, and do not perceive it when they love; it is the mind that really makes us young or aged, and with your cheerful disposition I would always think you were but your twenty-one," he said, carried with her from seriousness to gallantry.

A compliment was never lost on Rosamond, and while her face put on its warmest glow, her eyes shot out a soft light that betrayed the intense satisfaction she derived from his speech, made as it was in full view and recognition of their implicit engagement.

Her gaze was bent full on him for awhile, partly in doubt of the sincerity of his words, and partly in bashful consciousness of their meaning, while he boldly met it with eyes which said, "I have said it, and will make my word good."

There are times when even fickle and unstable people can be firm and true, and if fixed by a timely word, something they would regard as binding and absolute beyond their own weak will, they may become martyrs for a principle or a sentiment.

This time might have been Rosamond's now, and her affections, vacillating and unsettled as they were,

might have been unalterably bound had he said the right word, something that would strip their engagement of its ambiguity and demand from her the full measure and meaning of love, by the open confession of his own.

The time was not, however, improved; for though his heart beat quickly as he read in her face the keen pleasure his words had given her, he still preferred to leave her free to wait for him, if her heart was strong enough, and if not, liberty to accept any one she could love better. It must also be confessed that love made him more sensible of her imperfections than he even confessed, for he really doubted whether a positive engagement would be more binding on her than a partial one, if she should be tempted by a more favored suitor during his absence; while a broken troth would leave a more unpleasant feeling between them, should such a thing happen.

So Robert and Rosamond came no nearer to an explicit understanding by their temporary partnership. They were equally shy of the engagement, though they coquetted around it a good deal; for, distrustful of each other's feelings, whenever they came to the brink of their Rubicon, instead of boldly crossing, their timidity overcame them, and they called up other objects to cover a precipitate retreat.

Mr. Davenport, his wife, and Lucy furnished them topics for feint demonstrations against each other whenever the wily pair found themselves

forced on to the charge by each recurring allusion to their copartnership and the probable results of it; and though the life partnership of joys and sorrows was often in view, they as often exerted themselves to recede from it, as if from a dangerous whirlpool.

With fortune now almost within his grasp (for what young adventurer does not see it in his investments?), Robert looked upon his marriage with Rosamond as an event close at hand, and he blamed himself, after their interview was over, for not making a clean breast of his affection, and a plain fact of their fallacious engagement.

Rosamond, on the contrary, was well satisfied with herself for her success in evading the delicate point. Robert had committed himself by words and looks more than she could accuse herself of doing, and she had the benefit of his open-faced candor without any reciprocation.

The great question was yet before her for decision, and she went on again in her old way of debating it, still saying, with a taper finger on her buttons, "I am engaged; I am not!"

CHAPTER XIII.

As the day of his departure approached, Robert lost much of his self-confidence, and would have sold out his expectations at much less than their par value, I think; not that he was less anxious for the trial, but he was more solicitous as to the result of it.

He was leaving his art, which had, at least, afforded him a competency since he had become its master, and was venturing what he had saved in a forlorn-hope, so far as his experience was concerned.

But though Rosamond was the only one of the family who knew aught of his designs, yet she had kept him up to them by frequent mention of their pecuniary prospects, while he was making silent preparation for the voyage. She showed so much desire to realize more than the eighty dollars per annum, he began to fear that he was important only as he was useful to her, and he therefore felt annoyed at the enthusiasm which had recently encouraged him.

He was morbidly thinking that his death might even be hailed with joy by her could he promise to aid her in the spirit-land, when it suddenly occurred to him that Rosamond was acting the speculator,

and talking of gain to hide her real feelings. It seemed hardly possible that she could place one who had always been so friendly and companionable to her in a balance with the profit on two thousand dollars, and it would not be unlike her to hide her interest in his success, and the event which would follow it, by talking of the pecuniary results.

Full of new hopes, he went to Mr. Davenport, and told him that he was about to try a mercantile career for awhile, and would, in a few days, sail for South America under very encouraging auspices.

There is something in the adventure and supposed wealth of the merchant that dazzles even genius. The poet, the painter, the statesman, the soldier, and the minister of the gospel appear to bow alike before the great golden calf, and have done so ever since the time Moses was up in the mount. His wealth and magnificence has dazzled even the children of the sun, and the old tales of the East have them for their heroes.

Antar has no doubt played the sycophant in their Arabian palaces as much as "Sindbad the Sailor" does in the "Arabian Nights," and the wild asses of the desert have brayed in echo as the rich caravans crossed the plains from Damascus to Bagdad.

To be a "merchant-prince," and have ships on every sea, is of such great importance that the preacher of the riches of the kingdom of heaven must stop in his sermon to explain that such was

the case with some man with whom he had conversed; and, not having yet seen the inside of a counting-house, some boyish heart would leap higher and beat faster with commercial emulation than when the preacher spoke, with less earnest reality, of the golden streets and pearly gates of the New Jerusalem.

Mr. Davenport, artist, philosopher, and invalid though he was, was not exempt from this weakness, and he at once dilated upon the great and beneficial results of commercial enterprise. "Worlds have been discovered, civilization has been advanced, and nations have been sustained by it; the winds and the waves have been trained and made to serve it, and it is the patron of the arts and the sciences," was the laudatory sentence that followed Robert's communication; but he forgot to add to his glowing picture, the butcheries and miseries which its avarice and rapacity have carried to Mexico, Peru, India, and China. The poor man forgot for awhile, in his enthusiasm for his new career, how much he leaned upon Robert. Cut off from fellowship with his fellow-men, he felt Robert's conversation the only relief he had from the monotony of female society, and he would long ago have forgotten that he was a man himself, but that Robert had brought him such views and thoughts from the world of men as served to recuperate his manhood.

Sarah was present at the interview, and if she had ever been sincere before in her life she was so

when she commended Robert's enterprise and ambition. Leaving out the fact that her father had been a merchant, and she appreciated the profits of the trade, she could also be sincere because Robert was more in Mr. Davenport's confidence than she was, and whenever she could be dispensed with as a nurse, he turned to him for advice and companionship.

Both wife and daughter could not have been true to him, and knowing himself to be hastening to the grave, and fearing he might close a virtuous and useful life by an injustice to either, he made Robert his counselor.

Sarah had good reason to fear that her wages might be withheld by Robert's influence, and therefore was glad that he was going away.

As soon as she left them alone for a few moments, her husband said to Robert,—

"My time is rapidly approaching its end, my dear boy; for I am old beyond my years. With Jacob, I can say that 'the days of the years of my life have been few and evil, and I have not yet attained unto the days of the years of my fathers in their pilgrimage;' but I have been long since laid aside as useless in this active world, and maybe before you have entered your new career I shall have begun a new and better life."

Robert replied that he hoped to find him alive and in better health on his return.

But the old artist hopelessly observed,—

"No, Robert, hope will not save me, and it

will deceive *you* if you believe in it. My day is over, and why should I wish to prolong the night of my life? I have even lived too long; for had I died a year ago I could have left my orphan girl to the providence of God as one of His own angels; but now I can only commit her to His mercy and compassion."

"I hope you will not die so soon, sir; but more than all, God forbid that you should die with unjust suspicions of Lucy's duty towards you, whatever your wife may have said."

"I have told you all that I know about it, and I do not see why we both should draw different conclusions from the same evidence," he said, thinking from Robert's earnest manner that he had more reliable information.

"But I have not told you all that I know about it, for I cannot now; but I can say this much, sir, no one could retain my friendship for one moment after having abused your hospitality, as you suspect Mr. Pearson of doing, and yet I am as much his friend now as I ever was; and no one would more strongly condemn Lucy's ingratitude and folly in purposing to desert the best and most indulgent of fathers; and yet I now tell you, as perhaps it may be my last opportunity of speaking to you, that I believe she is the truest friend you have; and I shall always love and respect her as the worthy child of my best of all earthly friends."

As he spoke, his earnestness brought tears into the artist's eyes, whether for joy that there was

one to believe in his daughter's filial care, or sorrow that he had wronged her by ever doubting its constancy.

After pausing a moment, he held out his hand to Robert, and said,—

"God be with and prosper you, my dear boy, though there is none of my blood in your veins. You have always been my pleasure and my pride; and, as you still believe Lucy to be what I have found her for twenty years, be always a brother and a friend to her, and God will bless you for it. Her friends and companions are limited to Rosy Heywood and yourself: and even if she *had* contemplated leaving me, I am mostly to blame; for I have denied her the society and pleasures her age craves, and selfishly kept her at my side to nurse and comfort me; and now, when I shall go the way of all the earth, she will have but few friends or acquaintances in the world in consequence of her seclusion."

I have not yet explained how Robert came to be Mr. Davenport's ward; but there could be no time so fitting for it as now, when he is about to leave him and the art he learned from him for a distant clime and a new calling.

When Mr. Davenport was a very young artist he traveled, as all young artists ought to do, to see something of the faces and places beyond his immediate vicinity.

Stopping for a few days at a small village, which was snugly nestled between two mountains, he

plunged into the wilds in search of game every morning at sunrise.

On the third day he met with a young hunter, a year or two his junior, and they agreed to unite their fortunes for the day and hunt together. When they parted that evening they were well pleased with their day's companionship, and proposed to meet at the same place and hour on the following morning, and continue their hunt and acquaintanceship.

Their excursions were attended by so much success and pleasure, they were continued day after day for over a week.

One evening, as they were approaching their rendezvous, and about to separate there, the frank young stranger said to him,—

"I wish you would tell me your name, and come home with me. I have been interesting my mother and sister with an account of our meetings and adventures, and it was only last night when they asked me how we could talk so much without knowing each other's names, that I was reminded of the gentle Juliet's words on the insignificance of a name. However, as we know the names of every tree, beast, and bird we see, it does not seem proper that we should be less intimate with ourselves; so I told them that your name was Robin Hood, and that I was Little John, and promised to bring you home, dead or alive, and let them see you."

The young artist was pleased with his compan-

ion's artlessness, but declined his invitation, saying that there was always a romance attached to mystery, and by revealing himself he would destroy the interest their imagination had surrounded him with.

"Oh, no, you need not fear that; after I have told so many things about you, you must come with me and substantiate them. We live secluded here a few months each year, having no acquaintance with the people around us; and women are so curious, you know, that they must be told about everything I see when I go home at night." And a proud toss of his head indicated how conscious he was of the superiority of men.

Before he had decided whether to accompany the youth or not, they met his sister, and he was introduced to her as "the unknown ranger of the forests." She had been selecting wild flowers, and the artist, with his professional eye for beauty, thought he had never before seen so beautiful a woman; but, great as her beauty was, her refined manners and unstudied cordiality were still more irresistible to him.

Tossing the flowers into her basket, she prepared to accompany them, saying, without the slightest appearance of embarrassment,—

"My brother Perry has entertained us every evening with an account of your daily travels and conversations, and we owe much to you for the many pleasant titbits of wit and humor he has brought home to us. We have made a rule not to

use artificial light while we live in the country, and therefore Perry's adventures supply the place of books in our evening's entertainments, which I hope will not make him vain and egotistical, though I fear it will, for he already talks as if he was dressed in Lincoln-green, and one of the bold archers of Sherwood Forest, with you for his chief."

This skillful effort to learn his name was successful, and he was in return informed of the names of the brother and sister; and then there was a general laugh at the impersonality of the young men, who had not discovered their want of names for a week.

They had not proceeded far before they came to the house, and as he was about to leave them she added her entreaties to her brother's, and said,—

"Oh, you must come in and be introduced to our mother! It is seldom we see a stranger here, and we must make the most of one when we do;" and as "must" was the language of her eyes, he had neither the inclination nor the power to disobey them.

He was evidently the more bashful of the two, for there was a frank boldness in her manner towards him that convinced him he was regarded as a boy like her brother Perry, or in some other respect as one that she need not be afraid to make free with.

As he yielded and entered the house, he was presented to the mother, who welcomed him with matronly kindness, and said she already felt quite

well acquainted with him through her son's conversations.

The fowler himself was at last ensnared; Perry's romance, enthusiasm, and impulsiveness, his mother's gentle interest in him, and her communicative suavity, and her daughter's bewitching beauty, had all conspired to make him a prisoner, and for a time all thoughts of "moving on" were forgotten.

As he studied and learned the tastes and preferences of the peerless beauty, his plans of life and labor were rough-hewn anew, and she was encircled in every dream, hope, and thought of the future—the center of every ambition and aspiration.

I will say at once that he was in love, but his love, from the beginning to the end, had no hope in it; it was not the love that is usually successful, for it savored too much of adoration; with the feelings she inspired in him he would almost as soon have dreamed of marrying an angel.

Though young and untraveled, he had an intuitive knowledge of human nature, and knew that he could not hope for her love as long as she could treat him with the same ease and freedom of manner her brother shared in common with him; but when absent he overcame his extreme reverence for her.

Her diamond eyes were dovelike in the distance, and then he could look forward to a time when they would no longer awe him, but rather beam on

him with soft affection; for they inspired him with too much veneration to allow him to pay any marked attentions to her while he was within their range.

One glance of the bright, unflinching optics would dry up the fountain of thought he had to pour at her feet, and as long as he was near her he could not think of a word to say in plea for his passion.

He at last resorted to the more feasible way of writing a sonnet to speak for him, and thought it would be easy for him to judge what he might hope for by watching her countenance as she read it. The lines were not preserved, I believe, and even if they had been it would not be necessary to insert them here; for all such effusions breathe essentially the same spirit,—“lure,” “pure,” “near,” “dear,” “moon,” “boon,” and “never,” “sever” flow after each other as naturally as the notes of birds in the spring, when the pairing-time makes them tuneful.

He handed them to her, and, with his heart firmly braced to bear the consequences of his boldness, whatever they might be, he anxiously watched to mark their effect.

He soon saw it, for, with a burst of laughter, she cried out, as she thrust them back into his hand,—

“Come, come, sir! that will never do! If you would play the gay deceiver you must learn the art of duplicity better than that. I am too honest

to take the praise which does not belong to me: you have written that document for some other damsel, I see; for if you will take the trouble to look into my eyes you will discover that they are of a 'fast black,' instead of the 'changeable heavenly blue' which appears to have robbed you of your customary wit and discrimination."

Invited, he looked boldly into her eyes for the first time, and not only found them "black," as she said, but saw in them how little love he could hope for when they could read a love ditty so critically, and laugh so merrily at his blunder, stupid as it was of him.

A wit, a jester, or a clown feels successful in proportion to the laughter he calls from his audience; but the bitterest feeling one so earnest as a lover can have, is to know that to please a woman he had made himself ridiculous, and she laughed at him for his pains.

The loss of herself was aggravated by the fancied loss of her respect; for she was about a year his senior, and in maturity of mind several years, which made him more sensitive of her ridicule, and apprehensive of having earned it.

His dream of love was over, the first one he had had, and he soon discovered that the summer was not the time to hunt for game, and took his leave of the mountains.

This beauty was Robert's mother, and at the time Mr. Davenport had seen her first she was already the betrothed of another, to whom she was

married soon after her return to the city,—the autumn following.

They lived in the same city, and though the happy bride soon forgot the sensitive artist, and the rhyme he treated her to, she was never forgotten by him.

A few years afterwards he had recovered from his chagrin and his love-sickness so far that he wooed and won another; but though he was thankful that he was denied one in order to get another more after his own heart, he had a brother's interest in the heroine of his romantic passion by the mountains, and in the City of Brotherly Love he did not altogether lose sight of her family.

Perry filled an early grave, and his mother soon followed him; while ten years after her marriage, Lucille, the daughter and sister, was left a widow. She also followed her husband to the tomb, and left her only child to breast the storms of life without a parent.

When time had blunted the poignancy of his refusal, Mr. Davenport was both pleased and thankful to her for the tact with which she had kindly saved him from a straightforward denial, and he would prefer the power of doing her a favor in return to any other desire in life; and now the way seemed to be open at last.

There was no inheritance left to her orphan to require administration and guardianship from his relatives, and when Mr. Davenport, whose disin-

terested kindness was the great romance of his life, came forward and offered to adopt him, there was no objection urged against it by those who had the right to be his protectors and guardians, by reason of relationship to him.

There is no authentic information to the effect that the kind-hearted Mrs. Davenport ever knew why her husband was so interested in a strange boy that he took him into the family; no doubt she thought it was for the genius his discriminating eye had discovered in the embryo artist; but even if she had known it, she was far too sensible and too benevolent herself to be jealous of a sentiment which could never take a more sinister form of expression.

Mr. Davenport used to delight to walk up on the heights with Robert before he became an invalid, and impart his experiences to him for his instruction and amusement; and it was on one of those trips that he told him of his short but eventful acquaintance with his mother. If there was anything wanting to increase his love and veneration for the artist, it would have been supplied by the tender and affectionate manner he spoke of his mother, after a lapse of twenty years, and when both she and Mrs. Davenport were resting in Laurel Hill Cemetery, where no one is jealous or envious.

The parting was therefore the more affecting to both, because of the sentiment of their relationship; and the old artist still held Robert's hand as

if he would say more, after he had said good-by several times to him.

There was a time, perhaps, when he dreamed that his daughter and the son of the dazzling Lucille might love each other as he had loved the mountain-nymph, and his unuttered thoughts might have recalled it; but even before he had suspected Lucy's affections of leaning in another direction, he saw Rosy Heywood, another waif of his kindness, step into the niche he had designed for his daughter, and the fond dream had been dispelled long ago by that demonstrative and irrepressible girl.

But, setting sentimentalism aside, it was natural that Mr. Davenport should like to see the love of his daughter transferred to the only one he knew to be worthy of it, and have more hopes of her happiness by seeing her united to the one who had from her childhood showed himself in temper and disposition an agreeable companion to her.

With Lucy herself his parting was very affecting, for she was now more in want of his sympathy than she could confess, since her father's coldness, and the inutility of Rosamond's advice, left her sadly in need of a friend in whom, as one of the family, she could confide her cares and anxieties. She wept as he told her that he was about to leave them and go so far away, and took no more pains to conceal or suppress her tears than if they had been those of a sister.

"Now, Lucy dear, your father loves you as much

as he ever did, and when the feelings which his marriage has created will have lost their strangeness, and you both become used to the new order of things, you will be able to feel towards each other as you always have felt. You must be cheerful, and not let him see that you have taken it to heart, so that he will not be diffident about showing his affection for you, as he is now, from a conviction that you did not like to have him marry Sarah. I may be back in a year or two at most, and then we will have the same old times over again. Write to me every week about your father's health, and anything else you can think of, and I will answer every letter. If he should not recover, remember you will have in me a friend upon whose care you can, and have a right to, rely as long as I live," he said, as they parted on the porch.

Rosamond proposed to walk down the avenue with him, and the carriage which was to convey him and his trunk to the railroad was driven ahead of them.

She was nervous and excited, and talked rapidly all the way about making a fortune, as if to conceal her feelings at parting.

Robert did not, however, perceive the ruse, and was disappointed because their last moments were employed so little to his taste; for he well knew she would be in his mind while away just as he had found her when taking leave of her, and he was chagrined by the lightness of her conversation

when he was undertaking the journey solely for her sake.

The only thing he had to fan the sinking flame in his breast was the hope that he did not understand her, and that beneath her fickle and unsatisfactory surface she was concealing truth, firmness, and devotion, which his equally unsatisfactory declaration of love would not let her betray.

The earnest desire to have all causes for reserve removed, and learn more of her heart in half an hour, by telling her that he loved her and wanted her love in return, than he could know in a lifetime without doing it, came back to him with redoubled force, for she was a mystery to him that he longed to solve. He would have done it, even had he been assured that she would have proved false to her troth and married some one else during his absence, but he also thought she might remain true to him, to her own disadvantage, and then the words of the simple ballad,—

"Five years have rolled round,
And I have not a dollar,"

occurred to his mind, and the fate of the patient "Evelina" deterred him from asking Rosamond to also await an event which might be equally long deferred.

She disturbed his meditations by saying, in a light manner,—

"Now, Bob, while you grow a rich merchant, do

not allow yourself to contract those shop-airs so many of your brotherhood carry about them, as if advertising their business; but, remember, you have always hated affectation, and do not let your wealth and your wares be seen in your walk and your manners as well as in your warehouse."

"I wish you would not be always harping on 'business,' Rosy; for you make me fear that you are quizzing me, and you should be the last one to do that, since you have said so much to encourage me in this step," he said, impatiently.

"Which proves that I am not quizzing you, or making light of our laudable enterprise, unless I could be guilty of not only misleading a friend, but also of stultifying myself."

"Well, I do not think you would do either; this is the last time we shall see each other for many a day, and I would be glad to believe something better of you. I want to think of you, Rosy, as a talisman that is to aid me, and not as the fickle and unreliable creature you often appear to wish yourself taken for," he said, warmly.

"Wish myself taken, or rather mistaken, for a fickle, unreliable creature? Why, Bob Heberton, was there ever a creature so slandered to her face before? No, sir; I want you to think me all that your fancy can paint me,—endowed with every perfection,—and not one quality which even yourself could, by distortion, construe into a fault," she answered, with a comic effort to severely rebuke him.

He wistfully looked at her, as if he would willingly believe all this, if he could, and she tried to look gravely, as if conscious of deserving it, whether he believed it or not.

For awhile their eyes were fixed on each other, as if their sincerity depended on the strength of their stare, and then both laughed.

This was Robert's *pons asinorum*, and he could never pass it in his endeavors to reach her heart; for she was too skillful in parrying his sober earnestness by destroying his equilibrium just as he reached a point which she appeared to have marked for his discomfiture, and left him no other resource but to skirmish with indirect speeches, pointed by feigned feelings and witty retorts.

He was used to her tactics, and liked to follow her well enough when time permitted; but he had none to waste now, and he therefore said, with some impatience of manner,—

"Now, Rosy, I wish you would be serious for a few moments, and then I will say good-by to you. Can you remember the promise you made me that day my thigh was broken on the hill yonder?—let us now understand it, and each other."

"Why, I thought that was all understood; and I am certain that I know my part well enough,—it is merely to pass judgment whenever you present before my honor a trembling victim for the hymeneal altar, and no more: that is simple enough for a child to comprehend."

"Bah! you are neither a child nor a fool, that

my meaning was not evident enough to you ; and I wish you would let me say the few words time will permit me, without any of this foolish disguise or equivocation," he answered.

The color and nervousness returned again, and she seemed alarmed by his earnestness ; but quickly rallying, she said, with a confidential tone, which wore his patience entirely out,—

" Oh, yes, Bob, I understood you well enough ; and I would not have given my consent to your marriage with her had you asked for it, though I suppose you would marry her without it, had she not saved you by marrying uncle. And now, as all you said had reference to her, I suppose you wish to be released from a promise which you would never have kept ?"

" Rosy, you would wear out the patience of a saint, and the last lesson you will teach me is what I have learned from you a thousand times before. Will nothing make you sincere and candid for one half-hour ? You would equivocate at the altar, and Death himself would not find you willing to lay aside your everlasting coquetry !" he cried, in despair.

" What would you have me do, pray ? cry, and let you see how much I feel your departure ? Why, I would spoil you by flattery, and I do not want to see you like other only brothers,—full of their own importance. You must come back as you go away, neither more nor less of you, and you will find us, at

least Lucy and myself, just the same, and no more than as you left us," she said.

" Well, then, so be it, with all my heart," he cried, and he drew her to his breast.

She did not either resist or return his embrace, for her arms hung passively by her side ; but when he was going off, and turned for a last look at her, she kissed her hand to him, and he went away satisfied.

CHAPTER XIV.

THOUGH Mr. Davenport was proud of Robert's enterprising spirit, and had high hopes of his success, yet his departure left him a disconsolate man, and his mind became greatly depressed in consequence. He deemed himself rapidly sinking, and the consciousness of having done a very foolish act by getting married made him unhappy and morose.

His wife was not a companion for him, and between himself and his daughter there was a gulf made by his folly beyond which neither could pass; so that since Robert—with whom alone he could discuss the misunderstanding—had gone away, there was no one to share his griefs or look to for sympathy.

While his daughter was treated with kindness and respect by his wife, he felt that he had made her more of a guest in the house than she ought to be; for he never saw her except in his wife's presence, and she was as backward in forcing herself upon his society as if she had been a stranger.

As he grew more feeble, there was a change in his manner; he noticed her more, addressed his words to her oftener, and at length called upon her to do many little offices which his wife had been in the habit of doing; for if Sarah did not make a

(210)

loving bride, she became, at least, a good nurse, which was more to the purpose.

Lucy evinced a willingness to be reconciled and a gladness to serve him that gained much upon his affections, notwithstanding that she knew herself to be innocent of anything which ought to have alienated them from her. There was a dignity under all her devotedness and love that had been mortally wounded, and the old feelings could never be restored again; for her heart had fine chords in it, which, when once touched by an unkind deed, would vibrate while its pulsations lasted, though the hand that touched them could well be forgiven.

Gradually the duty of giving him his medicine devolved upon his daughter; for he said she could read Latin better than his wife; but as the directions were uniformly in plain English, as they ought to be, this reason had not much weight in it.

The truth was that, as his daughter regained the confidence his wife had undermined, the latter became odious to him, and the weakness of his mental powers decreasing with his physical, he finally refused to take any medicine from her.

His reluctance to take anything from his wife became so palpable and strong that it amounted to a suspicion of treachery, and, being so interpreted by her, she became cold, indignant, and defiant.

Whatever else Sarah was deficient in, she could always boast of a good, politic judgment, and, were she even without human tenderness, self-

interest would not let her wish her husband evil, as her object had been attained by her marriage, and its possession was guaranteed by his life rather than by his death.

I have forgotten to mention that soon after they had returned home I went out to congratulate Mr. Davenport and his wife, as if ignorant of the part I had involuntarily played in bringing their marriage about.

There was not much to congratulate them upon, certainly; but I contrived to say some things customary to a wedding, and was able to counterfeit smiles to sustain my words. Mr. Davenport coldly, though civilly, thanked me; but it was a part of my acting to overlook any coldness and come out there occasionally as if nothing had been revealed to me.

Rosamond was present when the hollow form of congratulation was spoken; and to hide her feelings, whatever they were, she thrust her hand into her deep literary pocket, and appeared to search diligently for something deposited there.

As I turned to Mrs. Davenport, who had then entered, the hand dived and rolled in the pocket like a porpoise in the water, and her eyes peered down after it, while there was a nervous twitching of the lips, as if she found it difficult to restrain a smile of scorn or merriment.

I imagined she was despising me, as her brows knit in thoughtful surprise at the disappearance of her treasure from her pocket, and I resolved to say

nothing to the bride, at least, that could be called hypocrisy.

She had often said the most sarcastic and severe things to me with the smile of an angel on her face, and I think I had learned a little from her; for I know my face broke into smiles of pleasure, and my lips parted as if to utter benevolent blessings, while I took her hand with affectionate respect and hissed,—

"Sarah, you have the devil's genius for deceit, and will also have his reward for using it so well."

"Edward, you were always so witty and complimentary," she replied in the same undertone, while smiles and blushes mantled her cheeks, as if I had wished her health, heirs, and happiness to the end of a long life.

My first visit being successful, I did not want for occasions for calling again, and before Robert had departed I had been there three times.

When news of the safe arrival of the steamer Robert went to Aspinwall in was telegraphed, I went out to bring them word, and, as usual, was welcomed by all in the family.

Dr. Boynton was now a visitor there; for, being an old friend of Mrs. Davenport, he was invited by her, while Rosamond, by her coquettish way of quizzing him, seemed to second the invitation.

Out of respect to me, Lucy came into the parlor, when I had talked as much to her father as I could without fatiguing him; for I am sure she would not sit there otherwise while Dr. Boynton was

making his silly impertinences to Rosamond. She was as much grieved as I was to see her cousin pursue a course of flirtation with the doctor, which was not deserved or expected by Robert.

At the hour for medicine Lucy was called out to give it to her father, and, taking advantage of her absence, the doctor so far forgot his respect to Rosamond as to stretch himself out on a lounge, asking me to excuse him; but never, by look or word, seeming to think the lady who was entertaining him ought to be asked for permission or pardon.

I looked at Rosamond in surprise, perhaps expecting her to ask me to kick him out for his ill manners, and then she colored deeply, and said, in a tone that was intended to be resentful,—

“And won’t you ask me to excuse you at all, sir? Do you not think I am entitled to any apologies for such a lazy disposition of your limbs?”

The laugh that followed her reproof did not hide her mortification at his letting me see how little respect he had for her presence; but he took it in jest, and carelessly replied,—

“Oh, yes, certainly: excuse me, Miss Rosy. I have had a long drive this morning, and am tired, you know.”

“Yes, ‘I know’ physicians are always running about, if their own words are to be taken for it; they are called here and there, rung up at night, and whispered out of church on Sunday,” she retorted.

“I do not know much about being called ‘there,’

or ‘whispered out of church,’ as I never go into one, or being ‘rung up in the night;’ but I confess I am called ‘here’ often by that much-abused medium of circulation, my heart,” he replied.

“Yes, I believe you have circulated it pretty extensively, and as your life depends on keeping the circulation up, I hope you will not allow it to stop,” she said, with sarcasm too well disguised for his intellectual keenness.

I did not wait to hear the reply, but stepped out on the veranda, where Lucy, who was just returning from her father’s room, joined me, and I proposed a short walk. I looked upon myself as her suitor, and had taken her father’s cold invitation to come out often for an assent to my attentions to his daughter, and did not think anything else except her own assent was necessary to our marriage.

When we had walked some distance from the house, I thought I had as good an opportunity then as I would have at any future time for discovering how I was progressing, as her ready, and even eager, assent to the walk gave me hope that my company was agreeable to her.

“I left Dr. Boynton alone with Miss Heywood, because I thought he was very far gone in his love-sickness, and would, at any moment, bring on the crisis,” I said.

“I do not see what he can hope for from Cousin Rosy; for she has not even respect for him, at least for his character, much less love,” she hastily replied.

"You think, then, I suppose, that respect is inseparable from love?" I observed.

"Yes; why not? Are there any who deny it?" she asked, in return.

"Yes; a great many deny it, practically, by accepting and marrying those whose peculiarities they laugh at," I said.

"Peculiarities do not cover Dr. Boynton's faults entirely; though, for the respect I have to manhood, I hope they are peculiar to himself. My father and you and Robert, who comprise my world of observation, do not show any relationship to his peculiar species, and if the rest of the world were like him, where do all the heroes and great men we hear and read about come from?" she said.

I could not help laughing; it seemed so strange to me to hear one who was naturally very careful to say nothing severe against an offender, however strongly she would condemn the offense in the abstract, speak so harshly of one man to another only a little longer in the circle of her acquaintances.

I accounted for it to myself, first, because she disliked to see her cousin flirt with him, but mostly because I had won her confidence; and that gave me confidence in myself, and hurried me on in my love career.

"Your candor is quite refreshing, and I am much obliged to you for your favorable classification of myself," I said, as soon as I could suppress an inclination to crow aloud over my anticipated triumph.

"Why not? Is it not best to be candid in anything in which good and bad, right and wrong, are contrasted? And a good opinion is a thing which a person earns and has a right to, rather than what he must feel obliged for," she returned, with a sweet earnestness which thrilled me.

"I must take some exceptions to the philosophy of your last clause, since an opinion often depends on the taste and character of the person who forms it. What would you think of such a wise and discriminating person as Mrs. Davenport preferring the doctor to me? She has done so on a great many occasions, and, though it was before you knew either of us, we have not changed much since then," I said, with some tremulousness, for I was about to make a confession, having heard her once express herself in regard to broken engagements, and thinking it due to her frank nature to tell her all about mine before I asked her to take Sarah's place.

"I do not know what to think of it," she said, thoughtfully looking at me.

"Yes," I continued, "she and I were engaged to be married once, and we had many a quarrel before our engagement was broken off about this same Dr. Boynton; not that I was so self-distrustful as to be jealous of him in particular, but that she would go to greater lengths with him than with more dangerous beaux, and, like Cæsar, I should want to see the name of her who becomes my wife above reproach. The engagement was not broken

off directly on his account, I am glad to say; but it was because of her capricious conduct and flirting with him that we were so ready to break it off when a less important matter gave us opportunity."

The reader will see that I did not bear very heavily on myself in this confession; but who will condemn themselves, being their own judges?

"It is very good and polite of you to meet the doctor and Mrs. Davenport so pleasantly after the sorrow they have caused you; and I think Rosy should be more careful, and not encourage his foolish attentions," she said.

I was immediately sorry that I had not told her I had been once engaged, without connecting the doctor or her stepmother with it; but it was too late, and I said, jumping at once to the vital question,—

"It ought to be the cause of thankfulness now to me, since the love I wasted on her has been transferred to one more worthy of it, and far better suited in temper and disposition to my taste; and I will bless both Sarah and the doctor for their flirtations if you, Lucy, will tell me that this time my love is given to one who will appreciate it and repay it a thousand times with her own."

She turned to me with a look of the most unfeigned surprise, and asked, in a hurried, earnest manner,—

"Do you mean that you love me, Mr. Pearson?"

"Yes, all that and far more, too, since the same words would be used to express love more lightly

felt and more lightly deserved," I replied, feeling confident that she would at once confess as frankly as she had spoken on every other subject, that her surprise had been an agreeable one, and I could have her and welcome.

I was sadly mistaken, however, for in a moment her look was one of sincere regret, and she feelingly said,—

"I am very sorry that I can give you no more than my sincere thanks for the feelings you have expressed, Mr. Pearson; but that is all I can return, sensible as I am of how worthy you are of the love of a true woman."

I was confounded for a moment by her reply; she spoke like one who had more experience and had reflected more on the subject than I had expected; but I rallied, and said,—

"Perhaps you think less of me after what I have just confessed; but I can assure you that you have my love as fully as if I had never spoken of it to any other woman: do not doubt that, I beg of you!"

She pressed my arm warmly and caressingly, and replied, in the same sincere way,—

"Indeed, I do not; I believe you would not say so unless you loved me truly, and it grieves me to think of it. I did not expect such a declaration, and I can never forgive myself if I have by a word or look ever encouraged a passion which I could not reciprocate."

"You have not, I assure you! It is because you

have inspired rather than encouraged it that I have confessed it. Perhaps I have been too abrupt; you have not thought of it and have not seen enough of me to say yes or no. I shall let it rest for your future consideration," I said.

"No, no, Mr. Pearson! though unexpected, my answer to you would be the same at any time. From the first time I saw you I have entertained the highest respect for you, and by the pleasure you have always given us you have added to that respect a warm interest; but nothing more could happen had you let the question remain open for any length of time; and I cannot encourage you to do it."

This was enough; for, though spoken in a soft, affectionate tone, I knew she was in earnest, and, feeling sorely disappointed, I turned to take her back to the house.

With her hand pressing still on my arm, she said, in a pleading, sisterly way,—

"No, do not let us return yet; let us walk up this hill. You look grieved, and I do not want to let you go away so, for you would never come back to us again, and we all would miss you and be disappointed."

I turned with her again, and she continued,—

"If you will only let me be as sister to you, we will always love each other! I am sure that is the way we feel, only just now, because there were no blood ties, you forgot yourself, and thought you felt differently."

I shook my head ominously, though I began to suspect that my disappointment arose from wounded vanity, and was not of that deep, suicidal nature which should characterize a wild, passionate love such as we read of in some novels.

She, however, penetrated the gloomy atmosphere of my countenance, and, still pressing my arm, she smilingly said,—

"It would not do for you to make such a declaration to some young ladies, you know; for they would feel so flattered that you would be accepted at once, and then you would have to make the best of a poor mate, if your love was not that of a true, lasting, marriageable kind: all are not philosophers and metaphysicians like I am, and are not able to discriminate like your sister."

Between her caresses on my arm, her evident sympathy, and her sweet endeavors to make me feel humorous and pleasant, my disappointment was melting away very rapidly. I became more confident that my self-esteem rather than my heart was hurt by the refusal; and if I were alone I could have cuffed my own head for being such a fool as to mistake my feelings; but, as she went on coaxing me in her tender, artless way, I made my face longer, and looked the more gloomy as she tried to make me smile.

"Forgive me if I have wounded your feelings by seeming to lightly regard what you have said to me. I do not; I do not, I assure you!" she

said, becoming saddened again by the increased length of my face.

I felt mean and hypocritical, and would, if my fear of her contempt had let me, tell her, with equal frankness, that I was more mortified at my mistake than disappointed in love, but I merely replied,—

“No; you are too good and too sensible, Lucy, to make light of what saddens another.”

“You are right, my dear friend.

‘Taught by the power that pities me,’

I esteem whatever makes a fellow-creature sad or joyous a great thing, and sympathize with all that affects the human heart or mind. He who trieth the heart knows that I do not lightly regard what you have said to me; but what can I say, or what can I do, to express my appreciation of your words, and yet at the same time convince you that it is better for both that we should be no more than good, faithful friends?”

“Nothing; you have said enough to prove how good you are, Lucy——”

“That is right! Call me Lucy always, and I will call you Edward, and you shall see what fine, old-fashioned friends we will be!” she exultingly exclaimed.

I could no longer hold out under such a storm of tenderness and entreaty, and I accepted her proposition, while I tried to keep her from doubting that she would be more acceptable to me as a

wife than as a sister. I drew her head to me, and imprinting a kiss on her smooth, white forehead, I said,—

“Well, then, good-by, sweetheart Lucy, and welcome, sister Lucy! If such a transition must be, the sooner I realize it the better.”

“There, now, that is right! spoken like what I always took you to be,” she said, looking into my face and taking my hands, as if I was a patient just recovering from a paroxysm and herself was the physician.

“Yes, it is all over, Lucy,” I said, contriving, however, to keep my face from indorsing my words too readily; for, besides being ashamed of the lightness of my passion, I imagined she would not like me less for breaking my heart a little for her.

I fear I make myself appear a very deceitful man, a male flirt, for keeping up the appearance of a passion that I knew to be illusory; but I did not pretend to it for the sake of urging it further; but rather, like a general, made a show of long, heavy lines, to cover my real weakness and retreat. Only I was afraid she would think me silly, I would have thanked her at once for not listening to my professions of love; for if there is such a thing as the love the poets and romancers tell us about, almost an inspiration, we would have married without it, and discovered our error when too late. We would have spoiled sound friendship to make spurious love, like many before us; and I

think if women were the wooers instead of the wooed this would not be a common occurrence. They are better judges of the passion, if they are of the sensible kind, and they more readily distinguish between it and esteem or respect; but not being the suitors, they too often accept what is offered to them rather than risk getting nothing more.

Lucy and myself became lively in a few moments, and now that we were in a groove out of which we could not slip, we talked of family matters.

After a few remarks about her father's marriage with Sarah, she said,—

“Your engagement with Sarah surprises me; tell me all about it, if it is not a painful subject to you; it must be very interesting, for she was always such a clever, brilliant girl.”

“No, it is not at all painful to think of, only sometimes a little mortifying, as in all cases where people recover from love-sickness, and discover how irrational and pettish they were while the fever was upon them. There are other things connected with my acquaintance with Sarah which make it disagreeable to me to think or speak of now. Robert was my confidant all the time, and when he returns to you he will tell you about it, and the miserable time I had with her.”

I meant when he had returned to the family, but she interpreted *you* in the singular, and while she gasped for breath, a flush overspread her face, and a flash of light burst from her calm blue eyes.

Either her eyes became dark after the sudden illumination, and her face vacant of any expression, or else my vision became so impaired by the discovery, so startling, so evident, and so unexpected, for all was dark and indistinct to me for a few moments afterwards.

“Here,” said I, while my eyes were dimly looking over the distant hills,—“here is a desperate case of cross-love! I in love with Lucy, she loves Robert, he loves Rosamond, and she apparently thinks of falling in love with the doctor! Can there be anything in surgical experience, or in the records of the *London Lancet*, more hopelessly cross-eyed than we appear to be in our affections?”

I was about to form a sentimental pity for myself at first, as the only one in the party who had no one's love; but in an instant my selfishness was forgotten, and I pitied the girl beside me, who, I was sure, had felt the passion longer and more deeply than I could comprehend. She was herself in a moment, and reading my thoughts wrong, she thought I was relapsing into another fit of love melancholy, and said, in a cheerful mood, to arouse me from it,—

“Do you not think the doctor has had time to ‘say his say?’ As you are old acquaintances, you must be aware that he cannot say much without repeating the same words over; and, as Rosy has intelligence enough to comprehend their full meaning at the first speaking, she must be wearied by this time.”

"She appears to like listening to him, however," I replied, carelessly.

"How can she help being polite to him? And he mistakes her smiles of amusement for smiles of appreciation," she said, noticing my sarcasm.

"You do not think she cares for him, then?"

"How can she? You do not seem to know her at all; and I have often thought you misjudged her,—she is more inclined to laugh than to weep at human follies; but she is fully capable of appreciating better things," she returned.

It was said more warmly that the preceding sentences, for they were spoken more for my amusement than to abuse the doctor, and I more than ever appreciated the charity and generosity that defended the one who was not only her rival, but also was trifling with the man *she* loved.

I pitied both Robert and herself. I had matched them the first night I saw them together; but Cupid, who seems to delight in setting suitableness aside when pairing his victims, made light of my judgment, and, in his childish wantonness, mated Robert with Rosamond.

It was, doubtless, because I had more faith in the blindness of love than in the sight of reason and judgment, that I had followed my "jack-o'-the-lantern" passion and came to grief now.

I saw that Lucy was lovable, and that Robert was the destined of another; and, having no one to love me, I undertook the gratuitous task of making myself her lover and her beloved.

But I was getting a sister's affection, and was becoming accustomed to the new state of affairs very rapidly. Every moment that we lingered on the road home was making our manners and feelings easier and more natural towards each other; and, only for the foolishness of my mistake in thinking I loved her, I would have been happy.

As her qualities of heart and head became more evident and perspicuous by this interview, I feared that it was only her charity and goodness which kept her from seeing the weakness of my judgment, and despising me for it, and I hastened our steps back to the house, to prevent her from having time to think calmly over it, and withdrawing her esteem from me before I was out of her sight.

But Lucy was a woman, and no man could incur her displeasure or enmity by telling her, with respectful earnestness, that he loved her. I never had cause to think that she liked me less for it, though I often wished I had known my mind better, and spared myself the mortification of a refusal.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Lucy and I had returned to the house, Dr. Boynton was gone, and we found Rosamond sitting out on the veranda, with a volume of poems in her hand, which she was perusing too intently to observe our approach,—as if the dull and stale compliments of the doctor had left her in want of some such mental stimulant to drive the *ennui* away. She rather avoided my scrutiny, as I tried to learn from her face the impression her visitor had left behind him; so I bade her a hurried adieu, as I had three miles across the fields to walk to the train, which left in an hour.

From Lucy I received a warmer and more pressing invitation to come out soon again than she had given me ever before; but Rosamond said nothing.

"She doubtless feels mortified at the attitude the doctor's conduct towards her has assumed, and is displeased with me for being an innocent witness of it," I said, as I turned away.

When I had walked about half the distance to the station, I sat down on a rock to rest, and to ruminate over what I had said to Lucy and received in reply.

I had not been there long when I was surprised

(228)

by the doctor, who had approached me, unobserved, satchel in hand, as if going to the city with me.

He was excited, perspiring, and panting, and as he came up to me held out his hand with a tragic gesture, and said,—

"Well met, fellow-mourner! Give me your hand, for I am in the same boat with you: jilted, rejected, and blighted by perfidious woman!" And he solemnly shook the hand I extended to him.

I comprehended his situation in a moment, but I felt the blood mount to the top of my head as I was thus convinced that he was equally acquainted with mine; for the greatest unpleasantness that could be attached to it was that one who had so little claims on my esteem and confidence as Dr. Boynton should be privy to my rejection, or anything else which concerned my heart-affairs.

Without seeming to notice his reference to myself, I looked as calm and sympathetic as I could, and wondered how a man with so little acuteness of intellect as he had could so easily penetrate my secret; but, in order to be non-committal and encouraging, I said,—

"Women are the cause of all our troubles, doctor, and yet we court them!"

"Yes, oh, curse them! We give them a little trouble when we first come on the stage, but, by way of revenging their own faults and follies upon us, they trouble and torment us all our subsequent career, as if we were to blame for our appearance on it. Mr. Pearson, I have often in conversation with

you pretended to some knowledge of the female heart, and with as good reason as any other man, because of my extensive and varied association with the sex. But now I take it all back: I know nothing at all about it, I never did know anything, and the conceit that I did was only a pleasant delusion which has now been rudely torn from me!"

I was astonished by such a burst of loquacity; for, as Lucy had wittily observed, the doctor's vocabulary was not very extensive, nor his grasp of thought great enough to require many words to set it off.

He paused for want of breath, and to wipe the perspiration from his face, and then continued, with renewed indignation and vehemence,—

"I can only say this much now, as a phoenix rising out of the ashes of my past experience: if a man wants to be accepted, let him sit down and think over the names of those of his female acquaintance least likely to want him, and then let him select the most unlikely one among them all, call on her and ask her without any preliminaries. If he wants to be jilted, rejected, and blighted, let him call up all his knowledge of the female heart, recall to his mind everything he has heard women say about themselves, and everything he has heard from those men best acquainted with them; let him think of all that novelists have written about them; the coquetry of some who always pretend to like those they want to make victims of; the bashfulness of others who fly from

those they wish to entrap; the smiles of those sharp ones who are on the lookout for young green goslings, and the frankness of those whose faces are always an index to their heart; let him put all his information together, and select the one who, by those sundry and divers rules, has given him the most hope, ask her, and then find himself a jilted, rejected, blighted man; and disappointment, like a phoenix, growing out of the ashes of his hopes."

He paused again, and, while I was amused at the lesson Rosamond had undoubtedly taught him, and the eloquence which resulted from it, I took the opportunity of suggesting that our time was short, and we had better move on towards the station and discuss the matter on the way.

He was, no doubt, a much-injured man in his own estimation, though I thought, since his ideas were enlarged by being "jilted, rejected, and blighted," he was not much injured.

He proceeded further to execrate his luck and the sex, and even blamed me as if responsible for his humiliation.

"Oh, confound me! who could expect such an answer as I got after the way she drew me on? Confound you, Pearson! why did you go out of the room just at that time, and leave me alone with her? If you had remained I would never have let myself be such a stupid ass as to let her take me by the ears, and then fling me over, as if I was not worth my fodder. Hang her for a termagant! how she warmed me up the moment she had me alone!

I can never look myself in the face again, but will break every glass that reminds me who I am,—a jilted, rejected, and blighted man,—a phoenix of sorrow, grown out of the ashes of my folly! Why did I ask her, when I know I did not want her or any one else? But it was to be so; I was destined to row in the same boat with you,—tossed in by Rosy Heywood, as Sarah Carroll has done with you. Galley-slaves, by Jove!”

I felt greatly relieved; he was thinking of my quarrel with Sarah,—and that had long before ceased to hurt me; so now, his mind being exhausted of its ideas, I began to question him about his rejection, having no fears that he would ask me similar questions in regard to mine.

Rosamond had avenged me so well that she had won my good opinion at last, and I was impatient to learn what she had said which so effectually banished him and all hope of renewing his suit, notwithstanding his excessive vanity. I said, therefore,—

“It must be very trying to be refused by a girl who does not know the value of what she throws away, doctor; but perhaps you did not understand her,—she might have only wanted a little coaxing. After having, as you remarked, drawn you on, she was doubtless anxious to have you think you did the most courting, to save her own dignity. Tell me what you said to her, and what she answered, and we will put the whole thing together, and make it out; for, you know, two heads are better than one.”

“Oh, it is all clear enough; I am dished, like a skewered chicken, with the tail of my pride plucked out, like the witch plucked the tail of Tam O’Shanter’s mare.

“The moment you left us, she turned on me like a wildcat,—I suppose for not begging her pardon at first, when I begged yours; and it was really too much for mortal man to remain unmoved when she looked so charming in her fury.

“I had no idea of asking her before then, for my motto is, that a man is happier to remain single, and let the women long for him and coax him, and then, when they think they have caught him, let disappointment come, like a phoenix, from the ashes of their hopes, while you throw their memory to the winds, like the witch threw the tail of Tam O’Shanter’s mare. Bah! on my knees to her! who would have thought of such a thing?

“Perfidious woman! No one could be more surprised than myself to see such a fine girl make a fool of herself; it is sad to think of it, and it is mortifying to me to be jilted and blighted by one who has so plainly coaxed me to have her. How she did it is more than I can understand, unless, like a phoenix, she has come up from the ashes of those New England witches. It makes me mad to think that a witch got hold of me, and then threw me to the winds, like the witch threw the tail of Tam O’Shanter’s mare.”

Between the phoenix and the tail of “Tam O’Shanter’s” mare, all hope of getting the *tail* of

his rejection seemed lost to me. His various emotions on finding himself so carelessly "thrown to the winds" were doubtless felt in the order in which he mentioned them above: first surprise, then sadness at losing the "fine girl," then mortification, and lastly, anger; and so desirous was I of getting the particulars from him, in order to send them to Robert, that I invited him to spend the evening with me, for on our way to the city I could not get him to say more than he told me in the few first sentences, as his tautology clogged his ideas. As he was for the fortieth time referring to the resuscitating powers of the phoenix, I interrupted him, and anticipated his words. Surprised that I should know what was coming, he exclaimed,—

"By Jove, old fellow, you have hit it! How did you know so well what I was going to say? Ah! I know now! 'Great minds think alike,' is the old saying." And, pleased at his own wit, he laughed aloud, forgetting that he had rounded his sentences so often with the death and resurrection of the phoenix.

Not wishing to be classed with so original a mind, I said, in explanation,—

"From a grandfather of mine, whom I resemble in person, I have inherited an intuitive power of catching the thoughts from a man's lips before he speaks them, so that often I can keep in advance of a speaker, my eyes doing the service of my ears."

"Indeed! that is wonderful! and I wish, then,

that your eyes had done the service of my ears awhile ago, and told me, in advance, what Rosy Heywood would have said: they would have saved me from the blight of listening to her," he said; and then he took a fresh start, and related to me, as follows, the tale of his wrongs, only I leave out his repetitions, for brevity's sake:

"After all her sweet looks and words, who could have helped thinking that she was dead in love with me? for she seemed ambitious of catching a man, and not on the lookout for green young goslings to pluck, as Sarah Carroll used to be.

"In fact, if I had been a youth in my first flirtation, I would have been vanquished long ago; but I was an old trout, and it required some angling to catch me. But confidence made me careless, and, taking a sudden tack on me, she got me, like the witch got the tail of Tam O'Shanter's mare, before I knew what she was about.

"I rather think by this time she has risen in her own esteem, for she is the first one that ever got the underhold of me, I can tell you, Pearson.

"As soon as you went out, she stood up like a queen, and told me that, though she believed my familiarity was well meant, it would be criticised to her prejudice, and my visits to her had better cease. She said she was thankful for my past attentions, which had been agreeable to her, though she was compelled to decline any more, owing to the form they had taken.

"I thought that she had despaired of getting

me, and wanted to drive me away out of spite, and, fool-like, I fell down on my knees, and asked her to take me and give herself to me, that I could not stay away from her, for I was desperately in love with her.

"I do not know how much more nonsense I said to her, but I know I said the same thing forty times over for her accommodation, as she was looking for something in her pocket all the time, and I talked on, thinking it was a written answer she had prepared in expectation that I would one day forget my usual caution and go one step too far.

"When I was out of breath and could say no more, she coolly took her hand out of her pocket, and told me that she felt highly complimented, having never before flattered herself that I meant anything besides politeness by my attentions, but she must decline to hear any more, and hoped that I would not give the matter another thought, as she would not. Just as if either of us could forget her triumph!

"If she had shown any inclination to accept me, I would have backed out at once, and stood a breach of promise suit; but her disdain made me the more desirous of getting her, and I began the whole thing over again, when she cut me short by resuming her seat, and telling me that she was waiting to say good-by whenever I was done, for she had nothing else to say to me.

"I suppose I did not make my declaration in the words she expected, and she was disappointed when the reply she had in her pocket would not

suit it; for she looked angry enough to eat me. But I have taken her at her word, and my motto is, let wisdom grow like a phoenix out of the ashes of experience; for I hope to be jerked up like the tail of Tam O'Shanter's mare, the next time I offer myself to another woman!"

Well, from this day I could think better of Rosamond, for I perceived that my look was not without its effect, as it was that which doubtless called up her self-respect, and made her give the doctor a lesson on politeness which promised to be remembered for some time to come.

He lost no time in leaving the neighborhood, for with his satchel he started at once for the city, intending to engage a passage in the first steamer leaving New York.

I had some curiosity to learn where he was desirous of going, and suggested Paris as a place where he would be apt to forget his griefs; but he said,—

"No, hang me if I want to go where there are so many women! when I leave this bewitched neighborhood, I want to be where there are not so many witches to remind me of what that one has done to me!"

I suggested to him that the women he would meet in Paris would be more bent on looking in the milliners' shops than for husbands; but he declared that even while shopping they did not forget their coquetry, and related to me an adventure he had with Rosamond a few days before, which more

than anything else prepared him for his humiliation, and which I repeat, because it is the only witty retort I had ever known the doctor to make in time, as he was usually late in condensing his wisdom for a retort.

Rosamond had been in the city shopping, and, as she was gazing at a pyramid of silks and laces, the doctor approached her, unperceived, and said,—

“Won’t you let me select the fashions for you, Miss Rosamond?”

“No, doctor, I have a woman’s weakness for pleasing myself; unless you are willing to pay for them,” she replied, in the easy, careless way in which she usually bandied words with him.

“And I have a man’s dislike to paying for any woman’s millinery except a wife’s; so you know on what conditions I will pay the bills,” he replied.

“Thank you, doctor; I will consider your reasonable conditions, but to-day I will enjoy the privilege of choosing and paying according to my own taste and ability.”

The silly fellow considered his escape a narrow one, and went away thankful that she had not said yes at once; and determined he would not risk his liberty by giving her another opportunity of catching him up at his word.

Of course I could not recommend Paris to him after this evidence that the sight of fineries and fashion did not render women oblivious of intrigue

and husbandry, and I took up a paper to see what steamers were advertised to sail.

The Aspinwall steamers were the first on the column, and I told him how scarce women were in California.

His reading was not very general; the classics at college, with a few books for recreation, among which Burns’ Poems and a History of Witchcraft in New England seemed to leave the most lasting impression; and his travels were not worth speaking of; so he submitted himself to my guidance.

I could see that, instead of being a “blighted” man by being “jilted” and “rejected,” he had gained more energy, and I at once put him in the way of securing a passage and making his preparations while the steamer was awaiting the appointed day.

The evening was pleasantly spent, and when the doctor was bidding me farewell he declared that he had never before understood me, and that henceforth he would count me as the only friend he had; in fact, that we would throw all old rivalry “to the winds, as the witch threw the tail of Tam O’Shanter’s mare,” and a new feeling of friendship would “spring up, like a phoenix, from the ashes of the past.”

I was amused at his conceit of being a former rival, and promised that when Mr. Davenport died he should be welcome to renew his old flirtation without the fear of incurring my enmity; but he

protested that Rosamond had taught him a lesson which he would never forget.

The passage was secured, and the doctor returned from New York to put his house in order before his departure.

He did not go near the house, however, but sent instructions to a servant, who had what things he wanted to take with him packed up and sent to him, while he made arrangements with his attorney.

He spent every evening with me while waiting for the day of sailing, and I found him to be what I had supposed him to be when my opportunities for judging him were less,—a good-natured, indolent man, perhaps injured by fortune, which had smiled upon him from his birth, and never gave him a good opportunity of developing those traits of character which self-dependence alone can bring out.

When bidding me a final farewell, he voluntarily promised to write to me, but on condition that I would not tell Rosamond where he had gone to, for he said that he did not wish the woman before whom his pride had fallen to know where he breathed, or remember how near she was to having him. I was surprised that he did not add, he was afraid she might repent of her cruelty, and seek to draw him back to the heart which had spurned his love.

CHAPTER XVI.

I HAVE made no account of years, months, or seasons in this story, maybe because I wished to keep my ladies as young as possible; for, having dealt impartially with their characters, I ought to atone, in a measure, by letting them remain as young as I found them. I would still continue this policy, only I think that ladies can be interesting after they are twenty, and remain unmarried; though Miss Rosy had repeatedly decided to the contrary. But I have not consulted them with reference to the characters, and I suppose I need not with regard to the ages I have given them, unless I take the ungallant position that the sex are more particular in concealing their years than their tempers and follies, which Heaven forbid that I would or could.

Eighteen months had elapsed since I first met Lucy; thirteen since the family moved out on the farm; ten since Mr. Davenport had married Sarah; seven since Robert's departure for South America, and five since the hegira of Dr. Leander Boynton; but yet time had taken nothing from the bloom and freshness of my female friends.

Robert was a merchant, for he had made a few shipments of merchandise; and, though his profits

on them had not been great, yet they had been sufficient to encourage him to try again.

I went out to the farm occasionally, and was, by this time, welcomed as if nothing had ever happened to mar the harmony of old feelings; for things flowed on there nearly as smoothly as ever, owing to the exercise of good sense by all parties.

One morning, as the mail was brought in by my friend who was so much interested in the "Rustic S" letters, he held up a diminutive note for me, and begged that I would cut out the monogram for him. I looked at it, and the little knowledge I had of Rosamond's handwriting, together with the monogram of her name, enabled me to guess who the sender was.

I did not waste time in surmising what its contents might be; but, after looking a moment at the superscription, I opened it to see to what strange incident I was indebted for her correspondence.

I was horror-stricken by the intelligence the few lines contained. Three nights before, there had been a collision between two large river steamers crowded with passengers, and both had been burned to the water's edge.

Those who had friends on them were filled with the direst alarm; for, while the loss of life was said to have been fearful, no one could give any information of the number or the names of the rescued, and all feared the worst for their own friends.

Lucy was among the passengers. By what accident she, who had never before left home, was

there, Rosamond did not wait to write me; but the boat she was on was particularly unfortunate in the loss of her passengers. The letter was dated the evening before, and I knew that Rosamond expected me every moment since then; so, after explaining the reason for absenting myself, I hurried to the hotel at which Rosamond was awaiting me, to give her any aid in my power.

I met her, looking deathly pale, and almost frenzied by fear and impatience; for she had not slept all night, nor eaten anything since she had left home.

A few hurried words explained all she knew: her uncle's widow had started for the North, and, being taken very ill at Louisville, telegraphed to Rosamond to come to her.

Rosamond had typhoid fever at the time, and, to keep her from attempting to go, Lucy volunteered to take her place.

With the few instructions she could get to travel with, she proceeded on her journey, telegraphing her safe arrival at Pittsburg and Cincinnati, and mentioning the name of the boat on which she was to go down to Louisville that evening.

Prostrated and almost helpless as Rosamond had been, when Mrs. Davenport told her about the accident, the shock gave her power to act, and, with the will and energy of her character, she came to the city to obtain such intelligence as she could by telegraphing to her aunt.

Nothing could be learned, and she asked for my

escort to the place of the disaster, for Mr. Davenport in his feeble state could not be of any service, and the news of the accident was kept from his ears by his wife and niece.

I tried to persuade Rosamond to remain at the hotel and let me go alone, as I thought the journey, in her present state of health, would be suicidal; but she was resolute, and insisted that she could bear it.

Her self-control and resolution were wonderful, for her grief was intense, and yet she made no display of it.

She was morally certain that Lucy was lost, and looked upon herself as blamable for it in letting her take her place.

We went on the first train going West, and, while my anxiety for Lucy's safety was as deep as if she had been my betrothed, my concern for my companion was not a bit less.

But she held up under sickness, fatigue, and grief with wonderful fortitude, and she reached Cincinnati not much worse than when we set out.

There was a boat going down the river to the wreck, crowded with anxious friends looking for the missing, and it was then I had a good opportunity of comparing Rosamond in sorrow with the seemingly careless and impulsive girl I had known in joy and sunshine.

While others were loudly lamenting and bewailing their lost or imperiled friends, she sat calmly by my side, tormented alike by pain and

anxiety, but needing none of the efforts and entreaty which were required to keep others of her sex within the bounds of sanity and discretion.

If pride could be justified under such circumstances, I would be proud of the martyr-like spirit exhibited by the woman I had with me; and this, together with the way she had rid herself of the doctor the moment he presumed too much on her good nature, made her, in my estimation, worthy of even Robert's love and confidence.

I caught myself several times, even in the midst of the distress and excitement which surrounded me, thinking that if Lucy was lost, her secret would be safe with me; and however much Robert and Rosamond would mourn her untimely end, it would be only as for a flower that had perfumed their path; and, little dreaming that the sweetness of her heart had been crushed out between them, they would live and love as well without her, scarcely affected by her tragic fate.

There is something so ineffably touching in the thought of young love like hers going unrewarded, unspoken, and unsuspected to the grave,—the true, warm heart mingling with the cold, unfeeling clay,—that friendship and romance demand a sacrifice or a monument to it, and, as I had no hope of dying of a broken heart, I sat planning my life for a monument, while supporting Rosamond, there being no one more bounden, since I had discovered her secret, and sought her love for myself.

But the idea of living to the memory of the

dead is premature, there being as yet no evidence that Lucy was dead. Every one who had friends on the steamers were fearing the worst, and mourning them as lost, and yet it was reported that more than half were saved.

We arrived at the place of the accident towards evening, and representing Rosamond's condition to the captain of the boat I secured a state-room for her use during the night, while I hurried among the houses and barns on the shore where the rescued were sheltered and those of the corpses which had been found were collected.

I had great difficulty in persuading Rosamond to comply with this arrangement, and would not have succeeded at all only I represented to her that she would delay my search, and that by leaving her in possession of the state-room we would have it for Lucy's use, in case she was found injured.

I was forced to promise her solemnly that I would return the moment I had found Lucy or learned any tidings of her, whether I was able to bring Lucy with me or not.

The replies to my inquiries on the shore were even more discouraging than the accounts in the city. There were a great many women among the passengers, and the few men on board had all they could do in assisting those of their own party, which left many others, who were traveling under no one's especial care, without other resource than their strength and presence of mind. The lost were mostly of the latter class, therefore, and as I

visited the houses and barns without success I became almost as hopeless as Rosamond.

After a few hours' search I returned to the boat, fearing to leave Rosamond alone too long, and the only comfort I could offer to the poor girl was that several were reported to have wandered back from the shore for food and clothing, as the supply, as well as the shelter, was limited in the immediate vicinity of the wrecks.

This was but a slender hope for either of us to hang to, as it was evident that the ladies did not belong to this class of unfortunates. I persuaded her to take some wine to sustain her, and had one of the physicians put laudanum enough in it to secure her a night's repose, while I went on shore to assist in the further search for the bodies of the lost.

Morning brought no comfort to us; none of those who had been in the interior had heard of any lady passengers being there, none that were on the boat could remember having seen one of Lucy's description on it, and none of the bodies which had been recovered could be identified as hers.

As the boat we came down in was returning that day, and I could not persuade Rosamond to return with it and await me in Cincinnati, I had her transferred to another boat, just arrived; and then I searched the country all around, going every place to which I had learned women had been taken.

There was now no use in hoping against hope,

and I was compelled to confess as much to Rosamond; it would be foolish to try to conceal the fact from her and keep her longer in suspense.

They were clearing out the wrecks as fast as they could, and every hour discovering the remains of some unfortunate, many of them so charred that it was impossible to identify them. At last it was reported that a female form had been taken out which might possibly be recognized by her friends, and hurrying to the spot I found my worst fears realized.

The whole scene was a sickening one, and the account of it cannot be otherwise, so I will hurry through it as fast as possible, by merely stating that there was nothing by which the poor victim could be identified save some of the golden braids, which even the pitiless flames passed lightly over, while they ravaged everything else.

Youth and beauty, form and flesh, were marred and shrunk, and even the hair would have been entirely destroyed, but that in falling, the back of her head came in contact with something that extinguished or smothered the fire upon it.

I told Rosamond, and, much against my wishes, she insisted upon viewing the body; but there was no scene, for she calmly pronounced it Lucy's remains, and we took them with us to Cincinnati that night.

There was never before in my experience anything more difficult for me to realize than that the young, beautiful, and pure-minded friend, who a

few weeks before had promised me a sister's interest, had left behind to us only the poor blackened corpse we had with us in place of herself.

It was, and is yet, a wonder to me that Rosamond could have survived the fatigue and shock of the adventure, considering the state of her health when she set out from home; and I believe if it had been any other woman of my acquaintance who had undergone her trials, I would have returned with two corpses instead of one.

She bore up bravely under all, displaying more strength than could be expected, even under more favorable circumstances.

Nay, more: believing that I, as Lucy's lover, needed comfort, the generous girl was as cheerful as she could be, and expressed many a sympathetic hope, looking to a blissful meeting and immortality beyond the grave.

This, too, from one who had hitherto borne a reputation for thoughtlessness, as far as the future life was concerned; but from this time a change had marked her character, deep, silent, and progressive. How to break the intelligence to Mr. Davenport was a question we were at some concern about; for we feared it might result in instant death to him, as his dependence on Lucy's care was returning fast, and it was only his benevolence and hospitality that made him consent to let her undertake the journey, and become a nurse to the invalid who had attempted to come North to visit them.

A suitable coffin was procured, and I telegraphed

to Mrs. Davenport that Lucy was dead, and her remains recovered.

The relics of our friend were in due time conveyed to the village nearest to the farm, and prepared for interment; but Mr. Davenport was not yet informed of the disaster.

Sarah met us, with true sorrow expressed in her face, and said she could recognize the corpse very easily; though we could not have done so if the hair had not been preserved, since all else was sadly charred.

"We are glad you can," said Rosamond, "for all we can identify her by is her hair, and maybe her father would never be satisfied with such a recognition."

"Everything seems natural to me," said Sarah, laying her fingers on the parted lips and looking at her teeth; "there certainly can be no doubt."

We assented to what she said, and she continued to reassure us. Then she observed,—

"You know how sensitive Mr. Davenport is of any blot or deformity in what he sees; his nature revolts at it, and his art has strengthened the feeling until it is almost a disease with him; and if we tell him how disfigured she was, it will be adding fire to his torment,—he was always so proud of her beauty. I think, therefore, we had better say nothing about the burning; drowning will not be nearly so revolting to him, as he has often said drowning was the easiest way of dying; and there will be no deception used, as the poor girl was both

burned and drowned. Besides, no doubt of her identity will exist in his mind, as there might if we told him how little of her former beauty was left to establish it."

"Yes, it would be better to bury an empty coffin than leave room for a doubt; he will sooner become reconciled to it as a certainty; and, even if we could not positively affirm that we have the right body, we are certain that she was not rescued, and must, therefore, be lost," I said, in reply.

Sarah, who had been freely weeping all this time, cast a look of appreciation upon me, and then said,—

"I will now leave you to proceed with the burial, and return, lest he should miss me, as I left him asleep. He has been asking for you all the time, Rosy, and I have been obliged to tell him that you could not come down-stairs yet. Oh, dear, what shall we do at last, when the whole truth must be told to him?"

Though Milton says,—

"Neither man nor angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone,"

I fancied then that I could discern it both in Sarah's tears and in her last piteous exclamations. Whether the great author is right or wrong, he is not consistent; for he makes Uriel soon discern hypocrisy in Satan's looks, and a human being has not more art in dissembling than the author of the art itself.

As Sarah turned away, Rosamond took her farewell look at the remains, and exclaimed, as she pressed her lips to those in the coffin,—

“Farewell, poor Lucy! sweet, even in death, are the lips that have never spoken guile or deceit in life! Of such are the angels in heaven; and may you *live* with them, dear!” And then she turned from them and wept, while the lid of the coffin was being fastened on.

The very skies, bright as they were when we came to the village, became lowering and overshadowed, and not a face among the villagers, few of whom had seen much of her, that was not clouded with genuine sorrow.

I have not attended many funerals in my time; but I know there are few as solemn and impressive as this one was, otherwise our race would care less for earth and its pomps, and think more of the bright world beyond it.

As the minister, in his prayer, said, “We now commit the body Thou hast given her to its native earth, to await the sound of the trumpet that shall awake it, and unite it with the soul and with Thee, in never-fading beauty, and everlasting life, through Christ, its Redeemer, amen!” it seemed to me that the trumpet would sound at once; that now, on the spot, the end of time had come, and, before the coffin could be lowered, she would rise from it in the beauty of a celestial body and the triumph of immortality.

While they were singing the requiem in the sim-

plicity of true grief around the grave, I still waited, expecting to hear the sound, while the tears fell fast from my eyes.

“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Every word of the promise of the great doctrine of the resurrection of the body was in my mind at the time, waiting for fulfillment; every comma and semicolon in the sentence was visible to my mind, and I waited to see Lucy’s new body, to feel the vital fluid of immortal life course through my own sluggish veins, and to claim her again for my sister in heaven.

The hymn was sung, the earth was thrown on the coffin, the grave was filled up, and I did not arouse from my trance, but, unconscious that the service was over and the people had departed, I stood there blinded with tears, until the fellow-mourner who leaned on my arm said to me, in sweet, sorrowful accents,—

“‘Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul!’”

Her comforting quotation had its effect on me, and I turned from my own thoughts to her who was weaker in body but much stronger in spirit, and in hope, than I was.

We were driven to the house without delay,

Rosamond giving me one of the tresses she had cut off before the coffin had been closed, and we were met by Mrs. Davenport at the door, who told us that Mr. Davenport had been awake for nearly an hour, and suspected the whole thing, because of some uneasy dreams which he had.

He heard the sound of our voices, and called aloud for us to come to him.

There was no way of delaying the dreaded moment, or avoiding it, and we went to him, pale and terrified enough to convince him that his fears were true.

"Rosy, what have you done with Lucy? Where have you laid my darling, for I know she is dead? Oh, my darling! My darling, beautiful Lucy!"

"Oh, uncle! Will you forgive me?" was all she could say, and she fell forward against his bed, prostrated at last by grief and exhaustion.

"I know you have buried her,—I saw it all! Oh, my child! my beautiful, loving child! There is no more wealth on earth for me now without her! God help me now, and God forgive the wrong I have done her!" he cried.

There was not a dry cheek in the room as he continued to bewail the loss of his idol, and no one could say one word to console him; for words, in his state of mind, would be little better than a mockery.

At last he cried out,—

"Oh, speak to me, some one! Sarah, Rosy, Edward Pearson, what did she say? Did she forgive

me? What message has she left for me, my angel? It is no use to hide anything from me! I know you have buried her, for I saw the grave open and her coffin let into it!"

"This is all: the steamboat sunk with her; and would to God that I, rather, had sunk with it, and died for her, uncle!" cried Rosamond, drawing one of the golden braids from her bosom.

"My darling! my darling! this is all that is left of so much perfection!—this poor, cold, clammy lock,—beautiful in death, like herself!" he exclaimed, pressing it to his lips, and taking no further notice of what Rosamond had said.

The lock was dry and warm, but the coldness and glue were on his lips, and he stroked it and kissed it, as if to bring the gloss of life back to it.

Suddenly he was taken with a spasmodic breathing, and, looking defiantly at his wife, he exclaimed,—

"My child has been always a dutiful one; she has never, by word, thought, or act, given me cause for offense; and I believe she never would, had God spared her and me for twenty-one years longer."

He turned to me, as if expecting me to confirm his words; and, understanding the language of his expression, I did so; for I thought he was dying, and did not then care how much suspicion my words would cast upon Sarah.

Gradually he became calmer, and stroking the hair seemed to soothe him.

"How beautiful, my poor darling! just the color and texture of an angel's," he cried, and his hand stole over Rosamond's head, which was buried in the bedclothes, and he blessed her for preserving the hair for him, and paying the last duty to his lost darling.

CHAPTER XVII.

It is time to follow Robert now in his search for fortune, and show how he prospered in it, as well as how his correspondence with Rosamond, from which he had hoped for so much, turned out. It seemed impossible that when he was absent I could have thoughts or events to sustain the story, considering that he is its hero; but, alas! how easily the best of men can be spared from their places, and when they leave the world, it goes on just as well without them, as if they never had anything to do with its progress.

Sometimes there is a convulsive shock given to its motion, and things seem to halt in a limited area, when a champion of liberty, progressiveness, or humanity is suddenly lost, as at the time the tidings of Abraham Lincoln's assassination was flashed over our land. But even that is local and brief, for next day everything proceeds as usual; and, with new leaders, we quietly and steadily resume our onward march.

I wrote to Robert, and received letters from him by every mail; and, as I had promised, kept him posted on the markets, while he bought and shipped, as he was encouraged by his success. He was, also, up to the events of the last chapter, in

correspondence with Lucy, who wrote him all the home news that could amuse and interest him; and every letter she sent him filled his heart with joy, as it was long, earnest, and affectionate.

With Rosamond he was not so happy in his correspondence; there was something unsatisfactory in her letters, that made them as much a mystery as herself was sometimes to him.

He waited impatiently for each one, hoping it would not prove like the previous letters; but, after he had got it, there was some undefinable wish that it had sunk in the ocean before it had reached him, as the anticipation was pleasanter than the letter itself.

One paragraph, and sometimes one clause, would seem to contradict the preceding one, as if she was trying to say more than she felt, or else she was afraid to say all.

He weighed every sentence, and examined every thought with distrust and eagerness, as if it had been written by a diplomatist, and contained more or less meaning than was apparent to the eye or could be understood in the common sense.

Her caution was both amusing and provoking to him; for neither his nor her name was inside of the envelope,—“Dear Friend” being used to designate her lover, and “R” standing, like a solitary sentinel, for herself.

He remembered her repeated ridicule of the insufferable conceit of some men, who were afraid to be gallant, or even polite, to a marriageable

woman, lest she was waiting to pounce upon some incautious expression and distort it into a promise, of even Pickwickian mildness, for legal arbitration; but now she was taken in the same cautionary conduct herself, and, whatever her tongue might confess, though she had been non-committal enough with that, her pen would never prove anything against her.

Was she engaged to him or was she not, in the spirit of their agreement? he asked himself to determine from her letters; but they would not be evidence, and he tried to countermine the strategic coquetry he suspected them of covering by writing formal business-letters, hoping that she would become solicitous by his apparent coldness, and write more affectionately, to reclaim her power and her place in his heart.

He delayed writing longer than usual, wrote a shorter letter than was customary with him, and, from beginning to end, not a word was admitted which might not have been written by a dry senior in a mercantile house to the foreign partner in China.

Without telling her whether he was sick or sound, warm or cold, or sad or cheerful near the equator, he merely reported the success of some operations on their joint account, and discussed the prospect of following them with others equally, if not more, profitable.

Then followed a few paragraphs on the probabilities of the markets in the United States ad-

vancing or declining while the merchandise was on the way, the rates of exchange, marine insurance, freight, and duty, and the comparative merits of steam- and sail-tonnage.

As he put his most formal and imposing signature to this, he felt that he had already achieved a decided success, and he waited to triumph over his superior skill and tact.

He left Rosamond's tact and penetration out of mind, however; for he was writing to no silly, love-sick schoolgirl; but to a girl with a shrewd, quick intellect, who at once comprehended his tactics, and had wit and spirit enough to appreciate them, and give him an opportunity of proving their merits.

To match his letter, Rosamond took a large sheet of blue commercial, and then got a copy of the "Economist," which she searched for terms and mercantile lore wholly unknown to her before, notwithstanding her taste for speculation and finance; and then, lest she should expose herself to his criticism by getting the technical terms in the wrong place, she copied sentences whole, where they were most knotty and terse.

In this way she prepared a long and intelligible business-letter, which thoroughly informed him of the state of the markets, besides containing a short article on Peruvian bark; which she digested, and then reproduced in her own words for his consideration.

It was like most business-letters, condensed at

the expense of grammar; the pronoun "I" was wholly ignored, and was signed "Rosamond Heywood," in full, as boldly as the character of the letter could authorize her.

It was evident that Robert, who was longing for a few words of affection, was not the iron will destined to crush the sweetness out of her; and when he read the letter he had misgivings to that effect. He was, however, pleased with it,—she evidently understood why he wrote to her with so much formality, and fell in with his vein readily enough to please him; and he thought, with pride and satisfaction, of the patient research and exhaustive labor it must have cost her to collect and compose its matter, while he laughed at her ambition to be conqueror, and at her success in shaping her phrases into the most unexceptionable business parlance.

It did not require a strain of his imagination to see her as she contemplated her letter for the last time before sealing it; her bright eyes sparkling with pleasure as she carefully read her squarely written lines, and her face flushed and smiling as she pronounced aloud, to her own satisfaction, words which she thought would puzzle him.

He could imagine her coquettish glee as she thought he would grow more amazed at every sentence, and impatient as he searched in vain for one line which even the most subtle sophist could twist into an expression of tenderness or interest.

It was not long before this that my letter, giving him a lengthy, and perhaps exaggerated, account

of Dr. Boynton's rejection had put him in a good humor with her, and he then thought she was his own betrothed without doubt; so now he was prepared to look upon anything in her handwriting with rapturous eyes, and the effect of this letter on the whole was only to prove that she was clever at anything she undertook, and never wanting words or thoughts to meet any exigency, with the wit and promptness so characteristic of herself.

The maiden's hand, which is kept for a man to the exclusion of other suitors, ought to do everything well in the eyes of her lover, especially when one of those suitors had all that a woman could ask for, except brains.

The doctor had as much of what is desirable in a husband as usually falls to the portion of one man, and few women would have rejected him when there was not a formal engagement to warrant them in such a refusal.

Robert was, however, determined not to let Rosamond conquer, as it would be a bad precedent for their married life; and he continued to write his business-letters, hoping that she would get tired of them and show some signs of relenting.

The same determination seemed to have possessed her mind, however, only as she exhausted her stock of mercantile terms by sending them off too prodigally at first, her letters gradually became shorter, until at length she could say no more in a business way than could be put into a few sentences.

Robert could endure it no longer. Her letters would chill the ardor of any lover; for, full of eager expectation, he would open a sheet of "commercial note," to find only a few words written on the middle of the first page.

At last his indignation overflowed upon getting one so unprecedently brief that he acknowledged it as a telegram, and even then told her that she had not availed herself of her privilege, as ten words were allowed in a regulation message. He concluded by remarking that ideas must be worth more now than when she and he had spent so many pleasant hours roaming over the hills together, or else her time must be more profitably employed, since she could not spare more of either in writing to an old friend.

The note was begun more formally than he was able to conclude it, for he addressed her as "madam," and to this she took exception, but wrote in reply a much longer letter than any written during the three previous months.

She hoped he would forgive her for correcting him, but he had made a serious mistake in conferring the title of "madam" upon her, an honor which belonged exclusively to married and elderly ladies, and as she did not belong to either class, her honesty and modesty shrunk from accepting it before time had thrust it upon her, which would be quite as soon as she wished for it.

This was exactly what Robert had expected. He knew that addressing young ladies as "madam"

was unusual, and changing his mode of addressing her would arouse her curiosity and lead her to question both his motives and his correctness in so doing.

It was not according to Rosamond's notions of etiquette or usage to "madam" a lady before she had entered the state of matrimony, and she would combat its propriety with all her heart, while he knew that he could quote authority for its correctness, and at the same time acquit himself of any desire of depreciating her youth or respectability.

Before he had written the letter, he had been looking over the "Bride of Lammermoor," in which the young lord of Ravenswood is made to address Lucy Ashton several times as "madam," and as it sounded odd and formal, coupled with a young maid of seventeen, he rightly supposed that Rosamond would at once correct him if he addressed her so, without suspecting the trap he was setting for her.

What she hastily regarded as derogatory to her reputation for youth, could be easily proved to be both proper and complimentary after she had been drawn into an argument, by advancing her favorite author for authority, and showing that it had been used by the passionate young Ravenswood in addressing a girl of Lucy Ashton's age, character, and condition.

He replied that he was led into the error, if such it was, by her favorite novelist, a much better authority than himself, and therefore he ought to

be excused for doing what so responsible a *historian* permitted to be done between parties whose honor and respectability on the one hand, and youth and virtue on the other, have never been called in question.

He well knew that she would turn to Scott at once, and discover that in that interview between Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton, the lover was indignant at what he considered the falseness of the maiden whom he so formally addressed, which would lead Rosamond to discover her own delinquency, if she had not thought of it seriously before.

She appeared to be satisfied that he was right, however, using her woman's privilege of not being expected to confess it; and whether she took the hint that he considered himself ill treated or not, she discontinued the correspondence altogether.

He only heard of her through Lucy or through me; for she sent many friendly messages to him through the former, and he continued as before shipping and trading to get fortune enough to enable him to marry, however much he felt discouraged by the discontinuance of her letters.

But at last one steamer arrived in South America without a letter from Lucy in its mail-bags, and that same steamer brought him letters from Rosamond and myself, announcing the sad loss of his best correspondent.

There was no more speculation; the fortune he thought necessary to possess before he married

was not won; yet he no longer sought it, but came home in the first steamer.

The correspondence which he had fondly hoped would have opened Rosamond's heart to him, and wean her from her habit of bandying complimentary phrases with him, was therefore a failure. She had not written one word expressive of love, she had not permitted him to feel that his motives in going to South America in search of wealth were different from those of other adventurers, and if she had betrayed a deep interest in his success, she was careful to deny other motives than those of a friend, and a partner in his speculations.

If the girl had a heart at all, it was so incrustated by caution and coquetry that it could not be reached.

Her father, who had been a judge, would doubtless be proud of her tact and craftiness had he lived; but a lover is not a lawyer, and cannot appreciate the skill and diplomacy Rosamond had shown.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROBERT surprised me one day, after dinner, by presenting himself before me with a luxuriant growth of beard on his bronzed face. I knew that he had not realized a fortune by the few turns he had made with his little capital, and yet he had encouragement enough to have continued his operations, so earnestly and auspiciously begun.

A few hurried words explained his reasons for coming back so unexpectedly when he was apparently prospering; and a new subject for thought was opened to me.

It seemed strange that a man who went to a foreign country to win wealth for one woman, should be so deeply affected by the death of another that his purpose was abandoned, and he returned as far from the realization of his hopes as he was when he went away. Such, however, was the case with him, for the death of Lucy broke down his speculative spirit as completely as if it had been for her that he went to make the fortune.

She might have been as dear to him as a sister; but it is only in isolated cases that even a sister's death will make a man forget his duty to his future wife.

Had he not been Rosamond's lover in his own

estimation, and also in the estimation of others, I should have supposed that he and Lucy had loved each other, and that it was for her sake he had left his home; for the first words he uttered, after he had taken my hand, and controlled his emotions enough to speak, were,—

“So Lucy is no more!”

The utter misery that was concentrated in these five words brought the tears to my eyes, and, comparing his despair with what I had seen Lucy betray the day I was refused by her, I saw at once the mistake Robert had made, and the sad result of it.

The artist's daughter, who needed no other wealth than that which usually fell to the lot of artists, was the most fitting wife for him; she was the one he loved in the deep, quiet way which her character inspired, and his fancy for Rosamond was all forced by the novelty of her return to Mr. Davenport's, the excitement of their rivalry in wit, and their flirtations with each other.

Sarah had monopolized his attentions before Lucy had grown up, and he had never questioned his feelings towards the latter, because he was always near her, and the tenor of their intercourse had been so free and even that nothing had interfered to mark the period when they had ceased to love as children and became mature lovers.

When Rosamond amused him, after her return, and I had expressed my preference for Lucy, he set her apart for me in his mind, mistaking my admi-

ration for love, and his love for Platonic friendship.

The same friendly misunderstanding misled me, too; for I thought he loved Rosamond from the moment she had returned, and, looking upon Lucy as my legitimate prize, I constituted myself her lover until her answer discovered my mistake.

We walked over to his old rooms, and then down to the house Mr. Davenport lived in when I first knew him; but the pleasant evening, with the gay scenes it presents in city life, and the familiar looks of our favorite streets and buildings, had no interest for him; we could think of nothing, and therefore speak of nothing, but only of her who was now no more, and the graces and qualities which had charmed us both.

There seemed to be an endless list of them, for we never before had time to recount them all; greater ones had obscured the minor from our vision when they shone in her life; but now, in the gloom of the grave, we could see them all, and beauties of every degree filled our view.

He said nothing of his feelings towards Rosamond, nor spoke of her, except in connection with the death and burial of her cousin, and yet he did not suspect the inconsistency of losing so much interest in the one he professed to love.

He left the city next morning for the farm, having first shaved off his beard, to make himself as presentable as possible after his rough life in the southern latitudes.

Rosamond was the first one whom he met as he entered the theater of so many joyful and home-like scenes, and, with infectious tears in her eyes, she welcomed him home.

There was simply a warm clasp of the hand, and a few hurried inquiries and answers in regard to each other's welfare, and then Rosamond left him to inform Mr. Davenport of his arrival and prepare him for the surprise.

Mr. Davenport never knew why Robert went to South America. He was aware that he intended buying merchandise there, and becoming, in some measure, a merchant; but he thought that trading was only an auxiliary to painting, and that Robert, with Church's famous painting of the "Heart of the Andes" in his mind, wanted to study tropical scenery in emulation of that great and adventurous landscape painter.

He gave Robert a tremulous welcome,—perhaps as a father would welcome back his only remaining child, after having seen his favorite ones laid in the grave.

He spoke of Lucy at once; in fact, he spoke of her several times every day since she had been buried,—sometimes as if she was alive yet, and always as if she was still watching by his bedside.

"I am sorry Lucy is not here to welcome you, Robert. She was always the first to hear your step on the stairs, in Summer Street, and meet you at the library door, and give you a welcome. But we have had sad times since then, Robert, and we

all will never meet there again. Family scenes and fireside enjoyments are always changing: the same persons, the same words and diversions, are seldom reproduced in the evening entertainments of our lives; new thoughts and scenes are always coming up, and old joys and faces are always falling off.

"Lucy has gone from earthly scenes, Robert,—gone in person; but I sometimes feel that her spiritual presence is near my bed; she was faithful in life, and can be more so in death. See, here is one of her tresses, braided as on the morning she left us! It has never been unwound; but all I can do will not bring back the rich gloss it had when alive. Do you not perceive the change?" he said, rapidly.

Robert took it, and acknowledged that it had faded and lost some of its sheen and beauty already. Artists could discern shades better than Rosamond and I could; for we thought it was as bright and glossy as ever, and the change existed only in Mr. Davenport's imagination; for he complained when Rosamond gave it to him, and before it had time to fade.

"Some day when I am able to go out we will go to her resting-place together; she will not be disturbed because we tread near her; and when I die, then lay me down beside her."

All were affected, as well as Robert, and in a few moments Mr. Davenport seemed to forget that she was no more, and continued,—

"Lucy does not think that portrait like her,—it is so feminine to demur; to be sure, artists cannot make canvas look as soft and delicate as the human skin, and oils will not make the eyes look as clear and bright as the moisture which Nature supplies. We are at best but poor imitators of her; for she is jealous of her works, and will not supply any other artist with the material to rival or compete with her in the sublime and beautiful.

"But I think I have done all art can do in that picture; and if I ever allowed that it did not do Lucy justice, it was because I had to acknowledge that Nature was a greater artist than myself."

He talked on, as he always did when he had any one to listen to him, often seemingly very egotistical, but always mild and entertaining.

When Robert was left alone with him he was asked to repeat the solemn assurance of Lucy's innocence of any intention of deserting him; and when it was reiterated, he expressed his sorrow for having ever listened to anything that wronged her, even in thought.

"Next to Lucy I have injured Edward Pearson, by my suspicions, and I shall tell him so when I see him again; I tell Lucy so every day, dear angel, and I know that she forgives me," he said.

That night, after supper, Robert walked toward the graveyard, in which Lucy had been interred. Rosamond had offered to go with him and show him the grave, but he said he could easily find it;

for he naturally wished to have no witness to his emotions when he stood by her grave the first time.

There would be no sweeter place on earth than this country cemetery to rest in, if the bloom and beauty of the turf above them could touch the dead senses of those sleeping there. It was a level tract of land; but so tastefully planted with trees and rose-bushes, that it looked like a sheltered nook, intended by nature to reconcile the village mortals to their final sleep when the work of life was done.

One monument alone towered above all the headstones; it had been raised by the people of the village in memory of a former pastor; and one person besides himself appeared seeking communion with the spirits of the departed, when Robert walked among the graves.

It was the widow of the pastor who slept beneath the monument, and Robert went to her to inquire for Lucy's grave.

As the old lady saluted him, he said,—

"I have never seen a more lovely spot than this is; it is very creditable to the village to have the resting-place of its dead so tastefully kept."

"Ah, yes; it used to be well kept, but it has been much neglected lately," she replied, with a sigh, as she looked upon her own unsatisfactory efforts to make her husband's grave look as well as she longed to see it. The good soul used to think it fair and beautiful until her own dead was laid

there; but since then it had not been to her taste at all.

After he had patiently listened to her account of her husband's sickness, death, and burial, together with such reminiscences of his life as a pastor's wife likes to dwell upon most, he inquired for the grave that held Lucy's disfigured remains, and left the widow to go mourn by it.

It may be well to remark here, that Robert did not yet doubt his love for Rosamond; for he was only conscious that his sorrow for Lucy's death had blunted all other feelings for the present, and had made him indifferent to the pleasures and aspirations of this world in a great measure. He was too observant of his own thoughts and feelings not to be aware that his engagement with Rosamond was almost forgotten, like a dream, in the great and ever-present reality that his dearest friend was no more; and he suspected that his love for the living ought not to be overshadowed by his grief for the dead. But he did not, however, think that he had deceived his own heart entirely; for he believed that the feelings with which he left home would return after the expiration of time, and it was only proper now, when death had loosed a silver cord, and broken a golden bowl, that his mind should be turned away from earthly cares and ambition.

Love was, according to his idea, a sudden passion, like that which Sarah had inspired when she attacked him with the bloom and coquetry of

eighteen years; or like that which he felt when Rosy Heywood had returned a full-grown, frank woman of twenty; and he did not dream that it could grow with his body and mind, as quietly and slowly as either.

He did not enter into a metaphysical inquiry of the nature and extent of his loss: deep and sincere grief seldom does; he was merely conscious that Lucy was a loss, without asking his heart what part of its affections belonged to the dead, and what part could be satisfied by the living.

He sat down by the grave, hardly able to realize that the eye that used to kindle with his, and the hand that used to be clasped in his when as children they sauntered along the gay streets of the city, were now cold in death, and that he could be so near the lips which had never spoken a peevish or fretful word, and receive no welcome from them.

Tears fell thick and warm from his eyes, and he laid his head down on the cold mound and mourned on it as he wished to do when he left the house alone.

He finally fell asleep, and in his dream something like a Jacob's ladder presented itself for his comfort. Lucy stood beside him and talked over their youthful joys and affection, and promised to come back often to him if he did not forget her.

It stormed all that night after he had returned home, and his dream, together with the wind and rain, kept him awake until daylight. It seemed impossible that she could be insensible to the cold

and loneliness of the tomb, and several times he had so nearly lost his reason that he thought of getting up and going to take her out of it, as he repeated, over and over again, Moore's lines on the Dismal Swamp:

"They made her a grave too cold and damp
For a soul so warm and true."

Next morning he devoted to Rosamond, for he had not yet said half a dozen words to her in private, and he thought she had a claim on his confidence which his grief ought not to let him forget.

Their joint ventures had been reasonably successful, and though he had their marriage in mind as a matter of course, he had no longer any cares about the fortune he once had thought so necessary before asking her to marry him.

He had proved to his own satisfaction that he could make money as fast as he wanted it, and he was less solicitous of the future now, since Lucy's death had taught him the uncertainty of life, and the vanity of being too much concerned for its wants.

He told Rosamond he was sorry that their correspondence had not continued long enough to keep her advised of all the investments she had an interest in, after he had announced the result of his trading.

Then there was a slight recrimination; each one blaming the other for the unfortunate issue of the

correspondence from which so much was hoped, but from which so little was gained.

At last Robert held out his hand to her, saying,—

"Come, Rosy, let us forget this childishness, and be good friends, as we always have been."

He meant the childishness of quarreling, but she thought he had reference to the childishness of sentimentality; because, when she had boasted that her letters were good business-letters, he told her she might have known that he expected a different class of letters from her; so she said as she placed her hand in his, and blushed with pleasure and satisfaction at his proposal,—

"Yes, with all my heart, Bob; it is time we should know our minds and our duties better; we are old enough to lay aside childish things now: I shall soon be twenty-two, and I am sorry to think that I have never yet done anything worthy of a woman."

He clasped her hand firmly in his, and then pressing it to his heart in a caressing manner, he said,—

"Little things should not ruffle the tempers of such large children, or interfere with our long and pleasant friendship for each other; for we have given each other almost an unlimited power over our future happiness: you know, Rosy, that I am not to get married without your consent, and that you have agreed to give it whenever I am ready; no matter upon whom I may fix my choice."

A shade of disappointment passed over her countenance as she saw she had mistaken his meaning, and she became uneasy and nervous, her hand anxiously seeking her pocket; but the leaven of Mother Eve was still working in her, and putting on her old coquettishness of manner, she said,—

“Why, Bob, what an incongruity! How could you be dependent on *my consent* if I was bound to approve of *your choice*? What a silly country lass I would be if I thought that I had gained any power over your future happiness by such a one-sided bargain as that is! You forget that I am a shrewd business woman, and can see at once that such a piece of cajolery is no agreement at all, and deserves no more than a laugh from the sharp traders *we* have been.”

“Incongruity, cajolery, or by whatever term you choose to designate a fair bargain, those were the words. I have thought of them too often to forget them, Rosy, and repeated them over in my mind too many times to be mistaken in the form and purport of our agreement. And at the time we made it neither of us thought it one-sided, for we both gave a full and free consent to it.”

Her apparent coquetry made him slightly angry, and very earnest; and there was a quivering of the muscles around her mouth as she answered him,—

“Bob, you said, just now, that we ought to put away childishness, and become mature, sensible friends. Let us do that, and let our past foolish-

ness be forgotten, and with it this subject, and bargain, if you wish to call it such.”

“Yes, and I say so still. Let us, as sensible people, talk plainly, and make plans for our future happiness; but we must begin by showing we can keep our words with each other. I will keep mine, and I shall hold you to yours, unless you break it in spite of me,” he said, becoming more persisting by her apparent desire to avoid the subject.

There was an expression of pain on her face, but she quickly pressed her lips firmly together, and became very pale, and then, after a moment, she covered all her emotions over with her old look of impervious coquettishness, and replied,—

“Well, then, I will stand by it; though I would much rather you would be your own counselor in the affair, as the happiness or misery of your choice will be yours alone.”

“Is our friendship for each other, then, so light and insincere that our matrimonial relations will not affect each other? If so, Rosy, the spirit and intent of our agreement was not understood, at least by you,” he said, reproachfully.

“Oh, no; I hope not, Bob! I should be unspeakably sorry to see you marry a wife unworthy of you, and I made this agreement with you because I thought you would first give me an opportunity of knowing her, and discovering the faults she could easily conceal from you until after you had married her. But I suppose you thought yourself capable of judging. Some dark-eyed

beauty of South America you have bespoken, and as I must give my consent blindfolded, it is only right that I should wish to throw all the responsibility upon yourself," she quickly returned, with more of her old character aroused in her than she had shown since the death of Lucy.

Robert was blind during all this conversation, or he could have seen that she was no longer coquetting with him; but he was only the more determined to bring the issue about by her apparent wish to avoid it. He said,—

"Yes, to be sure I will abide the consequences of my rashness. Only give me a 'blindfolded consent,' for she will not marry me without it."

"First, then, show me her picture or her letters, that I may judge whether I am about to do you good or harm," she cried, with a strong effort to maintain the composure and cheerfulness of her expression.

"Oh, hang her letters, Rosy! they were unworthy of her. Mere anonymous sheets of note paper, neither signed nor addressed as if she had confidence in my honor, but feared that I might make an improper use of them; and doubtful of myself, since one who ought to know me well doubted me, I have burned the miserable apologies for love-letters which she sent me," he cried, becoming impatient at the mention of her letters.

Hearing her letters spoken of so disrespectfully nerved her for the ordeal, and she calmly said,—

"How ungallant of you! Were they written in Spanish or Portuguese?"

"Oh, never mind the letters! Her picture is over here, and after we look at it, then let her tongue speak for herself," he said, putting his arm around her and drawing her towards the mantel-glass at the other side of the room.

He flattered himself, poor fellow, that she was waiting for him, and, little heart as he had for following her teasing and evasive humor, the fate of Dr. Boynton was in his mind, and he thought there ought to be no more room for her wit and coquetry to deny their relations to each other.

There was no longer a way to avoid what she dreaded; she saw her own self reflected in the glass; she knew that the question of her engagement with him must be decided now; and, quickly freeing herself from his arm, she drew back, blushing and agitated.

"Come, Rosy! there is no longer any use or chance for prevarication; you have too much wit and intelligence to be ignorant of whom I had reference to that day, and now let us have no more ambiguity about it. Of you I thought then, and have ever since, and it has never occurred to me that I would have to ask your consent to my marriage with any other woman; and though I longed to see you the frank, generous, and true girl I knew you to be, I have suffered whatever your coquettish humor chose to make me, rather than ask you to bind yourself so long before I could afford to marry.

But now, though I am not much better off, I have no longer such extreme desires, and I know you do not care for wealth or magnificence; so let us understand each other: will you be frank, Rosy?"

There was never upon woman a more frank and earnest look than Rosamond wore then; her hand did not seek to free itself from his, but her other hand stole up until it rested upon his shoulder, and, looking blushing and candidly into his face, she said, kindly but firmly,—

"Yes, Robert, I will! Let us remain as we always have been, true, firm friends: we have need of each other, and may be able to help each other. I have no friend in this world that I can look to for advice besides yourself, and, if you will let me, I shall try to be good to you whenever Providence puts it in my power. This is all we were ever intended to be."

She never before looked more charming; the mourning dress she wore contrasted well with the whiteness of what little of her neck it left exposed, and its loose fit draped her fine form like a beautiful statue.

Robert understood her in a moment, and, dropping her hand, he tore himself away, and threw himself into a chair, exclaiming, almost angrily,—

"I thought we understood each other better than that, Rosy, or I would never have flattered myself that we were intended to be something more than we have always been."

"I have never intended to deceive you, Robert; whatever I have said to give you hope was said in

the thoughtlessness of the moment, and I always supposed that you thought as lightly of it," she replied, feelingly, and looking apologetically at him.

"No, Rosy, I deceived myself; like the fool in the Bible, I have flattered myself until my iniquity has become hateful to me;" and then, before Rosamond could interpose a word, he added, rising from the chair, "Let us bid each other adieu here. I will then see Mr. Davenport and go back to South America: I longed to see poor Lucy's grave; and now, having remembered all her goodness, and mourned for its departure from this dreary world, I shall bid a long farewell to this once pleasant place."

She folded her arms across her breast, and steadfastly refused to shake hands with him, saying, with sudden alarm and eagerness,—

"No, Robert, you must not go away; we will never be happy without you here; and besides, you would soon sicken and die in that hot, unhealthy climate."

"Come, Rosy, let us shake hands. There is nothing here or elsewhere that my absence or presence will affect, and I suppose I shall never trouble you again this side of the grave. Will you give me your hand?"

"No, Robert; Bob dear, I will not! for you must not leave us and go back there: stay here with or near us, and you will be much happier. You said a moment ago that you did not care for wealth, and I know no one living cares less for it

than you do; so there is no reason why you should forsake painting for traffic."

"You are right; I do not nor never did care for it for myself; and I only sought it because I wanted it for you; but there is excitement in the pursuit of it that may help me for the present. What is there here? Lucy is dead, and you—well, I never understood you as I should——"

She refused still to take the hand he held out to her, and, seizing his hat, he went towards the door, saying,—

"Well, then, I will go without it."

She sprang ahead of him, however; closing the door, she placed her back against it, and said,—

"Oh, Robert, forgive me if I have ever led you to sacrifice your tastes and pursuits for me! I never thought of it before; and whatever I have said, I would not wish to see you anything else but what you are. If I loved you, I would love you as the artist, and nothing else; I would love the profession for the man, and not the man for the profession. I shall never be happy if you go back to that place again wrangling for dollars, instead of staying home here and enjoying your friends and your tastes."

"Well, then, love me, and love the artist, and I will stay here in our own country," he said.

"Yes, as a friend and sister, *for ever and ever*; but I could not otherwise, Robert; I would if I could; but I have not power over my own heart," she cried.

"That is enough, Rosy; let us part before I make myself despicable by asking you a third time. I have been all my life jumping to conclusions, and it is time I should learn wisdom somewhere," he said, impatiently, trying to remove her from the door.

But she stood firm, and, winding both her arms around his neck, entreated him with tears.

"Oh, Robert dear, forgive me if I have wronged you! You know that, however wayward and thoughtless I have been all my past life, I would never be false to a friend; and whatever I said to you, and allowed you to say to me, was not for unkind intentions towards you, but because I did not know my own heart.

"Let the past be buried; that question of giving my consent to your marriage be forgotten, and then we can be happy again.

"If you go away, Robert, I shall die of grief, for I have already been the innocent cause of Lucy's death; and now, driving away the only comfort her father can have in his utter helplessness and woe, will take away what little hope there is in me of ever doing any good.

"Remember how much we both owe him, Robert, and how much he now stands in need of anything we can do to add to his comfort and consolation. When our own flesh and blood failed us, and were cold towards us, he took us under his care,—poor little lambs, without a shepherd or a dam,—and defended us from the preying wolves that beset us on every side. Now, when he has lost his

only child, and has no friends besides us, can we turn our backs on him and leave him, when we might be children to him, and pay him back some of the debt we owe? What is the fame of gaining wealth or excelling in art, Robert, compared with some noble purpose in life, as that of living for some one else's comfort and good, especially when that person is one to whom every human and divine law binds us? And then, again, Robert, Lucy loved you; she lived loving you, and died loving you, all in secret, though I know it; and, if she lived, you would some time be Uncle Davenport's son in another sense. But now, when God has taken her away from her father, you will not make his affliction greater by deserting him too, instead of trying to make it lighter the short time he has left to mourn over her?"

It must not be supposed that Robert stood unmoved while Rosamond was saying all this, for the poor girl was crying almost aloud all the while, and her broken sentences were often intermingled with kisses on Robert's forehead and cheeks, while she appealed to him, so that her feelings would have overcome his obstinacy without the powerful ally she awoke in his own heart by appealing to his gratitude to Mr. Davenport.

He had softened at once, and wept with her at her picture of Mr. Davenport's desolation; but the moment she said that Lucy had loved him, he staggered back to the chair, and, overcome by emotion, he wept like a child, crying,—

"Oh, Lucy, my love! my love! had I ever suspected your love, and known my own heart, life might have been happier to me and longer to you! Oh, my poor Lucy! my love! my love!"

Without raising his head, he held out his hand to Rosamond, who was at once by his side with her sympathy, and he said,—

"Rosy dear, forgive me, though I cannot forgive myself. This has been all a hallucination. I know now what love is,—I never knew before,—and I feel my very heart turning to clay and mingling in the grave with the ashes of the poor unfortunate girl.

"How could I have made such a mistake, Rosy? Talking to you of love, and angry with you for not returning it, when my heart has been wholly another's! Alas, this is what comes of human planning! I thought you ought to be mine, and Lucy Ned Pearson's, and never for once waited to learn how much true love had to say. Will you forgive me, though my presumption and foolishness seem too great to be overlooked by any one but a good and generous girl like yourself?"

Rosamond assured him there was nothing to be forgiven; and then, hand clasped in hand, they promised to remain in the old house while Mr. Davenport lived, and be his son and daughter in spirit and truth.

CHAPTER XIX.

WE will now resume our search for Lucy,—not in the grave, nor yet in heaven, dear reader; so do not be startled by the proposition. We will return to the Ohio River and land in Kentucky.

Yes, to Kentucky Lucy was taken, alive and sound, by the current of the stream,—far, far below where I had sought her before.

I do not know how I have kept the secret so long; and now, as it leaps from my heart, my hand and pen are electrified by writing it; but I try to tell my story as it ought to be told,—every event, error, and surprise in the order they happened. Do not, therefore, think me hard-hearted for causing you to shed tears at her grave, and recording the solemnities of her funeral, and the grief of her friends. All was real to us then. We mourned for her as lost. And remember that if you have been deceived for a few hours, so had we been for a few months. To resume, then.

Lucy went on board the steamboat at Cincinnati, as her telegram to Rosamond announced, and she passed through the horrible scenes of the collision. She had not been long in her state-room when it occurred, having been sitting up until near midnight conversing with a lady and gentleman, with whom

she had traveled from Pittsburg. It was the first night she had ever spent on the water, and the unusual sounds and motion kept her awake.

Before she felt the shock of the collision she heard the cry of alarm from the deck-hands, and she was upon her feet when the passengers were awakened to a sense of their danger by the crash. As the cry of fire from the boiler-deck mingled with the screams of terror from the saloons and state-rooms, the first feeling of cold horror she had ever known chilled her blood. But Lucy was a calm, brave girl by nature, and her presence of mind did not desert her. Though she was not as energetic and self-reliant as Rosamond, she could think and act with as much reason and judgment.

When she first went into her state-room, she saw the life-preservers hanging up there; and, reading the notices for the passengers' instruction as to their use, she fitted one on her, partly from curiosity, and partly from prudence.

Looking into the saloon, as soon as the alarm was raised, she saw several running wildly about, and the smoke and flames already rushing up from the lower deck; so she stepped back and tied the cork jacket on her, as she had done more leisurely only a few hours before. Then she came out again, and followed the crowd of frightened passengers to the cabin-guards, from where she could see another steamboat in flames also, and, by the red glare it cast, she recognized the couple she had been a short time before conversing with. They appeared calm,

and she looked to see what they were doing for their safety, so as to do the same for herself; and having observed the gentleman take the doors of his room off their hinges, she proceeded to unhang hers also.

Her calmness attracted the attention of the man, and he took it off for her, showing her how to hold and use it when she plunged into the water; also telling her to stand near them, and not jump until they did, as the steamboat was nearing the shore, and, by jumping off the moment it was sinking, she would save herself with less effort.

"You may be engulfed for a moment by the plunge, but hold on to your door, as you have it now, and it will bring you up again all right," he said, to reassure her, as he pitied her lonely condition; for he was only a bridegroom yet, and had not lost his gallantry.

Others now crowded the guards around her, uttering frantic cries, and, as they could not be restrained from throwing themselves into the water, the philanthropic man handed them doors and tied life-preservers on them, as he had opportunity, turning, every few moments, to his wife, for she seemed as impatient to get off the burning boat as some of the most excited were. There were six or eight persons restrained by his efforts from throwing themselves into the water without the necessary apparatus for keeping afloat, and, while he was preparing them for the awful leap, the boat was rapidly burning and filling.

At last she was settling in the water, and, giving a hand to his wife and another to Lucy, he told them to jump off with him.

Lucy took the leap, but the other lady did not, and while her husband went back to take her off, the current carried Lucy away from the vicinity of the vessel.

As swimming-schools for young ladies were not among our city institutions when Lucy was receiving her education, she had not been taught to swim, and having no means of directing her course to the shore, she was carried down the river with the current. The life-preserver and the door were sufficient to keep her afloat, however, and, thankful for her escape from the fire, she awaited rescue patiently, though every moment was drifting her away from the light of the burning vessels, and into the unknown darkness beyond her.

All night long she drifted down the river, chilled by the coldness of the water, but still clinging to her door, and trusting in Providence for deliverance. Towards daylight she was carried so near the Kentucky shore that her feet touched the sandy bottom, and letting go her hold on her good friend, the state-room door, she crept to the shore.

The firmness and endurance which had so far supported her failed the moment she was out of the water, and she sank down on the low bank in a swoon.

About sunrise one of the wretched, poverty-stricken inhabitants, who exist rather than live

among the many wealthy and refined people in Kentucky, came down to look at his fish-lines, and gazed with open-mouthed wonder upon the unknown waif which night had cast upon his fishing-bank. He soon found that she was not dead, as he at first supposed, and, going to his wife, got her advice and assistance, and removed Lucy to his log-hut.

It was long before she revived, and when she did, her exhausted state would not permit her to give any account of herself, which, indeed, was unnecessary, as the couple would scarcely comprehend any account she could give them.

Then followed a fever, which nothing but divine interposition prevented from ending her life, for she had no medical aid, and as little of the aid which diet and comfort can give as she could expect from South Sea Islanders.

The people among whom she suffered lived in utter ignorance of almost everything: they never read a newspaper, and never knew what was transpiring beyond the range of their eyes; and they did not, therefore, think of making any inquiries as to whom the invalid belonged.

They had not heard of the accident which had cast her upon their poor hospitality, nor did they ever miss the ill-fated steamboats from among the many which passed up and down the river every day; and they did not consider that anxious friends might be looking for her, or that by hailing a passing boat she might be sent to some place where better care could be bestowed upon her.

Days and even weeks she was prostrated, insensible of her condition, or else too weak and unnerved to make any exertions towards helping herself.

At last she asked them for some paper and ink, that she might write home and inform her father of her safety; but they had none, and before any could be procured she had a relapse.

When the man at length made a journey to a distant grocery store, or rather to a groggery, at which paper was kept, he got some, and told them of the strange guest he had; but what aid or thought could be expected from people as degraded as they were? They were of a class so depraved in their tastes and morals that they thought Providence gave them corn and peach crops for the sole purpose of supplying them with whisky and brandy, and that the little used as bread and fruit was diverted from its legitimate channel, and wasted.

It was long before Lucy was able to write the few lines necessary to inform her father or Rosamond of her safety, and then those lines were carried about in the greasy pockets of her host some time longer before they were mailed.

Before I bring Lucy back to her friends, however, I must say something in extenuation of the three credible witnesses who saw her confined and buried. People are not believed when they say, after an unexpected event has transpired, that they

were looking for it, and yet doubtless such is often the case. We are so constituted that we hope and doubt everything sometimes; the evidence of our senses does not preclude it, and when occasionally one of the vagaries of our mental eccentricity becomes a sober fact, we boast of it, while we forget the many others that were dissolved to nothing. I went out to the farm two or three times while Lucy was absent,—in her grave we supposed,—and every time I approached the house it was with a vague hope that her death and burial were all a dream. Sometimes I would hope to learn on arriving there that something more had been heard of her fate, certain as it seemed to me, and even that I would meet herself at the door, in perfect health and soundness, laughing at our blunder.

"What if her death proved to be a mistake, and she was at the house before me, alive and well; would we not have a happy time of it? And how we should laugh at the tears we shed over her supposed corpse!" were words which often rose to my lips, but were choked back as foolishness.

Yet in sober mind (if I may so designate it in contradistinction to the whimsical fancies which will sometimes fill its place) I never doubted her fate, nor did I doubt that we had recovered the right body, though I thought with so little to recognize it, a mistake would be possible.

Since the error has been discovered, I have learned from Rosamond that she doubted nearly as much as I did; but the philosophy that Sarah

urged appeared sound, and she therefore kept her doubts to herself.

For Sarah I cannot speak so positively, because she pretended to recognize more than we did, while our eyes were as good as hers, and our acquaintance with Lucy as thorough.

Yet she wept the tears of a mourner, and whatever she thought and felt in her heart, her face did not betray any doubts of the identity of the corpse or pleasure in the sad calamity that had befallen us all, though it might be her gain.

It was her policy to have no doubt of Lucy's death, as Mr. Davenport would cling to a hope, however improbable, and die with it, leaving a provision in his will for the return of his daughter, which might hamper the independence of the young widow.

The lines written in the log-house down on the banks of the Ohio River were brought to the farm at last. The letter was addressed to Rosamond, and as soon as it was placed in her hand she thought the superscription looked somewhat like Lucy's,—in fact, she suspected that it was her writing; but, like Paul, she was in doubt whether it was written in the flesh or out of the flesh. It was torn open in an instant, and, without waiting to read the contents, she looked at the signature, and screamed that Lucy was living, at the same time rushing into Sarah's arms, who was coming towards her, when she saw Lucy's name.

She left the letter with Sarah, and ran as fast as

her supple limbs could serve her to Mr. Davenport's room, crying,—

"Oh, uncle, good news! good news! Lucy is not dead! she is alive! Lucy is living! Lucy! Lucy! she is alive!"

"What do you say, child? Lucy alive! My angel coming back to me!" he exclaimed, starting up in his bed, and repeating Rosamond's assertions rather than questioning them.

"Yes! yes! she has written to me! she is somewhere; I did not wait to see. Sarah has the letter!" And then they fell into each other's arms and wept like children.

Sarah followed Rosamond as soon as she had given the note a calm perusal, and read it to them as follows:

"DEAR FATHER AND ROSY,—I was not lost with the boat, as I fear you have believed, but was taken down the river a long distance by the current, and set on shore by a merciful Providence.

"I have been very sick and weak ever since, and unable to recollect how I left home or realize my present situation most of the time; but now I am getting strong very rapidly, and will, with God's help, be able to go home to you soon. When I reach home I will tell you all about my escape, and the fearful sights I have witnessed."

Then followed words of gratitude to the people who had saved her life, an inquiry for the lady on

whose account she left home, and directions how to address a letter to her.

"Oh, God be praised for his mercy and goodness!" Mr. Davenport exclaimed, when his wife had read to the place at which my quotation terminates. "I will get up and go to her with Robert! Rosy dear, telegraph to Robert! The poor angel is alive! the lost is found! I never did feel satisfied with that lock of hair you gave me; for Lucy's was far more beautiful."

They persuaded him with difficulty to rest in his bed until Robert came out from the city, in order to preserve his strength for the journey; though neither Rosy nor Mrs. Davenport believed it possible that he could undertake it.

Robert went out that evening, and there was a family jubilee, an overflowing of hearts into hearts, and an outpouring of thanks to the Providence which had rescued and preserved Lucy.

After all the tears shed for her, none could be found willing to acknowledge they had ever been satisfied that we had buried her.

Robert and Mr. Davenport, who had least reason to doubt it, because we who had seen the corpse did not tell them that we had doubts, had repudiated the shade and texture of the hair from the first; and now when it was known to be another's they made their discrimination the theme of great boasting, though they had only said it had faded or lost its gloss in the water.

"And now," said Mr. Davenport, pathetically, "let us remember that some poor unfortunate has

'Gone to her death,'—

maybe some friendless young girl, going to the South to teach; and no one has missed her! Oh, the poor victim! we must deck her grave always with flowers, and weep anew for her as a poor friendless stranger.

'Who was her father?
Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
Had she a brother?
Or was there a nearer one
Still, and a dearer one
Yet, than all other?'

are questions that may never be answered in this life; but we know that she was

'Fashioned as slenderly,
Young and as fair'

as Lucy was, otherwise you would not have made that singular mistake."

He continued his speech until he had quoted nearly all "The Bridge of Sighs" in his lament over the unknown victim, and his desire to watch and honor her grave in place of the friends who were not near it to do her memory that respect.

By Robert he was persuaded to relinquish the thought of undertaking to travel, and Rosamond

and Robert were appointed to go for Lucy, and determine whether it would be prudent to remove her at once or not.

Before she retired that night, Rosamond packed a trunkful of clothes for Lucy, and they left the farm, so as to take the morning train to the city, where they delayed only long enough to purchase cordials and tonics to strengthen the invalid for her journey home.

They found her in the midst of squalidness and wretchedness greater than they had ever imagined; but still, improved since she had written.

In his impatience, Robert clasped her in his arms, with all the fervor and frenzy of a lover, the moment he could reach her.

As she did not suspect the feelings her supposed death had awoke from their dormant state, she returned his embrace with all the warmth that could be expected of a sister; but when, forgetting that Rosamond was also waiting to embrace her, he still held her to his heart, crying, in the very words he used the day Rosamond had told him he had been beloved of her, "Oh, Lucy, my love! my love! my darling!" she comprehended at once the meaning of his unusual demonstrativeness.

There was no resistance to his passionate joy; indeed, there was no power of resistance that she could offer to it; for, though she did not become insensible, the power of action and utterance seemed to be suspended; and, while her head lay, like a drooping lily, upon his breast, the little color which

returning health and friends had brought back to her face had faded away from it again, and left her so inanimate in appearance that he feared she had fainted.

It is men's misfortune to be the cause of ladies' swoons, and women's fortune to supply the cure for them, and no sooner had Robert done the poor invalid this damage than Rosamond pushed him aside, and tried her gentle arts in repairing it.

When Lucy revived again, and was told that her father was well, and could hardly be persuaded from coming for her himself, she became very cheerful, and said she felt able to go with them at once.

As her accommodations were of the most beggarly description, and her mind seemed elated at the prospect of going, both Robert and Rosamond agreed with her desire.

It was only a few hundred yards to the river, and the steamboats ran up to the banks, where the water permitted, to take any passengers that signaled them.

That same evening a passing boat touched the bank three hundred yards above the bar Lucy had been cast on, and she was taken on board in almost an ecstatic state; her body was already beginning to feel the sympathetic influence of the mind.

They rested a day in Cincinnati, and then took passage on another boat to Pittsburg, as that mode of conveyance was easier than railroad travel, and would rest her for her greatest exertion,—the journey across Pennsylvania. But she was so much

stronger by the aid of cordials, milk-punch, and the society of old friends, that when they reached Pittsburg, they had no fears for her, and leaning on Robert's arm, she walked from the boat to a carriage almost as lightly as if she had never been sick.

She was allowed two days to cross Pennsylvania, and then rested another day in Philadelphia, by command of her guardians, where I had the pleasure of welcoming her back to life, and joining the party in their triumphal march to the farm.

Mr. Davenport was sitting up,—in fact, he had been for a full week, except during the hours of night; and, being advised by telegraph when to expect her, he was at the parlor window, looking down the avenue for her arrival.

There was a joyous shout of welcome, as she came through the village, from those who mourned her loss the day we pretended to bury her; and when we reached the gate we could see Mr. Davenport's handkerchief wave from the window.

She was in his arms almost in a moment after she alighted, and the fond old man forgot all his ailments for the time being, and hugged her as soundly as he could have done at any time in his past life.

Sarah was not behind in her good will, but, true to her dignity and practical sense, did not waste either tears or time in her welcome, but released her, and went to see about suitable refreshments for us.

After another affectionate embrace, and then holding her out from him to make sure that he was not wasting his strength on a counterfeit Lucy, he released her, and, looking to us, cried,—

“Edward and Rosamond, give me your hands! You are a nice pair of friends to intrust with the burying of my dead! What can you say for yourselves for imposing upon a sick old man with such a lachrymose tale and dewy ringlet as you brought me, like the bloody garments Jacob’s sons brought to him to prove that his beloved Joseph was devoured? Guilt will not let you answer; but ask for my forgiveness and you shall have it instantly.”

He was becoming intoxicated with joy, and in his overflow of happiness was scarcely conscious of what he was doing.

His cordial grasp of my hand conveyed to me the reparation he offered for his past suspicions; and, letting Rosamond’s hand fall, he reached for Lucy, his purpose so evident in his countenance that all present read it in an instant.

The poor man labored under the strange delusion under which myself and all the family had labored (Lucy excepted), that she and I loved each other, and in the wild impulse of the moment would have given her to me without letting me ask for her. Robert’s quick wit saved us from the embarrassment which would have followed such an offer; for, grasping Lucy’s hand, he cried, “You have found your lost one again, and your dead is now alive, Mr. Davenport. Give her to

me, and I shall never let her go near a steamboat again!”

He did not wait for an answer, but clasped Lucy to his heart as if she were already his own, and drew her towards her father for the blessing.

Amazement sobered Mr. Davenport in an instant; he was not expecting this, and both he and Rosamond anxiously glanced at me to see how I took such an unlooked-for interference; for Robert was the only one who knew that Lucy and I had parted as brother and sister.

My face assured them that there was nothing in my heart but unfeigned satisfaction at the turn the little family drama had taken, and a bright flush of pleasure illumed Rosamond’s always bright countenance, while Mr. Davenport showed plainly in his that though he would gladly have given her to me, I had lost none of his good will by letting her go to another so cheerfully.

He turned to Robert, who still held the half-resisting girl to his heart, and said, in poorly counterfeited indignation,—

“What, you selfish rascal! can you have the impudence of asking me to give my long-lost darling away to you so soon after the grave has given her back to me? No, sir, she shall never leave my house again for you or any one else! so understand that I love her yet!”

Robert did not hear or seem to hear what was said; for Lucy, overcome by the excitement of the past few days and the vehemence of her lover,

would have fallen on the floor had he not supported while he embraced her, and all his attention was centered on her.

As she recovered, and was again showing some signs of resistance, her father said,—

“Bring her to me, Robert.”

Robert led her towards him, and, supporting himself between Rosamond and me, the tender father stood and received them both into his embrace, saying,—

“Yes, as God has given her back to me, so willingly do I give her to you, Robert, my son! May you both be as good and as happy, as faithful to your God and to each other, as it is in my overflowing heart to wish you!”

Through the tears, which were flowing down his face, the benevolence and goodness of his character shone with almost unearthly brightness, and he was, no doubt, realizing the divine truth that “it is more blessed to give than to receive;” but even in the excitement of the moment his native politeness was not forgotten, for he said to Robert, who was still holding Lucy,—

“Come, Robert, do not be selfish; remember we are all friends here, and allow Rosy and Mr. Pearson to congratulate us. God be thanked, we have at last awakened from this ‘Midsummer-Night’s Dream’ by which I have been deluded so long.”

Rosamond kissed them both affectionately, and I followed by kissing Lucy also; but Mr. Daven-

port, overcome by his unusual excitement, and having deprived himself of my support, fell to the floor.

As we lifted him up, he cried, in a suffocating voice,—

“Oh, I am dying! Come near me, my children! May God bless you both, and bless you all, Rosy and Edward! You have all been good to me; what would my life have been without you? Every one of you has contributed to my happiness as you had power, and I bless you for it. My dying blessing——”

While he was speaking, or rather gasping, those words, we laid him on a sofa, and Mrs. Davenport, who was ignorant of all that had passed in the room, came in now and hurried out again for restoratives.

Though some were bathing his temples, and others chafing his hands, he was gradually becoming incoherent in his speech, and we felt, with all our exertions, how powerless human aid is when death comes upon man. We tried all that love for the good man could do to assist him, but he was soon unconscious of our efforts even, and talked wildly, while we could do nothing to restore him to consciousness.

“Glorious mountains and plenty of game, Perry. —We are Robin Hood and Little John.—Yes, Lucille, so fair and lovely!—Yield the poor orphan’s portion to the churl? No, never, while I have a dollar to—Oh, you hypocrite! why have you

slandered and wounded my poor, innocent dove?—Come back, Lucy; come back, my angel, and forgive me!—Yes, take her; she has come again to us, the wound is healed, and she is ours—Lucille's son; yes, amen, amen!—A splendid sky!—Translucent atmosphere!—Magnificent col—glorious! glorious! glori——”

He ceased speaking. All his life seemed to have been reviewed in that short time, and its principal events were recounted for the last time on earth.

He soon sank into a peaceful slumber, and we sat up with him all night, expecting every moment that some change would take place.

About daylight he opened his eyes, beckoned for Lucy to approach him, and after holding her to his breast for a few moments, without any other token of recognition, he calmly expired.

Lucy had hitherto shown all the firmness and presence of mind that she had acquired by years of patient nursing; but the moment his breath ceased to be felt on her cheeks, both failed her, and Rosamond and Robert took her away, while Sarah and myself remained behind with all that was left of the artist, philanthropist, and father, save the good record of his unobtrusive virtue and useful life.

CHAPTER XX.

DURING the four weeks which followed Mr. Davenport's death, there was nothing said or done at the farm worthy of record in this story. The mourning set aside by Mrs. Davenport and Rosamond on the return of Lucy, had been resumed again, with a few extras for the former, who now required a widow's weeds.

It would be presumptuous of me to describe Sarah's feelings on finding herself a free woman so soon; for she did not betray her sentiments to me when I was her lover, and I was less still in her confidence since she became Mrs. Davenport. By the death of her husband she was released from her servitude as nurse and housekeeper, and also from the yoke of the law, so that she was now free to enter into the matrimonial lists again, as soon and energetically as her sense of propriety would let her.

Born to succeed, apparently, and yet, so far, singularly unsuccessful, she must have rejoiced, without malice towards the living or the dead, upon contemplating another trial of her captivating powers, so long resting in ignoble idleness, but still in good enough preservation to serve their ambitious mistress.

She had made no pretensions to excessive grief, for moderation was her virtue; and to be moderately bereaved, and decently solemn, was all she claimed as her privilege. She had perception enough to know that tears would not become her, however natural and honest the feelings which would call them forth, and her respect for her cousins kept her silent on the subject of her loss. Since the day she had entered the house as its mistress, she had never, by word or deed, given Rosamond and Lucy cause for complaint, and she only waited to leave it now when respect for them would permit it. Like all well-bred persons, she made her duty and inclination go hand-in-hand; so her politeness to them was not lost, since she needed a month of retirement to form and mature her plans for the future.

Mr. Davenport's last will, which had been made about the time he began to have doubts of his wife's disinterestedness in marrying him, had not been altered, on account of Lucy's supposed death, and it left one-third of his property to his wife and the balance to his daughter.

During the earlier days of his professional career, he had been a successful painter, and his savings were not inconsiderable; so that Sarah's portion, however below her ambition, was enough to maintain her in modest independence.

But she had higher projects than living a retired widow, and her fortune would not serve her ends unless she spent it all in a year or two, and

risked everything in getting a husband with a more substantial fortune before it had failed her.

She was too independent and too conscious of the incompatibility between herself and Rosamond to remain with her cousins on the farm, even if her patience would suffer her to await there a tardy and doubtful discovery, and she resolved to go some place where she would be more appreciated, and courted as a woman.

It was her belief that the sexes were intended to be nearly equal in numbers, and statistics prove that they are nearly so by birth; but she knew, from personal observation, that marriageable men were greatly in the minority in her neighborhood, and, consequently, there was some place where they were wasting their existence without the companionship Providence had provided for them.

She gave her mind to the benevolent task of discovering that place, and the project of blessing it with her presence and attractions.

Rosamond, while frank in her manners, was as deep as a well, and, though Sarah had not made her a confidante in her schemes, yet she rightly read them in her mind by her knowledge of character in general, and of Cousin Sarah's in particular.

Though sorrow-stricken by the death of a man who had been such a kind guardian to her, Rosamond's mind was not vacant. Physical and mental activity was her characteristic, and a feeling of moral responsibility added to these, had made her a girl of nobler aims and aspirations than when she was

first introduced to the reader. It was only natural, however, that some of the old leaven would sometimes show itself, and this was usually the case when she was dealing with Sarah, whose selfishness and cunning aroused it.

One day, in conversation with the widow about some acquaintance who had married above her deserts while on a long voyage, she said, "If ever a woman seems to be angel to man it is when she is at sea, with the rough faces and the rougher manners of the sailors to set off her beauty and gentleness. As she is the only woman in sight, every look and motion seems grace itself; no feminine eye is there to detect art and affectation; and no wonder the poor sailors and all the men on board admire her as the only mark of civilization and refinement they have in view."

While Rosamond was delivering her mind of this sentiment, her hand was exploring her pocket. It was not often drawn forth empty from that magazine of curiosities, as when she sent Boynton away, and when she had concluded her speech she produced a clipping, saying,—

"Being at sea must be almost equal to living in California, which appears to be a paradise for women, from the following paragraph I have cut out of a paper a few days ago:

"We would advise some of our New England towns, which have an overstock of women and an interest in philanthropic enterprises, to send a few cargoes of its "wall-flowers" to California, where

they would not be suffered to sit alone a whole evening at a party, however much age and appearances were against them.

"From an exchange we learn that there was a ball given there some time ago, and all the women they could muster amounted to two cooks, not over-beautiful or accomplished, as may be supposed, but yet no Eastern belle could boast of being more sought and contended for than they were in the mazy dance at that ball. This reminds us that we saw some time ago in the same exchange a paragraph which deserves notice also:

"A woman had taken her infant to the theater at San Francisco, and as the orchestra began the overture the child cried; whereupon a man in the pit called out to stop the fiddles and let the baby cry, as he had not heard one for ten years.

"The orchestra stopped, and the baby continued its performance amid unbounded enthusiasm.

"Let those societies whose object is to encourage marriage and population take notice. *Verbum sat sapienti.*"

Rosamond had cut this out for Sarah's benefit, and kept it in reserve for the right moment, turning the conversation on the marriage at sea for the purpose of introducing the chances of one in California.

Of course, "a word to the wise was sufficient;" Sarah was intelligent enough to see at once the advantage of being where there was so little com-

petition, and too decided in character to hesitate a moment before determining in favor of California.

Rosamond read her thoughts, and continued,—

“It is no compliment for a woman to get a husband in such a place, as there are twenty eligible men to every woman they see.”

“She need not care for that, since she could have the pleasure of complimenting a man by accepting him before the nineteen others,” Sarah replied, elated by the thought of coquetting with a host of admirers again, as in days gone by.

“I would prefer being complimented myself by being selected from twenty others ready to jump at the offer made to me,” Rosamond returned.

Two small speeches could not more fully illustrate the different characters of the speakers.

Lucy being present was appealed to, but said, in a way that proved the discussion was not much to her taste, that such a disproportion on either side might have its disadvantages.

“Lucy, my dear, you must not let your heart be consumed by grief: we seldom die of it; and as we may expect to live on notwithstanding our bereavements, we should give our thoughts to such things as will enter into our duties and enjoyments in our subsequent lives,” Sarah said.

Lucy replied that she was not prepared to be very cheerful; but, nevertheless, she did not think that her grief was more excessive than her father deserved and natural feelings justified.

“We have only an uncle to mourn for; and

though he was as kind as a father to us, we cannot blame Lucy for dwelling more seriously and disconsolately on her loss,” Rosamond remarked.

“You mean that you have only an uncle to mourn for,” Sarah returned, not wishing to hear her husband designated as her uncle.

That, however, was the way Rosamond in her own heart viewed Sarah’s marriage with Mr. Davenport. She doubted whether it was allowable under ordinary circumstances, though really there was no consanguinity between them; and she replied, evasively,—

“Well, yes, I mean that; but as he was an only uncle, my loss, though not naturally so grievous, is equally, with Lucy’s, irreparable, for I cannot have another.”

“And why is not mine, also, pray?” asked Sarah.

“You married him, and of course can renew the relationship with another at any time by marrying again. I believe it was written on Pompey’s Pillar that what man has done man can do; and the same can be said of woman,—what she has done once she can do again as well,” Rosamond replied.

Sarah did not allow her resentment to betray itself, but calmly remarked,—

“You mistake the meaning of the inscription; for the moral intended to be conveyed is that what has been done by one man can be also done by another; and it is therefore more for the encouragement of the woman who has never had a husband than for her who has been already married.”

Yet in her heart she did not reject Rosy's interpretation of the moral. She had won a husband once, and she thought she could do it again, only there was no one in her vicinity then worth the winning, even if she could feel it consistent with her sense of decorum to cast her eyes about in a place where the recent death of her husband was known and would be remembered to her disadvantage.

She had read too many witticisms at the expense of husband-hunting widows to be ignorant of the suspicion she would incur by going out alone on her venture, and she now hoped to detach Lucy from Rosamond, and making her companion to herself. She would gain a twofold advantage by it,—their united incomes would enable them to live more extravagantly than she could on her own separately, and with Lucy for a decoy, the beaux would not be so much afraid of her designs.

I hope I will not be judged too severely for writing such uncharitable things against a widow, but I have reason for knowing that her motives were not disinterested, and the candor which should characterize a historian compels me to say all I know. I have more confidence in Rosamond's insight of Sarah's character than in my own, with all the advantages my engagement with her gave me; and Rosamond is no longer the wild, impulsive creature she was when I met her first, that she would say unkind and unjust words of her cousin or any one else.

Sarah bided her time; and when she and Lucy were by themselves she said,—

"Lucy, my dear cousin, to resume the thoughts which Rosamond, with her well-meant though ill-timed wit, interrupted to-day, I must remonstrate against the wrong you do yourself by allowing your mind to dwell too much on your sorrows. It is our duty to be cheerful under affliction and bereavement, and the part of sound philosophy to forget what we cannot help.

"With the loss of your father on your mind, and the effects of your recent sickness yet preying on your body, you ought to try a change of air and scenery. You owe it to your health, and the Giver of such a blessing expects that we will appreciate it enough to guard it by all the means we possess."

"I do not think my health suffers or is in danger, and I could not be more cheerful any place than here," she replied.

"Come, you can and will, my dear! You have wept and thought for the dead long enough, and now you must think of yourself and the future. If I see you indulge in such a gloomy trance again, I shall be inclined to think that you are in love, and not at all the disconsolate orphan we have been sorry for."

Lucy looked with surprise and reproach at her, for so unfeeling a remark, and then turned away her face to hide her tears.

It must be remembered that Sarah was not

present when Robert asked Mr. Davenport for Lucy, and therefore was ignorant of the relations existing between them. She thought that Rosamond and Robert were engaged, and said this purposely to offend Lucy, that she might have an opportunity of making an affecting scene between them, which would set them on softer ground with each other.

She rushed towards Lucy with a girlish vehemence unbecoming to her maturity, and threw herself at her feet, crying,—

“Forgive me, dear Lucy; I said it to arouse you, it is so long since I saw you smile or look interested. We both have lost our best and only friend, and let us now be friends for his sake. Let us banish that frigid reserve which has existed between us since my marriage, not only to our own prejudice, but also to the sorrow of your dear father.

“Though you may feel injured by it, and justified in resenting it, you have really lost nothing by my marriage. Your father loved you as much as ever, only your offended manner towards us kept him from demonstrating it to you; and as for what he has left me in his will, you shall have every dollar of it back, for I will not touch it, but will teach, or do something else for an humble living, rather than take yours from you!”

“No, no, Mrs. Davenport, such a mean, mercenary thought has never entered my heart! Instead of envying you the possession of what you

have, I would gladly have seen it more,” Lucy answered, feelingly.

“But I assure you that I cannot touch it, Lucy. It all belongs to you alone, and I should be sorry to let anything like that come between us, related and bound as we are to each other by blood and sympathy. You see the misfortune that has attended the willing of this farm! What else has ever bred discord and dislike between Rosamond and myself, innocent as we both are of the will and the laws which have interpreted it? No such bone of contention shall be between us if I can help it; for I shall give it all up to you, and then, if you feel so disposed, live on your bounty while I am making arrangements for my future, and there will be nothing to embitter our feelings.”

“I trust you do not think I could have bitter feelings towards you, Mrs. Davenport?”

“Why not? You have not denied it! You made no denial when I said you felt yourself injured by my marriage with your father; and what else could I think of your silence?”

“I deny it now, Mrs. Davenport. From my heart I wish you a happy future, and if there is anything to be forgiven, you have my free and full forgiveness.”

“Ah, Lucy, you profess Christianity, and it may seem a Christian-like duty to say that you forgive me; but I tell you, Lucy, there is no such thing as forgiveness in this world between mortal and mortal! If you think you are wronged, the feel-

ing ever remains, for you do not forget it; and saying that you forgive only means that you are magnanimous enough to be willing to forego the luxury of revenge, while the heart remains, as before, estranged from the offender, and dwells upon the injury. This is not such a forgiveness, as God promises to man; for He takes the offender back to his love and forgets the past; while your evasive manner merely says, with the old aphorism, 'It is your fault if you cheat me once; it is my fault if you cheat me twice!'"

"I have not heard that before. It is very good, I think," Lucy said, with a faint smile.

Sarah looked disappointed, and resumed,—

"You admit, then, that it expresses your feelings—that you were offended because I married your father, and that, while you do not wish me ill, you cannot forget the offense? But, Lucy, if I *did* cheat you once, I cannot cheat you again; you have not another father that I can marry; and if you had, I do not think I would care to see the misfortune of my former marriage duplicated," she said, ignoring the fact that she could cheat her out of many things besides a father's love.

"I hope you do not regard your marriage with my father as a misfortune to you? Did he not always treat you with the kindness of a father or an uncle, if not with the gallantry of a young lover, Mrs. Davenport? And what more could you expect?" Lucy cried, with a slight show of indignation in her manner.

"Well, I must confess that I expected more than I received, and my marriage experience will last me for a lifetime! I was not foolish enough to think that he would go into ecstasies over me, like a young husband,—a woman never expects that when she marries an old man; but when I married him, expecting a father's love, at least, to replace the love of the father I had lost, and wishing to share a sister's love with you, I was, unfortunately, disappointed.

"I found your heart closed against me from the first moment of my new life, and impregnable to all my efforts to overcome its prejudice and displeasure. Your father, too, seeing that he had mortally offended you by marrying, and that you would not be reconciled to it, hated me for your sake, and, while I tried to nurse him, insulted me by his suspicions, as if I was another Lucretia Borgia, and was waiting for an opportunity of poisoning him. Yes, Lucy, you may well ask me what I expected, and what I got, by my marriage,—little of the one, and less of the other! I was foolish for doing it, and, if I have injured you, you have been already avenged, and it is not much for you to say that you forgive me enough to let me go without any more punishment."

By making out a case of injured innocence, she hoped to take advantage of Lucy's tenderness of conscience, and she partly succeeded, for Lucy answered her with tears,—

"If you have suffered all this, then it is I who

should be suing for your forgiveness, for I have caused both yourself and my father unhappiness; and if your married life has been embittered by my manner towards you, I can assure you that you have misunderstood my feelings, for I was never conscious of a thought that would make it less happy for you than you could wish it yourself. And it is for you now, Mrs. Davenport, to forgive *me*, if I have ever, by a word or look, rendered your position in the house, or relation to my father or me, uncomfortable or unpleasant."

"No, no, Lucy dear! you never have; you have always demeaned yourself well and blamelessly, and it is to my own sensitiveness I owe it. I came here, as I said before, expecting a warm welcome from you, but I could read none in your looks.

"I have never, in all your life, known you to deceive by word or look, and because since my marriage you have never spoken or even looked any affection for me, I was justified in thinking you had none in your heart. You did not welcome me, as your mother, with any show of love, and I feared you regarded me as an intruder and a rival; for you know you are demonstrative, and when you say nothing, it means that you feel nothing."

Lucy thought one moment of her long and silent love for Robert, now suppressed and unspoken no more, and then replied,—

"You are right; my looks and words shall never pretend to what I do not feel; and how could I be pleased to see you my father's wife, when I knew

he married you because he had withdrawn his confidence and his affection, in a great measure, from me?"

Robert had betrayed to Lucy enough of Sarah's duplicity to inspire the last clause, and the mute eloquence of her blue eyes gave so much force to the words, that the young widow did not reply with her usual readiness. Lucy continued,—

"When my father had returned from his unfortunate wedding tour, and before I could have betrayed anything but joy and solicitude at his unexpected return, he showed his estrangement from me; and a month before his marriage took place his manner was altered and mysterious."

Sarah's ingenuity had given her a reply by this time, and she said,—

"You know Rosy used to laugh a good deal about the preference Mr. Pearson betrayed for your society, and your father might have become alarmed by her prophecies, and taken offense at the bare possibility of such an event. Old men, and especially invalids, are easily frightened when such a thing is hinted at, and it is not surprising that he should have made a bugbear of Rosy's jests, and thought you really intended to marry Mr. Pearson,—a step he was mortally opposed to."

This was a skillful double-barreled discharge of spite at Rosamond and myself,—the two whose influence in keeping Lucy from her clutches she thought she had most to fear; but innocence is

the best shield against craftiness, and Lucy calmly but reproachfully replied,—

“You ought to have told me this before you married my father, and then all would have been saved the sorrows of a misunderstanding. If you complain of being married to nurse him, and then being suspected of a wish to poison him, remember that you have partly merited it by making no effort to relieve his mind of the errors which were preying upon it, and led him into such an act of seeming monomania.”

Sarah was beaten with the weapons of her own selection, and said, despondingly,—

“What I have suffered by his error I do not complain of now; for I have erred as much myself, and the natural amiability of his temper had been impaired by pain. What I have been compelled to bear with from Rosamond is different; and, not having your father’s peace of mind to consider now, I cannot, with self-respect, longer submit to it. This house is hers, and I owe it both to her and myself to leave it as soon as possible. She will be married to Robert before long, and there will be as little welcome for you then as there is for me now. Young married people are always happiest when by themselves, and let us leave them and go forth together to seek some quiet far-away place, where we can live in retirement and sisterly affection. ‘The world is all before us where to choose our place of rest, and Providence our guide.’”

The romance of her proposition and the sub-

limity of her quotation was not lost on a mind like Lucy’s, but they were not well supported by her facts, since Lucy knew that Robert would not be married to Rosamond.

She said in reply, therefore,—

“I have no nearer or dearer relative than Rosy, and no older or better friend than Robert, and I do not know why I should run away from either of them; besides, I do not think they will be married as soon after my father’s death as you predict.”

A mind as truthful and explicit as Lucy’s was once with every one, will learn to keep its own counsel, and even to equivocate eventually, when confidence has been betrayed, as was proved by her remark about Robert and Rosamond’s marriage,—a fact which explains the Saviour’s strong denunciation of those who offend the innocence and trustfulness of children.

“Maybe they will not be married within a month; but you know they will at no very distant day; they will not always mourn for your father; and when they are married you will see a change in them; their sympathies and their thoughts will be centered in themselves more than now. Rosy is egregiously selfish, and even Robert will, after he is married to her, become different from the friend you have known hitherto,” Sarah remarked.

Lucy’s eyes kindled, and she betrayed a desire to say that the change which would some time take place in Robert’s relation to her would be an agreeable one, but Sarah did not perceive it.

"Robert has always been in the place of a brother to me, and it is his express desire that I should consult him when I contemplate a step involving so much of my happiness as leaving the farm would," she said.

"But are you not afraid that taking him at his word may place yourself in a delicate position? The engagement between himself and Rosamond, though existing, is not supposed to be known, and he may think you have understood him in a different sense from what he intended on that account."

"I do not fear that Robert would suspect me of being so unfeminine," Lucy replied, contemplating, with inward satisfaction, the fact that there was no room for a misunderstanding between herself and Robert; for she was no longer under the necessity of hiding her feelings from him: all was open, confessed, and acknowledged between them now.

"Oh, it is not at all unfeminine, I assure you; going to a bachelor friend for advice is quite feminine, and custom has made it honorable; and it is because the ruse is so well known that I feared Robert might suspect, and be in doubt what he ought to do."

"There is, however, no occasion for asking his advice about this matter. I am contented here with Rosy, and when she gets tired of me she will be candid enough to say so."

"Yes, and it is because she is so candid that I would try to avoid the mortification by anticipating her," Sarah returned.

This was almost too much for Lucy to bear, well as she had been trained to keep her temper, for to be thus counseled as if she had not sense or delicacy enough to direct her in a matter of this kind was an insult she keenly felt.

"Let us say no more about my future, Mrs. Davenport; it is all in the hands of God; but if you have anything to say about your own I will hear it with interest," she said.

"Mine is in the hands of God, too, I suppose; for it is said that He cares for the widow as well as for the orphan," she sententiously replied, and then abandoned the scheme of using Lucy and her money for her own ends and pleasure.

The idea of restoring to Lucy the third of her father's money was also abandoned as Quixotic, and with the decision that characterized her, she selected California as her future home, and wrote to secure a state-room in the first steamer going out.

There were no hollow professions of sorrow when she announced her intention of leaving the house, for the cousins had too much self-respect, and respect for each other's intellects, to make an unmeaning display of tears and epithets.

Rosamond accompanied her to Philadelphia, and there bade her adieu; but Robert and Lucy went to New York to see her off.

As she stood in the cabin of the steamer with Lucy, she said,—

"Now, Lucy, I suppose we will never see each

other again, and I should like to feel that I carry the kind wishes with me that I leave behind with you: this parting, you know, is by your consent, and under the circumstances I have more cause to doubt your affection than you have mine."

Lucy did not appear to notice the reproach the last clause contained, but replied to the first one,—

"You certainly do, Mrs. Davenport! There is no happiness in this life or that to come which I do not desire for you; and when you are far away on your voyage I shall think of you, and pray for your safe arrival."

"Yes! yes! you could do all for your enemies, I have no doubt, Lucy!"

"And what more could I do for myself or my friends? I cannot grant the blessings."

"You can to me, Lucy; I am starved for love, and since I left home and came to your father's house I have never had a token of it. You have never been politely deceitful; I have never heard you utter a word that was not as true as it was kind, and it is this sincerity that makes me feel how unfortunate I am in separating from you."

From a proud, spirited woman, no words more humiliating could be expected, and she was very anxious to unite her income with Lucy's when she sued so humbly for her friendship.

The compliment paid to Lucy's sincerity only made her the more resolved to be sincere, however well she wished her stepmother, and she remained silent.

"You have only to say the word, Lucy, and we will live together; you need not come with me, for I will remain with you; any place you like we will live together, have one common purpose and interest as long as we live, and nothing but death shall separate us," she continued.

The Ruthlike devotion of her proposition, and the pathos of her voice, were unable to shake Lucy's determination to part from her; she knew by intuition that her motives were sinister, as the dove knows the hawk by instinct.

The "word" was not spoken, and Sarah said once more, as a last appeal,—

"One word, now, Lucy, and the steamer will go without me; I will remain here with you!"

"Mrs. Davenport, I wish you a safe and pleasant voyage from my heart of hearts!" she said, weeping for the sternness of her own will more than for the departure of her cousin, and then they parted. Robert, in attending to her baggage, had finished his last labors for her, and they left her to pursue her course to California, that El Dorado of fortune-hunters and husband-seekers.

CHAPTER XXI.

Two years have elapsed since the preceding events were recorded, and I now find myself compelled by the force of circumstances to add another chapter.

It is a duty I owe to those who have with patience followed me through twenty chapters to make my narrative as complete as possible, and the two last years have given me material with which to do it.

Time, ever passing, brings before us new scenes, and a true light by which to review old ones (viewed before, perhaps, through the colored glasses of prejudice and self-interest), and as an honest man should not hesitate to correct his errors, I find it easier to confess mine in the end of the story, than search over the whole book for them.

But, to begin with the events. I will first state that Robert and Lucy have been married two years, and threaten to disturb the harmony of natural laws by never letting their honeymoon wane.

They have a "fairy boy," whose portrait Robert has painted, in hopes, he tells us, that the picture of his innocent infancy might recall the future man to the path of virtue, should he stray from it, as

(328)

witnessing the child's worship called the lawless robber to repentance in the tale of Paradise and the Peri.

But Lucy and I, who delight in twitting him, say that the portrait is the fruits of pride in his painting and paternity, because he is constantly sending it for exhibition to the art-galleries of our principal cities, at the expense of a heavy transit insurance.

However that may be, the picture is one of marvelous beauty and exquisite fineness, and if prolificness was a characteristic of pictures, I should say that it had descended from the one Mr. Davenport had painted and loved before he saw his wife; Lucille, with the blue eyes and sunny hair his imagination had given her.

This is not the only event I have to record. Six months after Sarah had sailed for California I received a paper by mail which contained a notice of the marriage of Leander Boynton, M.D., and Mrs. Sarah C. Davenport, at the "Cliff House," in San Francisco, and my mind was at once delivered of the following impromptu: "May disappointment never rise, like a phoenix, from the ashes of his hopes!" Some may dispute its originality; but, "alas! there is nothing original within us, excepting original sin."

The poor victim was overtaken and captured by the female privateer in the very harbor in which he thought he had immunity from the gales and the wars of matrimony; and this paper was a com-

promise with his word, which was pledged to write to me of all his adventures.

Now, with regard to Rosamond. I suppose the reader has condemned her to perpetual virginity, doing penance for her fickleness by telling over the question of her engagement on the buttons of her wrapper, while sadly ruminating on *what might have been*. Not so. There is no question in her mind, or in mine, about her engagement now, however it was once; for she is engaged, without doubt, and will be until she is married!

It is to her record I have done injustice, and I would gladly have effaced my errors and strictures from this tale; but as the spoken word cannot be recalled, I will try to place her in a true light in my last chapter.

Rosamond is now twenty-four, but is far more charming than when she was twenty, for in mind and in person she has improved on herself, ardent, aspiring, and progressive as she was from the first. Her qualities were all positive, Robert said once, but I must add that she had a few negative ones. She was never vain, indolent, or selfish, and I have found in her one who can advance side by side with her husband, instead of holding him back by laziness and lack of appreciation.

But I have let out my secret, and I must now go back, and tell how it came about.

As soon as they were married, Robert and Lucy moved into the city, and Rosamond came with them; for she said that a young couple ought to

have an old maid in the family to look after their morals and manners.

I could see, however, that their spirits were not greatly depressed by her society, for the brightness of her eyes, the sprightliness of her wit, and the kindness of her disposition increased every day, and rendered the idea of her company being of the heavy order preposterous.

As Lucy had led a retired life while her father lived, and had remained fully as retired on the farm during the interval that followed from his death until her own marriage, the sight-seeing and concert-going which usually belong to courtship came after it.

Rosamond had been practically as secluded by her Western life, and everything was as new to her as to Lucy. She accompanied them, therefore, and, as three do not make a convenient party, I *accompanied* her, which left Robert and Lucy free to talk of their own affairs, whenever their interest in the entertainment was not kept up. In this way I learned to look upon Rosamond as my own friend and companion, and the past, in which I thought it was treasonable to admire her, was like a dream to me.

Poor, selfish, narrow-minded bigots are we, and our prejudice and indifference come of the want of knowing our fellow-creatures and ourselves! To know Rosamond was to love her, and to be in her society was to become acquainted with her; for she had a frank, open way about her which

never left me in doubt of her tastes and her qualities.

It seemed as if the scales had fallen from my eyes when I viewed in her, expressions, manners, moods, and traits of character as different from those I had formerly ascribed to her as day is from night, and discovered beauties of mind and temper which were unknown to me before, well as I had thought I was acquainted with her. Maybe they were forced to bud and bloom by the appreciation they were certain of being greeted with now, for Rosamond could guess how my feelings were disposed towards her at all times during our acquaintance.

She knew when I first began to like her, and how much my esteem increased each day, and she also knew exactly when my esteem threw off its chrysalis and passed into love.

She had seen how unfavorable an impression she had made on my mind at first sight, and how long I had retained my prejudice, though she had not betrayed her knowledge by pettishness or retaliation; for Rosamond, I am happy to say, never had that petulance and fretfulness which her sex excuse in themselves as nervousness, and I will not, therefore, have a nervous wife.

As she was aware of my feelings, I had a smooth road before me. If I retained her hand longer than was necessary at parting, she did not appear to notice it; and if I pressed her arm too emphatically when it rested on mine, she was in blissful ignorance of the fact. There had never been the slightest ap-

proach to a flirtation between us, and, as my sincerity was not doubted, it was received with sincerity in return.

At last the time came when I could no longer contain my love, and I asked and obtained my peerless girl.

We had ridden together one day far into the country (for Rosamond did not entirely give up her favorite exercise when she returned to live in the city), and by some accidental remark my old saying, that the hand which held the bridle firmly would be firm and true in friendship, was recalled. She had so often betrayed her eagerness in adopting my sentiments, and proved their hold on her memory, that I was not surprised to hear her revive this doubtful maxim of mine; and I at once took the opportunity of asking for the hand which was then firmly, though gracefully, holding the reins. According to novelists of a certain school, she should have started, fainted, and fallen off, or at least trembled like an aspen-leaf; but she did neither, for the time which would be wasted in so doing was used to relieve me of suspense.

With a grave, blushing, but frank face, she assured me that I could have her hand, as she always expected to give it with her heart, and I was already in possession of that.

It was then I learned how long; for with her hand and heart she seemed to resign her right to keep any of her old or new feelings or secrets from me.

Our love relation was too novel and strange to

us to enable us to speak or think of the future, so our thoughts naturally reverted to the past, and the many unexplained mysteries of our long acquaintance.

"You did not like me at all when you first knew me," she said, half reproachfully, giving her innocent pony a smart tap on the neck, but turning her face to me with demure gentleness for explanation.

The vision of the old library, and her entrance, looking so stiff and dignified, rose before me in an instant, and I felt guilty of misjudging her; but I answered evasively, by asking a question in return, for I remembered that Lucy had led her into error by telling her I was a great admirer of dignity.

"Why do you think I did not admire you when I met you first, Rosy dear?"

"Because you scarcely looked at me, and you seemed indifferent to everything I said."

Very impolite of me; and as I could not defend my manners or my taste, I compelled herself to act on the defensive and let my weak points alone.

"But you were as severe on me: you snubbed me with your dignity, stunned me with your self-complacence, and crushed me with your learning."

"I was then an ignorant, silly girl, and you made me appear worse by indifference and lack of appreciation," she returned.

"How could you know I did not admire you? It would have been rude of me to tell you so on a

short acquaintance, and you have often said you did not like flattery."

"Well, I do *not* like flattery; but if you had then flattered me, just a little, by a look even, I would have been better pleased with myself and with you: as it was, I felt greatly mortified with the result of our introduction, for Lucy had assured me that we would be delighted with each other."

"Ah, the gentle mischief-maker! it was she who also told you that I admired dignified people, and persuaded you to overwhelm me by your stately entrance into the library," I said, and I clasped the face that appealed to me in mute surprise.

No one except a stupid man could have heard that secret from Lucy without knowing why she had tried to be dignified, and sought my admiration with the crudeness of her Western training.

Her interest in my pursuits and her self-abnegation in conforming her tastes to mine, as I often accidentally discovered, ought to have taught me the story of her love long before her lips had confessed it; for so wholly could she give everything, small and great, where her heart was bestowed, that I even found, in looking over her handwriting, she had learned to make her capitals like mine, odd as they were in many instances, and in several other ways betrayed an assimilating tendency which could only be the spontaneous fruits of an unselfish love.

However, I did not speak of this then, for I merely remarked that I thought she was destined

by fate for Robert, and therefore not eligible to my admiration.

"But could you not admire me even if I could not be your wife? Is it not selfishness to depreciate a thing because it does not belong to yourself?" she asked.

I could not gainsay it; so to defend myself I was compelled to attack her again,—

"So you would have been better pleased with me had I shown more admiration for you when we first met?"

"Yes, I was angry with you for turning to Mr. Davenport so soon, as if you thought I was a verdant, uninteresting country-girl."

"And then, afterwards, when I turned with more appreciation to you, and seemed to be interested in your tastes and ideas, you liked me a good deal better?"

"Yes, I loved you, and would from the first moment had you not shown such a superb indifference towards me."

"But is not that a species of self-love, Rosy? To be displeased at a man because he does not bow down and worship you, and then, afterwards, to like him better because he shows a greater sense of your merits, is not loving the man, but yourself. What shall I do with you, dear? You love yourself, and not me, after all!"

"No, I love you, and ever will; and you must take my self-love with myself, for I do not think we can ever be separated," she said, with the frank-

ness and confidence of a girl who knows how well she is beloved.

"Willingly. I would not have you a single iota less in anything. I have known you too long to doubt your love, or your knowledge of your own heart, and, in fact, I think you have loved me for many years," I returned.

"Yes, I have, almost from the time I first met you, only sometimes I thought I would never get you, and I tried to feel indifferent."

Admiration, wonder, and self-condemnation kept me silent for awhile; for here was a girl, who was not half an hour my betrothed, speaking as freely as if she had been my wife for years, though she had never, before I asked her for it, betrayed the love she cherished under such unfavorable circumstances. She also spoke of "getting me" with a self-abasement which entirely ignored my good fortune in getting her.

But such is the case; the more a woman gives a man, or sacrifices for him, the more she will love him and forget self. Her truth, good sense, and holy purposes seem nothing in her own mind; she brings her gifts to the altar with humility, and is grateful because they are accepted.

It is she who has nothing to give who loves least, thinks most of self, demands and absorbs everything and makes no return.

"Well, the mistakes of the past are corrected now, and let them be forgotten in our life, dear, where heart shall be open to heart for evermore,"

I said, after my surprise had been overcome; and my horse reared because the bridle hand was heavy on his mouthbit, as my arm strained Rosy to my heart.

"So then it was because you loved me that you dismissed Dr. Boynton in such a queenly manner, and sent him to California with a wound in his head?"

"You looked so withering at me when he stretched out on the lounge, though I do not suppose the simple coxcomb intended me any disrespect by doing it. You do not know what a bitter cry I had when he left me alone, for I supposed I had forfeited your good opinion, and was afraid to look up at you when you returned with Lucy."

"And for me you broke off that long engagement with Robert,—our own peer?"

Her gloved hand was laid over my mouth, and she cried out, earnestly and reprovingly,—

"I was never engaged to him, or to any one else; it was only a foolish misunderstanding. You and Robert conspired to betray us, and divide the spoil according to your own pleasure; but we conquered, Lucy and I, and you are taken and appropriated yourselves."

Just so. Robert and I had often confessed as much to each other; for neither of us are sensitive of the blunders of the past. His attentions, and my seeming indifference, had forced poor Rosamond into the embarrassing position from which her own good sense and true heart finally extricated

her; and we shall hereafter laugh at our blunders in once making love to each other's wives.

We had set out on the journey of life as philosophers, provided, as we thought, with knowledge and rules for weighing, measuring, and demonstrating all the uncertainties of mind and matter, but before we had reached our thirtieth milestone we found that our rules were uncertain, our philosophy was crude, and we knew nothing at all.

We are now humble, though happy, and, as we are not too old to learn yet, we hope the past experience will not be lost upon us; but that, with help and encouragement from our fair and loving wives, we may become wise and useful, if not remarkable, men.

THE END.

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