

AMBITION.

KATE WILLIS.

"Unstudied thoughts, and brief remarks are here ;
[Critics, approach not—*friends* I do not fear."



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TO THE MEMORY
OF
FANNIE FORRESTER,

THIS VOLUME
IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY CONSECRATED.

AMBITION.

CHAPTER I.

If there is one village more attractive than another, one that excels in beauty and variety of scenery, and of general interest to the lover of the beautiful, it is the little busy village of Hamilton.

To the traveller, there is something in its appearance unusually attractive, with its white College-buildings upon the hills, and the neatly cultivated common of green reposing between the elegant residences of the wealthy on the one side, and the mercantile commu-

nity on the other; and then the general neatness and refinement which seems to pervade the whole place, accompanied by the busy hum of industry. In fact, it has a decided tone of something superior, something indescribable, which other villages, at least in our opinion, cannot, with equal justice, lay claim to. It was in the full maturity of summer, and everything in nature was ripe and mellow with beauty. The trees were heavily laden with their rich green leaves, and the gentle zephyrs fanned delightful fragrance in the air from the waving and dancing flowers, the fruits of nature's profuse but uncultivated gardens, scattered here and there.

It was upon one of these lovely days, that a young girl, just budding into womanhood, left the couch upon which she had for a long time been seated, and gazed without, upon the smooth lawn, the gentle waving of the foliage, and the graceful movements of the accomplished equestrians who were taking their daily exercise, and who seemed to vie with each other in strength of grace. But ah! even nature, mellow with its fruit, nor the busy movements of the world without, could give delight nor pleasure to her, for she

feared, that on the morrow, she would be — motherless.

Ever and anon she would look, with anxiety and grief, where her fond and sick mother was lying, and then with uplifted eyes pray fervently to be spared the threatening affliction. The physician, entering, interrupted her devotions, and endeavored to convince her that all had been done to restore her mother to health, but her complaint baffled the skill of man, and that the lamp of life was calmly but rapidly growing dim, and would soon be extinguished.

Mr. Wellmont here entered, and when informed that death was so near, he expressed more grief than surprise, for he anticipated the event much sooner. He took his daughter's hand, and led her to the bedside of her who was soon to leave them forever.

"Mother," said Laura, "here are father and Frank, they have come to see, and —" but her sobs drowned her voice, and she could speak no more.

"Weep not for me, Laura," said the dying woman, "nor you, my husband, but rather submit with Christian resignation to the will of the Divine Being, for it will be but a temporary deprivation, and we shall all

meet again in Heaven. Come nearer, my husband, and let me hold your hand. Edward, I thank you for the never-failing kindnesses and affection, which you have lavished upon me for so many years. I think of them with sincere gratitude. Forgive me if I have ever said aught to wound your feelings. I pray of you do not weep, we shall all meet again—all meet again. And you, my Laura, I thank you for your efforts to prolong the life that is called for, but we all must submit cheerfully to *His* will. Forget not, my child, your responsibilities to the children and your father. Let your thoughts be constantly for them, and teach them as I have endeavored to do, the power of God's love and infinite goodness; be as a mother to them, and forget not my dying words."

She kissed the children, and then prayed as none but a Christian can pray, for their happiness and prosperity, and then extending her feeble arm, shook their hands and bade them a "good-by"—the parting farewell of life—and her spirit returned to the God who gave it. So died the best of mothers, whom every one recognized by the gentleness of her manner, and the evident sincerity of all her actions.

Without doubt, the few moments which immediately precede death, are extremely afflicting; but it is unreasonable to allow our prejudices to extend so far as to transform death into a terrible spectre. Fear often constitutes an imaginary enemy, and from the same source are our fears of death derived. But when we look upon death as an angel, rather than its opposite, we should banish all fearful thoughts, and look upon it as a temporary deprivation. But, contrary to the instructions which wisdom teaches us, we cling convulsively to life, and tremble at its departure.

Laura arose quite early on the following morning, that she might linger near her fond mother's remains. How vividly returned to her mind the many kindnesses she had received from her fond parent, now inanimate before her! She kissed the pale, cold forehead, and, gazing upon the lifeless lips which had so often met her own, tried to disbelieve that life had fled, that the heart had ceased to beat, and the voice hushed forever.

The day of burial arrived, and it seemed as if nearly all the villagers were present, to do homage to the respected dead.

How many hearts throbbed with grief, as they looked, for the last time, upon the motionless features of the departed ! When all had congregated, the venerable pastor addressed them. His hair was white, and fell loosely upon his shoulders, and the expression of his countenance, which was radiant with sincerity and benevolence, commanded both attention and respect. He spoke feelingly of the merits and Christian virtues of the deceased, of her life of true usefulness.

Wiping the fallen tears from his aged cheeks, and with a faltering, and almost inaudible voice, he inquired, who of them had not experienced some benefits of her bounty and liberal generosity, of her sympathy, when sympathy was desired ? All were mourners there. The beloved pastor had touched a tender chord, for all present had experienced some obligation worthy of memory, some kindness, some fond token of regard and esteem, long to be remembered.

In eloquent strains, and with heart-felt sincerity, he prayed for the departed, he prayed for the mourners, he prayed for all who felt this deprivation. His voice gradually failed to be audible, for the stifled sobs had

become too heavy and frequent, and they drowned his words.

The faltering "Amen" was finally pronounced, but still they lingered round the beloved remains, till the voice of some one called the names of those who were to make up the funeral procession.

They all took a farewell look of the dead, and now, with slow but solemn movements, they removed the coffin to the sombre-looking hearse. The procession was soon formed, and slowly they traced their way to the hallowed ground—the cemetery of the dead.

The freshly dug grave was ready to receive its tenant ; the body was lowered to the grave. Dust had returned to dust, but the spirit was communing with the angels.

The mourners dispersed, and returned home, to reflect upon the sad incidents of the day.

Home ! oh, that one word, home, how many a tear will it cause to gush from the reader's eyes ! For who has not had the angel of death enter their dwelling, and lay his cold, icy fingers on the life-cord of some fond, loving heart, that was wont to beat in unison with thine own, and leave the hearth, that once echoed with joy and contentment, desolate ?

Present afflictions banish all prospects of brighter joys, and destroy all hopes of happier hours for the future. Laura's grief was so excessive and uncontrollable, at first, that she would not, or could not listen to words of sympathy. Every allusion to her mother, now no more, filled her soul with grief. The future promised nothing brighter than the present.

Such was the excess of her affliction, she seemed to embrace it, and turned a deaf ear to all words of intended consolation.

CHAPTER II.

LAURA retired to the solitude of her chamber, and she began to realize and reflect upon the incidents of the last few days. Hence-forward she was no longer to receive the pleasures of maternal tenderness and love, of useful advice and instruction, for she had reached that period when nature and circumstances called upon her to assume the obligations of responsibility and duty—but to meet these obligations she was well prepared, for her mind was cultivated and ripened by an excellent education, and her faculties were matured by the exercise of strong natural powers of reflection and discipline. At the suggestion of her father, Miss Joy, a cousin of Mr. Wellmont, was solicited to assist Laura to preside over the duties of the household, and everything went on well for a while under the vigilant care and watchful

eye of cousin Edith. But troubles and disappointments seldom come singly, for little Addie, the youngest of the family, a short time subsequent to the circumstances related, began to show symptoms of declining health, and it was deemed advisable to take the little invalid on a short journey, with cousin Edith as its protector.

"Laura," said Mr. Wellmont, one morning, to his fond daughter, "I have just received a letter from Harry, and he has written me that he has already made preparations to return home again. Poor boy! he little thought when he left us, that mother's kiss was the last one he ever would receive from her."

"When do you think he will be here, father?"

"He thought he should arrive here by the first of the month, and writes there was a vessel to leave there the following week. He preferred returning all the way by water, instead of going to Charleston, and leaving there by land route, thinking the voyage by water would be more beneficial to his health."

"Laura," he continued, and handing the letter to her, "you see he expresses his regrets that you have received the visits of Herbert Wells. I agree with Harry, and think that if you were ever married to

Herbert, your life would be one of misfortune and extreme misery. You do not know his real character, you only know him as he appears in your society, but not as he is generally known in the world. Bad men among men, Laura, express and act their natural principles, but among your sex they assume sublime virtues, and express lofty and beautiful sentiments, and with their flippant tongues virtue becomes the victim of their subterfuge, which good men on the contrary, prize as an invaluable treasure. Beware, Laura, of that man. Will you follow my advice? And believe me, I am prompted to advise you, from motives which you must plainly see. Your happiness depends not on him; for if you were in your grave with your dear mother, far better, far better it would be, than to be united to such a character as Herbert Wells."

"Father, I doubt not your motive in advising me, comes from your heart, and that it is always true to justice, and overflowing with warm affection. I will follow your advice."

"Do you love him, Laura?"

"I know not what my feelings are, I cannot analyze them, yet I have much friendship for him, more so than I desire."

"Be guarded, and be careful not to let your friendship develop itself in love. Yet why do you think you do not love him?"

"His infidelity, father."

"Thank heaven, my child, you are safe!" and kissing his daughter again and again, said he no longer feared for her safety, but trusted her willingly to decide her own affairs, for her principles were the best protector, and needed no better guide.

"There are some men, Laura, that assume virtues, though they possess them not. I know Herbert Wells better than you, he is reckless, dissipated, and unprincipled, and possesses nothing that is commendable. Mark the difference between Herbert and Edgar Clifford. Edgar is not what your sex would generally pronounce handsome, that is the first recommendation as a usual thing, you know, Laura, among women," said he, smiling, "but he is intellectual, accomplished and generous; he has a strong regard for truth and virtue. His opinions when expressed, are the result of his actual convictions. He is a man of profound reflection. Were Herbert like Edgar in principle, I would not object to your being his wife."

Laura promised her father that she would do as he wished, that she would endeavor to banish from her thoughts Herbert Wells, and think more of the regard and esteem shown her by Edgar Clifford, and added that she hoped to see Herbert's reformation.

"That you will not see, for dissipation, backed by such principles which guide him, seldom languishes into satiety. And in proportion to the imaginary pleasures forever passed away, the desires racked by all the fiercer passions of our nature become stronger and stronger for something new." And kissing her affectionately, he left her to reflect upon his friendly advice.

After listening to her father's footsteps till they died away in the distance, she opened a small box that lay upon the table, and drew forth a letter that was placed in her hands by Herbert on that very morning. She did not dare to peruse it in her father's presence, for she feared he would interrogate her as to its contents. But look upon her now as she sits with the letter in her hand—see, she breaks the seal, and with trembling hands opens the missive, and reads aloud the following words.

My DEAR LAURA:—

I deeply regret that with all my affection

and earnestness to make you happy, I should fail, and that the affection I have so sincerely and ardently bestowed upon you should be unrequited. Some one has scandalized me, and used all their exertions to militate my character. The world is full of scandal, and you know that a disposition to scandal is a compound of malignity and dissimulation.

"On eagle's wings immortal scandals fly,
While virtuous actions are but born, and die."

I have a just pretence for vindicating my character and reputation, which have been so barbarously traduced. It should rather shock than delight those who pretend to the least good nature and generosity, to set forth the real errors or misconduct of their fellow creatures, and unreasonably magnify, with all the aggravating circumstances that hypocrisy and witty malice can invent; but where no just or real cause is given for censure, where the most perfect honesty and innocence, and even the earnestness to do what is right, which are the truest indications, are unfairly construed into the marks of a vicious inclination, the crime of those who do so ought to be held

as detestable to man, as most surely it is to one of your upright mind. I desire to call upon you tomorrow evening, and if you will permit me, I will do so.

With much regard and affection, I remain

Yours truly,

HERBERT WELLS.

CHAPTER III.

LOVERS generally resolve by first impulses, and when the excitement subsides, gradually they reflect and reason. Laura's first impressions were, after reading the letter, that she had done injustice to Herbert, by giving credence to the reports so detrimental to his character, but upon maturer reflections, when she remembered and discussed over in her mind her father's admonition and friendly advice, she thought there must be some reasonable foundation to have his visits hereafter discontinued. Her father had called Herbert a libertine and an infidel, and she knew he was slow to form any such opinion, or rather to express one, unless he had substantial proofs. And to harbor any feelings of affection for a sensualist, she considered impurity of mind.

No, Herbert, thought Laura, your wife I can

never be. Something tells me not to encourage your visits, but, on the contrary to curb my affections for you, which have gradually grown stronger and stronger. No, no! you must visit me no more. And opening her escritoire, she wrote Herbert the following answer to his letter.

FRIEND HERBERT : —

Your letter I have just perused. In my first letter I respectfully informed you of my suspicions and fears that your mode of life was not exemplary, but inconsistent with high moral principles. They were only suspicions, but reflection has increased them to confirmation. Yet allowing these suspicions shadowy and without reasonable foundation, there are other reasons which control me, and which prevent me from ever consenting to be your wife. My temperament and disposition could never be assimilated to your own. Our views upon religion, consider how different they are!

I am not so bigoted as to denounce a doctrine, merely because it differs from mine, if it still bears the name of religion, but you, Herbert, unfortunately possess no religion whatever. You are an infidel—

you have unintentionally informed me as much in our conversations, and were this the only reason why I could not consent to be your wife, it would, in my judgment, be sufficient. My father desires me, Herbert, to request you to discontinue your visits. I do so with feelings of duty to myself and him. But with continued regard for your feelings, wishing you much prosperity, I remain your friend,

LAURA WELLMONT.

After sealing the letter, Laura regretted that she had been so severe; but duty to herself, and respect for her father's advice exonerated her from all injustice. She still desired to be on friendly terms with Herbert, even though it were impossible to be on intimate terms, and she feared she had not worded her letter to that effect, and unsealing and reading it over, she again resealed it and despatched the missive.

On all occasions of justice, duty and delicacy, Laura was inflexible, and she never went beyond, or fell short, but always proved equal to the circumstances presented. Her opinions were not the fluctuations of a volatile and changing mind, not mere imaginary creations of a romantic brain, on the contrary, they

did not vanish as you tried to analyze them, but were convincing, useful, and good guides to be directed by—the usual materials of a bright understanding. No dread of personal violence to her feelings could deter her from doing her duty, which was the paramount object of her life, and though it might cause much severity, *right* conquered reluctance. Religious promptings were permanent companions in her breast, and, better than transient or frequent guests, they were constant and faithful inmates.

The most prominent and attractive features which adorn the female mind, are delicacy, modesty and refinement. Not that nominal refinement, derived from ceremonious rules and manners of mere aristocratic circles, so called, but the refinement of intellectual and cultivated minds, the agreeable emanations of generous thoughts, free and spontaneous, and unshackled by conventional and established rules of society. Laura possessed all these attractive gifts. Her delicacy, modesty and refinement was no outward show, no mere affectation, but rather the generous gifts of nature.

Mr. Wellmont returned, and invited Laura to ac-

company him in his morning ride. She little felt like doing so, but thinking her society would be agreeable to him, she consented without reluctance. He was soon at the door with the faithful horse *Jinny*, who seemed proud to serve her master. She shook her mane, and rearing high her head, started with a quick gallop, and carried them "over the hills and far away." It was quite late in the afternoon when Laura returned from her ride, and the children ran to meet her, exclaiming, "Sister Laura, Mr. Wells has been to see you, and will be here again soon."

Laura hushed their voices, for they spoke so loudly that she feared their father would overhear them, and she did not wish him to know of her farewell interview with Herbert. Laura retired to her chamber to adjust her attire, when little Frank came bustling in, exclaiming, "Laura, father wants you a moment, in the sitting-room." She feared that her father had learned that Herbert had called, and she wished to avoid giving an explanation; but she obeyed the summons.

"I wish to ask you," said Mr. Wellmont "if you have received a letter from cousin Edith? the children inform me that you have."

The blush mantled her cheek, and she answered him in the negative. She was about to tell him the letter was from Herbert.

He questioned her no farther, but left the room sadly. Her thoughts were revolving in her mind with rapidity, upon the occurrences of the day, when the servant informed her that Mr. Wells was in the parlor and would like to see her if convenient. She cast a hasty glance at the mirror, and being assured that all was right, left the room to meet her visitor. It seemed as if her feet were not wont to perform their required duty, for she seemed bound to the stairs. Herbert, impatient to see her, met her, and conducted her to the room.

"Well, Laura," remarked he, "what conclusion have you at last come to?"

"Did you not receive my letter?"

"I did, but thought your letter was written too impulsively, too hastily—and have come to see you face to face, to hear your decision, which, I trust and hope, has changed."

"It is unpleasant, Herbert, and far from my intention to wound your feelings. You must not ask me to repronounce the sentence which I have already writ-

ten, I would part with you as friends. And believe me, no one will feel sincerely more pleased at your prosperity in life. Do not think hard of me if I tell you our interview must be short. I wish—" here her voice failed her, and Herbert started wildly from his seat.

"Laura, if what you say be true, you will drive me to despair."

"I am sincere."

"Farewell, Laura, you, whose life's cord seems bound into my own, farewell. I shall leave Hamilton, scenes of my early joys, scenes of so much pleasure, scenes of my early childhood, when in youth I was gay, and everything seemed bright and beautiful in the future. Alas! what phantoms will men sometimes pursue. Laura, you will surely give me the parting hand."

He placed her hand in his own, and told her if she ever wanted a friend to advise or assist, he would be that friend to her.

As he was about to leave her, he slipped into her hand a small piece of gold, of exquisite workmanship, with the words engraven, "AMO TE." He begged of her not to destroy it, but keep it for his sake.

Laura, placing the gift on the table, accompanied him to the door, and bidding him good-bye, returned to examine the gold.

"How capable, how useful Herbert might be, if he would only exert, and apply his abilities, to some wise purpose," thought she. She examined again and again the chaste workmanship, and upon the opposite side she saw the translation of the Latin inscription, "I LOVE THEE." "I trust I have not acted with indiscretion, in accepting this gift," thought she, "for fear that my willingness to accept it might be construed wrongfully. Yet I would not have received it, had I previously looked at the inscription. I was too hasty, I see now, but I wished to avoid wounding his feelings. I hope he will not interpret my acceptance of this gift into a favor of qualified conditions, or give him encouragement to continue or forward his designs." This was precisely, of all things, that which she was most desirous to avoid.

As her father's advice, his beseeching entreaties for her own good solely, arose to her recollections, her inflexibility of judgment and duty began to assume itself. "Herbert must understand at once," said she, "that this last interview must seal all hopes of another one, if

professions of love are to be the object. And sending for Frank, she requested him to re-deliver the gift to the donor, with a cautiously written, but friendly note, explaining her reasons for the cause which prompted her.

Nature had given Herbert Wells a fine mind, and uncommonly captivating manners. We use the word mind, as regards its intellectual capacity, for his mind had been allowed to nurture false doctrines and vicious thoughts, approaching to debasement, but the capacity to do right, think right, still remained, amid the horrid deformity. His person was showy, and had all the polish and elegance of that "*misnomer*," high life. He had read, not merely for amusement, not to wile away pastime, but for instruction, for the same reason which all intellectual minds are desirous to inform themselves. But his pleasing address, his capacity and his intelligence, were nearly obscured in their legitimate sphere, for subterfuge had apparently poisoned his naturally fine faculties. His mind was a compound of all that was good and evil, and it needed but a particular object, or a single purpose, to bring them powerfully into action.

His full, round forehead, and his large, dark, ex-

pressive eyes, would have caused the observation of the most casual observer; and the Phrenologist himself would have been pleased with the outline of his finely shaped head. The intelligent expression of his features would have passed well with the most rigid disciple of Lavater. He could not have been more than five and twenty years of age, yet it was no difficult matter to perceive that he had for some time habituated himself to inordinate dissipation.

When he received back his gift, he felt surprised, and exclaimed—

"Three things a wise man will not trust—
The wind, the sunshine of an April day,
And woman's plighted faith."

"How cautiously she has worded this letter, as if she were afraid she would commit something that I might construe, perhaps, into latent friendship, fearing that I might possibly renew my exertions to bring her feelings into expression again. I will condescend, sometimes, when an object is to be gained, but my nature is too independent to kneel to a vision. She loves that milk and water, 'moral young man,' Edgar Clifford," continued he sarcastically. "Poh! I will smoke

and study metaphysics; life is beginning to be rather disagreeable, but I will adopt the motto of old Fuller '*Nil desperandum.*'"

And here, for the present, we will leave him to his own reflections.

CHAPTER IV.

"LAURA," inquired Mr. Wellmont, "have you not thought it singular that we have received no letters from cousin Edith? I fear Addie is worse."

"Perhaps she intends to return so soon that she thinks it unnecessary to write."

"It was unwise for her to neglect to give us some intelligence concerning Addie. I am very anxious to hear."

"I will immediately write to cousin, though I think she will be here to-morrow or next day."

"Are the children progressing in their studies, Laura? You must drill them at home; discipline is as necessary with the parent and guardian, as the school-teacher."

Laura replied that she expended a great portion of her time in hearing and instructing the children in

their studies, but she feared Frank would never make a scholar, he was so playful. If his mind is one moment on his lesson, the next it is with his kite, or spinning top, or concocting some mischief, and often would shout and halloo when she was endeavoring to explain to him some hard lesson.

Her father requested her to be as patient with him as possible, for he believed that as soon as he saw the advantages and use of learning, that he would make an excellent scholar. "The loss of poor mother has had a greater effect upon the little fellow than it would with most boys of his age. He misses her easy and judicious mode of governing, but as soon as he once learns your system of instruction, you will find him pliant and easy."

At the mention of the name, Mother, she burst into tears, and bidding her father good night, sought the solitude of her own room. She seated herself at the window, and looked upon the beauties of night. The stars shone brilliantly, and the moon, equally clear and bright, threw her light into the chamber. Laura extinguished her candle, that she might better witness the beautiful handiwork of God. The mournful chirpings of the crickets caused a shade of sorrow to

steal across her face, but it was soon dispelled, for she thought she heard her father's steps, and she wished to appear cheerful to him, he looked so sad, and also to avoid anything that might augment his gloom.

Laura had noticed her father's health gradually decline, since the decease of her mother, but little did she think that the destroyer was already at work upon his vitals. She did not think her father, too, could die! No! she could not bear the thought. She would think of it no more, but would write a few lines to cousin Edith, and urge her to return as soon as Addie was strong enough to undertake the journey home, as her father missed her joyous prattle so much. After she had finished the letter, she took up a small box inlaid with pearl, and pressing the sides, the spring caused the box to open. This box contained the miniature of her departed mother. She kissed it again and again, gazed sadly upon the picture, and wondered if the spirit was hovering around her. She knelt to the Giver of all good, and retired for the night. The following morning she arose early, and giving the letter to Frank, desired him to deposit it in the office. The bell summoned her to breakfast, and she

found her father seated at the breakfast-table, with his head resting upon his hands. He seemed to be in so profound a meditation, that he did not hear or notice her entrance. Laura approached him, and inquired if he were ill. He shook his head. She feared from his manner that something was wrong, and kissing his forehead, asked him if anything unpleasant had occurred, to wound his feelings? He uttered feebly, "I fear Addie is lost." She started nervously, for she feared he had received intelligence that Addie was beyond hopes of recovery. She entreated him to enlighten her. He began to show symptoms of faintness. Laura called the servants, and by the proper application of restoratives, he began to recover, and looking wildly around the room, exclaimed, "It was only a dream. Laura, draw your chair beside me. I have had a most singular dream, and if you listen to me, I will relate it to you; but give me a glass of water first, for I am very feverish." She handed him the cooling draught, and, trembling in every limb, seated herself by his side.

"I dreamed last night, Laura, that I was out upon the water, in a small sail-boat. The waters and the sky suddenly became black as cimmerian darkness,

and everything looked so terrible, in my imagination, that I knew not how or where to reach a place of safety. Suddenly a flash of light broke upon my vision, and I discovered it was a steamer on fire. I looked again, and presently I heard such heart-rending screams, that I cannot bear to dwell upon, and saw my child, my Addie, lifeless, in the arms of Edith, and she clinging to a raft, and I, so near, could not save them."

Laura told her father that such a singular dream was owing to his mind being troubled, and told him not to be too superstitious.

"Laura, a few weeks before your mother died, I had a dream almost precisely like the one I had last night, and this is why I fear that something dreadful is in store for us."

Mr. Wellmont, since his wife had died, had grown feeble, both mentally and physically. He was far advanced in years, and his mind was just in that state, that he would cling with as much tenacity upon the illusions of a dream, as he would upon actual facts. Laura herself began to consider the dream as a warning, though she was not naturally superstitious. The meal remained untasted; and as he was about to go

to his place of business, Laura advised him to remain at home, and she would read to him.

"No, Laura, I have less time to think of my troubles, when I am active, and exercise my mind."

Laura urged him no farther, but was sorry to see him depart looking so sadly.

It was evident, when he returned home to dinner, that the dream still worried him, for he said but a very few words. Laura had accepted an invitation to visit a friend that day, consequently she did not see her father, on her return. The servant informed her that he had early retired for the night.

Laura, and her sister Alice, occupied the room adjoining their father's. Laura listened several times that night, fearing that her father might be unwell, as he had retired so early; but she listened in vain, for she could hear no sound, save the breathing of the child beside her. Once she imagined she heard her father call her name, but not hearing him again, she thought she might have been deceived.

She awoke Alice, and asked her a few questions concerning her father. Alice told her that he had played with her that morning, and appeared to be well all the afternoon, but she did not see him in the

evening, and did not know whether he went to bed sick or not. Laura felt worried, but, tired and exhausted, sleep at last soothed her weary mind, and her turbulent and conflicting thoughts had for a short time subsided.

Laura did not rise with her usual readiness on the following morning. She started, upon hearing the sharp ring of the breakfast bell, and hastily dressing herself, and assisting her sister, descended to the breakfast room; but she was surprised when the servant informed her that Mr. Wellmont had not made his appearance. It was already past the time, by an hour, that he usually made his appearance, and not one in the house had yet seen him.

"It is strange," said Laura, "very strange that he is so late this morning."

Alice, perceiving her sister so alarmed, began to cry. They went up stairs, and knocked at the door of Mr. Wellmont.

"Who is there?" said Frank.

Laura inquired if her father was sick.

"I guess he is," said Frank. "I have been talking to him a long time, and he will not answer me."

"*Will* not speak?" said his sister. She lifted the latch of the door, and entered, and saw her father lay with his back towards her. She spoke to him, but received no reply. She noticed his ear looked very white; she touched it, it was as ice. She bent forward to look into his face, and saw that he was dead, and the boy lying by the side of his lifeless remains.

"Did you say Pa was dead?" said the boy; "he felt so cold last night, that I did not want to sleep with him."

It was very evident that he had died the early part of the previous night, for he was turning fast. Laura called the servants, for she began to sicken and faint at the solemn sight before her, and instructed them what to do, while she herself, excited now almost to phrenzy, hastened to the house of the physician, and on her return stopped at Mrs. Willis,' the eldest sister of her mother. She found her aunt busily engaged. She looked surprised at seeing Laura so early in the day.

"Father is dead," were the only words that the suffering girl could utter.

"Your father dead? what, your father? why he was here last night, and related his dream to me, as

he feared it was a warning concerning cousin Edith and Addie. No! no! he can't be dead, it must be a fit."

Mrs. Willis accompanied her niece home. She found Dr. Fuller in attendance. To their inquiry whether it might not be a fit, he shook his head, and told them death was there. We will not speak minutely of the circumstances which transpired on the two or three following days; but how could they be otherwise than moments of gloom? He was laid beside the remains of that wife whom he had so fondly loved on earth, and now they were to be re-united, in the temple of Heaven, never more to part again.

CHAPTER V.

"LAURA, there is no need of so many servants," said cousin Edith, one day, "and you can't afford it; they are as thick as mosquitos in summer, and they hinder each other in their work, for there is scarcely room for them all to turn round."

Laura smiled at Edith's idea.

"Dismiss all of them servants," repeated Edith, "and I will stay and keep house for you, till the children are able to help themselves."

"I thank you, Edith. You have my permission to do as you please, but when you dismiss them, tell them I am sorry to part with them, and that I cannot afford to employ them longer; but, cousin Edith, do you think it is doing them justice to dismiss them at once? ought we not to give them two or three weeks notice? You know they have been with us a long

time, and one of them has no friends in this country. She is a poor Scotch girl."

"We will see about that," said Edith, and she proceeded to call them up stairs; and after wiping her glasses, looked through them, and then over them, and hemming two or three times, said, "Well, gals, your master is dead."

The Scotch girl put her checked apron to her eyes, and cried bitterly, for she dearly loved the family, and felt grieved at their affliction.

"I want you to look right at me," said cousin Edith.

"I can't bear to talk, and have people thinking of everything else. We have got to dispense with help, and that's sartain. I give you all notice, but you may stay till you can procure a place. You may all retire, for you are as thick as mosquitos."

The girls went down stairs with a heavy heart. The Scotch girl resolved she would stay for her board only, if they would give her a few articles of dress once in a great while. But cousin Edith would hear to nothing of the kind. Our Scotch lassie fortunately found a situation, a few days after, in the family of a clergyman, a few miles distant, and left the field open and clear for Miss Edith.

"Cousin Edith," said Laura, "I am afraid you will be ill, if you continue to work so hard. I think you had better have some one to assist you."

"Don't talk to me of assistance, I have been three weeks putting things in order, and the assistance you allude to, would have everything in disorder again, in three days. No, Laura, no. I can't endure the thought. If we but adopt this rule, 'a place for everything, and everything in its place,' our work will not be hard; that's my maxim."

The children studied the rule, and in due time had the lesson perfectly; and even little Frank would hang his coat and hat upon *his nail*, as he called it, and taking off his heavy boots, would put on a pair of light slippers, that Edith gave him, that he might not soil the carpet.

"Order is Heaven's first law," and cousin Edith recognized all its duties. She was a queer specimen of humanity. Reader, if you could see her in your mind's eye, as we do, I know you would love her. She was the pattern of neatness. She sits in her chair primly, with a high, we might say gigantic comb upon her head; and attached to her slender waist, she wore, dangling before her, a large strawberry pincush-

ion, and she taught the children that the pincushion was the depository for all stray pins. If she has a caller, the instant they have departed she runs for the dust-pan and brush, and sweeps the dirt that might be, *not was*, made with their feet. She is continually dusting and sweeping, and Frank often told her that the flies did not venture in her presence, they were so well acquainted with her ways. Cousin Edith was strongly opposed to matrimony. "Oh! these men," she would say, "they will carry on their plots before your eyes, and gals, blinded by love, can't see anything wrong." She took occasion, frequently, to advise Laura not to get married. "Laura," said she on one of these occasions, "they say matrimony is an existence of bliss; don't you believe them if they tell you so. I never entered the beautiful land of matrimony, as they call it, and I never want to."

"Sour grapes," said a little voice, but she being busily engaged in her conversation, did not hear the remark.

"What do you think of Edgar Clifford, cousin? don't you think he would make me happy," said Laura, smiling.

"It is one of those things you can't always tell,

appearances are so often deceitful. He looks good, but that is no recommendation. I have seen the best looking men that ever existed, turn out rale villains, and I have seen the ugliest fellars you ever did put eyes on, that had hearts as big as the univarse. I never saw one yet that I should dare to trust myself with, though, it's so unsartain, so unsartain."

"You don't mean to say," said Laura, laughing at her talk, "that you prefer to live in single blessedness, rather than run the risk of getting a good husband?"

"I hope you will believe me, when I tell you that I would not change my maiden name of Edith Jane Joy, for all the world. My mother always thought there was luck in the name of Joy, and I think I was lucky never to noose myself into matrimony, don't you?"

"Perhaps so, but may be you will get married yet ; you're not fifty, quite?"

"Fifty!" cousin Edith repeated. "Fifty! mercy on me, what are you thinking of, Laura? Well, that beats all. I don't know as you 'll believe it, but I am not thirty-six. Trouble has caused my hair to turn gray, sickness has wrinkled my forehead, and taken some of my teeth."

"*Fifty!* what can you be thinking of? thirty-six is the extreme utmost."

Cousin Edith, according to the family records, was on the shady side of fifty. She boasted of having in her life thirteen good offers of matrimony, when in reality she never had one.

The day of Harry's return at length arrived. Everything had changed to him since he left home. Everything had the appearance of gloomy darkness to him. He gazed upon the picture of his mother, so fondly loved, and the big tears coursed down his manly cheek. And as Laura described the circumstances of her death-bed, her last fond words of advice and affection, he became unmanned, and the tears he tried to suppress, gushed forth afresh, as from a fountain. Laura wound her arms around her brother's neck, and, with broken sobs, related the death of their father, of his dream, and his interpretation of it. She continued, with the history of cousin Edith's kindness, and of her own responsibilities.

"Laura, you have indeed passed through many trials, but adversity, such as God chooses to burden us with, becomes a necessity, and cannot be avoided. Life is full of care, perplexities and disappointments,

but the only wise course to meet these trials, is to acknowledge to the Giver of all good, the blessings we daily receive, which overbalances all that may be in the opposite scale."

They kneel, and their voices commingle in praise to their Redeemer's love.

CHAPTER VI.

How pure and delightful is the sentiment, how agreeable is the pleasure, derived from the intimacy of sincere friends, united by the ties of pure affection, and similar opinions and desires? "There is an effusion of heart flowing from the union." Such friends to each other were Laura Wellmont and Estelle Gray. Estelle was the only daughter of a wealthy and retired merchant. From childhood, she had been the constant and intimate companion of Laura. Both were accomplished and refined, and each were highly educated; their tastes, opinions and peculiarities, had, from a long and uninterrupted intimacy, become assimilated to each other. Both influenced and controlled, in all their actions, by the force of principle, justice and duty, as well as the natural impulses of generosity and affection, they did not act from mere

duty, but rather from the promptings of the heart and mind.

"Laura," said Estelle, "so Herbert and you have had the grand finale?"

"Yes, Estelle, we have forever separated; but do not renew this subject which is anything but agreeable to me."

"Heighho! Laura, I wish I had a beau; but, alas, like cousin Edith, I shall see wrinkles and fifty 'come o'er the spirit of my dream.'"

"Do not be so gay, Estelle, I mean so provokingly gay. You must not think I had no affection for Herbert; on the contrary, I had more than I ever told you of."

"Did you, Laura? Indeed! and did you love him?"

"No, I did not love him, but had we continued in intimacy, my feelings might have developed into love."

"He is incomprehensible, mysterious and unfathomable, and has upon his tongue, on all occasions, to support any argument, or to take one up, ethics, metaphysics, theology, Christianity, poetry, philosophy,—in fact, everything comes from his mouth fluently, and

smoothly as oil. I can't fathom him, for his life and conversation are inconsistent with each other. He is a mystery to me, Laura."

"And to me, Estelle; but I will talk with you about him some other time. Oh! here comes Fannie Thorne."

Laura, thinking that Fannie and Estelle had some privacy together, returned to her home.

"I am really glad to see you, Fannie," said Estelle, "and hope you have made up your mind to spend the afternoon with me. I am really dull to-day, though I have been hard at work to be gay."

"I do not think I should be dull," remarked Fannie, "if I lived as easy as you do, lounging sumptuously on cushions of ease."

"Ah! Fannie, you may think so, but those cushions of ease you speak of, may not always prove so, to a troubled mind."

"Your mind troubled, Estelle? pray tell me from what source your troubles are derived."

"No, no! Do not inquire of me, for there are some griefs we will not relate to our best friends; but do not forget, Fannie, 'that every heart knoweth its own bitterness.'"

"Well, I will not press you. I met Laura Wellmont as I was coming up the yard."

"She called on me to-day, the first time since her father died. Poor girl, thus early has she been obliged to experience the cares and troubles of life."

Fannie colored, while she remarked "that Laura's deprivations might be a useful lesson to her. She indeed needed something to remind her that we can not all live for self."

"Why Fannie! do I understand you rightly, or do you misjudge Laura? What can you be thinking of. No one lives less for self than Laura Wellmont. Ask the villagers from whose hand they have received the most bounty, the most generosity, the most liberality, and they will tell you from my dear friend, Laura Wellmont, to whose 'bounty of heart, there is no winter in it.' You misjudge her, wrongfully, cruelly misjudge her."

Fannie felt rebuked at the enthusiasm of her defence of Laura. She did not expect so open a rebuke—though she was aware that when she maligned Laura, she was treading upon dangerous ground. "Well, Estelle, we will not continue the subject. I was not aware that Miss Wellmont pos-

sessed so strong a friend, one who would so willingly defend her."

"I defend her only in her absence, and this is the first time I ever found occasion to do so. If a heart like her's, so full of goodness, and everything that is lovable, will not defend and sustain itself, then I think it unbecoming for me to praise her. You, yourself, may some time need the solace of that friendship which you condemn, and then this ungenerosity will occur to you in no very agreeable light."

"Well, well, Estelle, I may judge her wrongfully, I may be prejudiced; but let us leave the subject for one which I came on purpose to see you. There is to be a vacancy made in the village school by the resignation of Miss Osgood, and I should like the situation. Don't you think my prospects are as good as any one's?"

"I should think so, if you have made the necessary forms of application."

"But that is not the most important part of the ceremony, Estelle; for all the candidates are required to pass successfully, the most rigid examination."

"Then I fear, Fannie, your chance will be a poor one; at least it does not look to me propitious. I

thought the candidate would be chosen in the usual manner; that is, by favor, not by commendable merit."

"That is what struck me most forcibly," said Fannie, laughingly. "Now if I could get the interest of some influential person, I know my success would be certain."

"Don't you know of any one, Fannie, who would intercede for you?"

"No one that is influential, unless your father would interest himself; but I did not think of asking him, for Laura Wellmont, no doubt, will be an applicant, and perhaps has already requested his favorable consideration. I should think she would consider the indigent circumstances of some of the candidates, and withdraw the application, if she has made one."

"My father, no doubt," said Estelle, "will do his utmost to assist you in procuring the situation; and be assured, had Laura made the application, I should have known it. Laura's circumstances, though not affluent, are far from being indigent, and were the salary double what you say it is, it would be no inducement or temptation for her to accept it."

"Did she say anything about Mr. Wells, Estelle?"

"Nothing detrimental to his character."

"Then she did say *something*?" said Fannie, with an anxious look.

"Something," said Estelle, repeating her words provokingly. "But that *something* was imparted to me confidentially, so you must not expect me to relate, what duty requires to be kept secret."

"I do not insist upon any revelation which does not voluntarily spring from confidence and esteem, but I thought we were mutual friends, and regret to learn that there are unimportant secrets which will not allow even friends to be informed."

Estelle noticed instantly that she had excited her friend's curiosity, but was not unprincipled enough to reveal what confidence had so freely entrusted.

"There are some secrets, Fannie, which are revealed to us unsolicited, and, from the very nature of this unreserved confidence and regard, I feel obligated not to impart them, no matter how unimportant."

"Do not be so earnest, Estelle, my curiosity is not so great as to importune you. If you think so, you misjudge me. I referred unintentionally to the subject, not suspecting for a moment you would consider me inquisitive." And looking at the time-piece, added, "that she must leave."

Estelle accompanied her to the door, and reassured her that her father would render all his influence to obtain success for her in regard to the school. And Fannie, thanking her for her kindness, left for home.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was a brilliant gathering of the distinguished elite, composed of the erudite, the honorables, and the wits, assembled at the elegant mansion of Mrs. Ashland, in Albany. Distinguished, herself, by a gifted mind, cultivated and refined by education, possessed of natural and acquired grace of manners, with much dignity, attractive and peculiar; added to all, an immense fortune left her by the death of her husband, whom the historian has not yet recorded, as a politician or statesman. Suffice to say his attention whilst living was mostly confined to the affairs of his country, and very little to his accomplished wife. On the evening referred to, she was stimulated to be more than usually conversational; and her ardor and animation were in no inconsiderable degree increased by the presence of Herbert Wells, whom,

she had met but once before, yet had seen and heard enough of his accomplishments and abilities. Wells was, in reality, the only man who favorably compared with her notions of the requisitions of manliness. She had an utter contempt for what she called "*feminine man*," either in looks, or in mental capacity, and had chiseled in her ideality the mental and physical requisites which give solidity to the masculine structure, and Herbert Wells came up fully to the standard required. If Wells was conscious that he possessed talents superior to the general average of human nature, he had the good taste to conceal it. Always ready to meet any argument when it came from a source he respected, he was equally careful to avoid anything that might be construed, that he desired to thrust himself into notice, or consideration. He was, by nature, too independent to wish the application of *bore*.

Wells had, for some time, been a silent listener at her sallies of wit and piquant conversation, but did not interrupt or accept any challenge which she frequently threw out for any or all to answer her. At last, finding that she had used all her art in vain to bring the Hon. Mr. Bayford to a colloquial and mental

combat, she thought she would confine the subsequent topics to ordinary conversation. Espying Mr. Wells leaning against the wainscot, she pleasantly observed to him, "Mr. Wells, I trust that Miss Woodville has not become satiated with your attentions. You have not fatigued yourself, I hope, by the ceremony usually attendant upon such circumstances;" and she laughed heartily, for she had watched Wells closely all the evening.

"Not at all, Mrs. Ashland, but it was always a doctrine of mine, that too much *outward* ceremony is equivalent to false worship, and soon disgusts the image of our idolatry."

"It is a false doctrine, and if applied to some subjects, would be lamentably detrimental to society."

"Name a subject," said Wells.

"Religion," replied she.

Wells started, for he did not expect that such a serious subject would be brought forward. Recovering his coolness, he replied, "that his doctrine was universally applicable. Religion, politics and society, were not exempt."

His reply discomfited her. She could not judge with certainty, but she apprehended that, if he was not an infidel he was not very far from being a sceptic.

"I trust you do not think that the established rules of the church are useless, absolutely unnecessary?"

"I do not," answered he. "On the contrary, I regard all rules and laws which regulate society, useful and beneficial. I alluded to the excess of ceremony, and do not denounce it when it is confined to its legitimate application."

Seeing Miss Woodville unattended, he remarked, "with your permission, I renew the ceremony which you so anxiously thought had satiated me *au revoir*."

Mrs. Ashland felt chagrined at the result of the argument ending so abruptly as it did. She wished to *bring him out*, but she was confident from his easy, fluent conversation, that latent powers of his intellect could come at his bidding. She secretly admired his manly and elegant form, and the features and expression of his physiognomy, she would upon no consideration have changed. Still he was a mystery, too deep, even, for her subtlety. Reminded of her duties, she arose from her seat, and divided her attention from circle to circle. The entertainments of the evening were music, conversation and dancing. It was indeed a brilliant assembly. The ladies, ambitious to make a dazzling display, were burdened with jewelry. Diamonds rare, and precious stones threw out

an intense blaze of light and beauty under the influence of the brilliant chandelier suspended over them, and the rich, intoxicating fragrance of beautiful flowers seemed to make it the abode of the fairies. All was one gay scene of excitement. Lovers secretly harboring the feelings of jealousy, because somebody else had exchanged civilities with their fair inamoratas,—criticisms and comments made upon the dresses, of their beauty and the taste of the possessor—the enjoyment of the transient and hilarious fever of the senses, derived from imbibing the sparkling wine, discussions both rapid and sensible,—exhilarating music, civilities and congratulations exchanged — the almost fabulous, golden splendor of everything that the eye perceived, and a thousand pleasing attractions of all sorts, made up the ingredients of this coterie.

Wells had shown manifestations of feeling towards Miss Woodville, which indicated something more than a mere respect for her. This was the fourth time he had met her, and learning that she was the only daughter of a wealthy gentleman, he was determined to invest all his abilities and attentions in the "speculation," believing there was as good a chance for him as any one else; namely: to obtain the prize

"*two hundred thousand.*" It was the best investment, he thought, that had presented itself to him. The prize once his, the rhino once felt, glory, comfort and luxury would inevitably follow.

His impressive eloquence, free from affectation and pedantry; his conversations full of enlightened and instructive lessons; his pretence of the love of sublime virtues and ennobling thoughts, found their way into the deepest sanctuary of her affections; and the latent feelings which had up to this time slumbered in unmoved fountains suddenly awakened to a delightful existence.

Herbert intuitively saw the interest he had created, and he continued to throw out his multiplicity of ideas, and she, fascinated with his pretended sentiment, had expressed by her looks, that, than which pledges would not be more binding, — she loved. He was her most constant companion for the evening, and, save the two or three times that she danced with other gentlemen, they had been inseparable. Mrs. Ashland grew envious of Miss Woodville's monopoly of his company, as well as jealous, that they seemed to be in no desire or haste to separate, but possessing too much good taste to join or interrupt them, and they appearing to enjoy themselves in the highest degree with each

other's society, she concluded not to add her presence. The hour of three arrived, and the party broke up; but Herbert's attentions did not end here, for he accompanied Miss Woodville in her carriage home, and assisting her with all the politeness imaginable, from the carriage, ventured to kiss her hand, and she requesting him to accept the use of her coach, bade him an affectionate good-bye. As the carriage rolled on, Herbert gave himself up wholly to the delightful reveries which filled his brain.

No conqueror experienced more delight, more self-congratulation, after a splendid victory. That carriage, thought he, would soon be his; those beautiful horses, that gray-coated, big-buttoned coachman, with the gold band around his *chapeau*, would soon be under his control, and the possession of the two hundred thousand, well appropriated, would be the "*nil ultra*" of his proudest hopes. He saw before him, contentment sufficient; for money was the only material, in his opinion, which could furnish it.

The carriage arrived at his Hotel, and, for the moment, his dreams were suspended. But when he lay upon the couch, they were again indulged in, and did not vanish when sleep came o'er him, for golden visions were his companions even then.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was a cold and bleak day in January, that Mrs. Wells, mother of Herbert, called on Laura Wellmont. "I have come to see you, Miss Laura, concerning Herbert," said she. "Some one has informed me that my son is in Albany, and plunging into all sorts of dissipation. If you would write a few lines to him for me, I think he would be induced to return home; and it may fortunately be the means to restore him to self-respect and virtue."

Laura replied "that her former advice to Herbert was unnoticed and ineffectual; but she would consent to write to him in the name of his mother; for that name was, in effect, more potent and powerful than all else, unless the heart was calloused and impenetrable, or the memory hushed forever, and unmindful of its obligations."

Mrs. Wells thanked her. And when she left, cousin Edith commenced to reprimand Laura for consenting to fulfil what she thought an unreasonable request. "I wonder," she remarked, "if people think you have nothing to do but to write letters? I think it was rally providential that you escaped the snares of that hypocritical villain. He was always a bad feller; it was born in him."

Laura replied, "Speak ill of no one, Edith, for if he should be disposed to reform his conduct and errors, what injustice it would be doing, to still harp and discuss upon his past follies. Let us be more lenient, and trust that he will soon give evidence of a better life."

Examination day at last arrived. That day which causes the heart of the applicant to flutter, either at the defeat or the triumph; yet the defeat in such instances was not ignoble, no more than that the triumph was glorious; for all depended upon the unreasonable influence of favor. How many committeemen could pass a favorable examination? How many would dare accept the challenge of a bright school-boy? The question can only be answered by experiment. The proceedings commenced with an

elaborate speech, seemingly more elaborate, because no one could have made a more studious variation from the most simple rules of grammar, than was made by a gentleman who gloried in the distinguished title of Squire Copperton, a man of easy circumstances.

"I shall call you all out successfully, conclusively, and alphabetically," said he, with the most dignified and pedantic delivery. "If there is a young lady whose name commences with the first letter in the alphabetical list, of course I mean the English alphabet, let her immediately present herself for the trial she must undergo. The town requires one who can teach her children the beauties, and all that sort of thing which elevate the brains and excite the heart! hem; and all that sort of thing, you know. Now I hope no one is foolish enough to come here unless she is capable to assume this grand and responsible situation, and all that sort of thing. You must all be capable of parsing correctly and satisfactorily, Popery's Essay on Man, and be conversant particularly with the sciences, both galvanic and magnetic."

"If there is a young lady," said another committee-man, "in the room whose name commences with A, let her stand forth."

"How," continued he, "would you govern a school?"

"By moral suasion," replied simultaneously half a dozen Misses who had presented themselves for the ordeal.

"Have you ever studied French?"

"No sir," was the united reply."

"Then you cannot expect to pass a further examination. I wonder what you were thinking of?"

"I was not aware that French was introduced into the school," said one.

"That makes no difference, a teacher should always know more than she teaches."

After all the applicants had been examined, the committee retired to the ante-room to select their candidate. One of them, a little dapper, funny looking man, "insisted upon the election of Miss Adams, whose aged mother relied solely upon her support, and as far as he was able to judge, had passed the best examination, save her ignorance of French."

"But this ignorance of French is the most objectionable thing imaginable," was the answer he got from the Squire.

The debate did not last long, for the whole affair

had been cut and dried three days previous ; and the meeting concluded with the election of Miss Fannie Thorne. " Committee-men, like politicians, alas ! are not invulnerable to bribery or corruption," said Mr. Metcalf, the dapper little man, who will form a prominent part of our story hereafter. The applicants despondingly returned to their homes, grieved at the result of the occurrences of the day, except Fannie Thorne, the successful candidate ; who, after receiving the appointment, immediately called upon her friend Estelle, and related to her " her triumph over all competitors." Leaving Estelle, she returned to her own home, and informed her father of her victory. Mr. Thorne congratulated his daughter upon her success, and added, " though the vocation might be new to her, and her patience severely tried, it would prove beneficial to her in many respects, particularly as a good discipline for her own wavering mind. You will find it a responsible situation ; for you are obligated to advance the minds of your pupils, and give evidences of that advancement ; at the same time you must not forget that you are an agent for the whole village ; and you will find it much easier to suit an individual mind, than it is a

community. I wish you success in your commendable undertaking, and trust you will reap all the merit which the arduous vocation justly bestows."

Fannie, if she had experienced the flush of success, now began to magnify the responsibilities which she was about to assume, and requested her father not to say anything more, for he had already frightened her so much that she had a good mind to resign. But convincing her that she was capable, if she would only apply her abilities to the fullest tension, she concluded to make the experiment. All that evening she was planning in her mind what rules of the school she intended to abolish, and what innovations she should substitute in their place ; and a thousand ideas of improvement occurred to her, which would be advantageous to all concerned, and meet with favor from the committee.

Mr. Metcalf, after the meeting dissolved, traced his steps to the residence of Laura Wellmont ; and, arriving there, the younger children clambered upon his knee, for they anticipated some little present, in the shape of sweetmeats or toys ; as he seldom visited them without giving them something. They were not doomed to be disappointed, for he presently dis-

tributed the gifts he had brought for them. He handed Frank a whistle, a doll to Alice, a horn of plenty to Addie, and a paper of "sugar comfits" to cousin Edith, to whom of late he had shown particular attentions. She tucked them in her huge pocket, and thanked him with much politeness. The children ran to cousin Edith to see what he had given her, but she gave them a stern and dignified look, which they well interpreted, and returned to their seats again, to listen to the conversation.

"How is Miss Laura?" said he, "And where is she?"

Edith answered him by relating the interview Laura had that morning with Mrs. Wells, of her promise to write to Herbert, and added, that she now had gone to give Mrs. Wells the letter, hoping the contents would meet her views, and that probably she would soon return.

"I should be pleased to see her," said uncle Metcalf, as he was sometimes called, "but can tell you just as well what I want to say, and that is, have you heard the news?"

"No, I have not, what is it, Mr. Metcalf?"

"Guess who is to have the charge of the village school?"

"Miss Adams?" replied Edith, half interrogatively.

"No, guess again."

"I cannot, I don't feel acquainted with any one, who, I think would apply, unless it is her."

"Then be surprised, when I tell you that Miss Fannie Thorne is the successful candidate."

"Miss Fannie Thorne!" said Edith, surprised; "what on airth were you thinking of when you selected that unfeeling critter?"

"I did not vote for her," said uncle Metcalf, fearing that she would cast some blame upon him.

"Who did you vote for? sir."

"I voted for Miss Adams," was the reply.

"That is right, Mr. Metcalf; I always said your head and heart were in the right place; you displayed good sense."

This compliment pleased him mightily; for no one had a stronger desire for approbation for anything, than he did of her commendation.

"Thank you, Miss Joy," answered he, "your appreciation of good intentions, though resulting unsuccessfully, penetrates my heart; and your approbation is a sufficient recompense to enlist my desires to continue in your regard and esteem."

"La, me ; how beautiful you talk ; what a fine thing eddication is ; I always said if I was married, I should 'marry an eddicated man. Where was you eddicated, Mr. Metcalf ?"

"Here, in Hamilton," replied he. "I passed my youth inside the walls of those colleges upon the green hills. Those were delightful times, and the remembrance of my early associations daily recur to my mind. In the beautiful language of one of your own sex :

'My eyes fill with sweetest tears,
In thinking of those early years.'

Here Mr. Metcalf wiped his eyes with his pocket-handkerchief, adopting the advice of Hamlet, "to suit the action to the word."

Cousin Edith appeared much affected, and expressed her sympathy "that his conscience was so troubled by the recollection of his misconduct in his early years, and trusted that he would see the folly of his past life, and try to do better ; adding, that repentance came never too late."

Mr. Metcalf withdrew his handkerchief, and looked with surprise at his friend. He saw he had been misunderstood, and said :

"My dear Miss Joy, you have rightly heard my language, but have not understood what I wished to convey. I merely wished to inform you of the pleasures of my youth, not its follies ; but you, on the contrary, have put a different construction to my language."

Cousin Edith apologized, and remarked "that she thought it strange, from his present appearance, he had ever been *indicted* to intoxication." The children importuning for supper, she was obliged to leave him, and trusted that he would renew his visits often.

He arose to depart, and assured her "that the few moments interview he had passed in her society, were delightful and entertaining, and he should indulge in the prerogative to visit her frequently."

Upon his way home he soliloquized upon the attractions which cousin Edith possessed over him.

"What a happy family the Wellmonts are. But could it be possible to be otherwise, when the sunshine of Miss Joy's countenance was present ! I never saw such a woman in my life ; there is not a particle of dust on anything in the house. What a capital wife she would make ; I wonder she never

thought of getting married. She is what any one would pronounce a good-looking woman, and her beauty would be enhanced, if it was not for that ugly, state-house-looking comb. Why does she persist in wearing it, when nothing of such magnitude ever burdened a woman's head before? It is just the thing for a sign to a comb-manufactory;" and he laughed heartily at his facetiousness.

Laura arrived home a few minutes after the departure of Mr. Metcalf, and cousin Edith inquired if Mrs. Wells was satisfied with the letter she had composed for Herbert?

Laura answered in the affirmative; and inquired in return if Edgar Clifford had called. But ere the question was uttered, Clifford was before her, accompanied by her brother Harry. The pleasure Laura received at meeting Clifford, was profound and sincere. He had been absent several weeks, and this was the first meeting since his return. "Edgar," said Laura, "I have been expecting you all day, and just this moment inquired if you had returned. I hope you had a pleasant visit."

"I have not derived much pleasure, having been unwell nearly all the time since I left here, but am rapidly recovering."

"Did you stop at Albany on your return?" inquired Harry.

"I did; and guess whom I saw there?"

"I don't know" said Harry, "any one who lives there."

"I met Herbert Wells at the hotel where I was stopping, shook hands with him, and he inquired after you, Laura."

"After me?" said Laura, surprised; "what did he inquire about me, pray?"

"He inquired when you were to be married; and said he had understood you were engaged to a very fine young man," replied Edgar, laughingly; "I suppose, of course, he meant me."

"I do not know. Perhaps he was speaking ironically, if he did allude to you."

"I owe you one, Laura; but I have something more important to relate about him. Report says, he is engaged to Clara Woodville, the fortunate possessor of two hundred thousand dollars left her lately, and that her father is worth five times that."

A shade of deep thought darkened the countenance of Laura. Herbert's engagement caused her regret and sympathy for his affianced. She

doubted the happiness of such a union, knowing his character and principles. Happiness could not flow from such a source, and she desired that the object of his attentions might see her danger, ere she became irrevocably his victim. She did not express her thoughts to Clifford, for fear he might misunderstand her. But to Harry she poured forth all her fears for the happiness of Miss Woodville. Harry coincided with her, "but advised her of the impropriety of interfering with affairs relating to love, particularly so, in the present instance; for the very fact of her having once been Herbert's object of regard and affection, would certainly destroy all expectations for success. Should a favorable opportunity occur," said he, "which was openly and fairly taken advantage of, it might be considered. But for you, Laura, to personally interfere, is not for a moment to be thought of."

"I might write her an anonymous letter, and warn her of her danger."

"Never stoop to that, sister. If there is anything mean, low, despicable and degrading, it is to write anonymous letters; for it deprives the object whose character spoken of, whether good or bad, from de-

fending himself, and the recipient of the letter may be credulous enough to believe facts have been stated, when character, on the contrary, has been traduced. But if Miss Woodville is as sensible as she is thought to be, of course she will consider an anonymous letter in the same detestation. Then what would be the result? Of course you see, Laura, such proceedings would prove ineffectual." Laura was convinced, and saw the impolicy and unfairness of her proposition; but she trusted that some fortuitous circumstance would warn her of the impending danger and evil. She returned to Edgar to hear him relate what he saw that was amusing and instructing on his late tour.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW mornings subsequent to Mrs. Ashland's brilliant assembly, Herbert was early surprised from his slumber, by a loud knock at his door. Hastily jumping from his bed, he partly opened the door, and the servant, by whom he had been aroused, handed him a letter. Looking at the superscription, he immediately recognized the well-known hand-writing of Laura Wellmont. The pleasure he experienced at that moment, was infinitely greater than he had for a long time enjoyed. The prospects of wealth had no longer any allurements for him, they dwindled into nothing, they no longer possessed seductive charms. The image of Clara Woodville, surrounded with all the elegance and refinement, all the exuberant and profuse luxury which affluence and taste can command, faded from his memory, and vanished from his dreams,

to give way to a more chaste and delightful sensation. He looked again and again at the handwriting, and conjured in his mind a thousand conjectures which had prompted and influenced Laura to write to him. He read the letter, and though he read that Laura had written it at the "importunities and suggestion of his mother," he would not attribute it to that cause. "Yes, yes, Laura," said he, "you love me with all the strength that woman's heart is capable, and now that your father is dead, you are bold enough to give your feelings expression. How cold she writes," continued he, as he read a little farther on. "I do not understand this letter," said he, when he finished it, yet the beam of joy lightened his countenance, and Hope could be distinguished, from the inspiring thought of rapture and doubt, which seemed to accompany his cheerful fancies. "Yes, Laura, you love me," said he, "and this is the method which you think better than any other, to invite me to return again to Hamilton, and renew that intimacy which has been so delightful to us." He looked again at the letter, and added, thoughtfully, "at least, I hope so."

"Auspicious Hope! in thy sweet gardens grow
Wreaths for each toil, a charm for every wo;

Won by their sweets in nature's languid hour,
 The way-worn pilgrim seeks thy summer bower.
 There as the wild bee murmurs on the wing,
 What peaceful dreams thy handmaid spirits bring!
 What viewless forms th' Æolian organ play,
 And sweep the furrowed lines of anxious thought away."

"I would infinitely prefer Laura for my wife," thought he, "than Clara Woodville, though her fortune were double what it is. I begin to believe there are other and more substantial enjoyments than money can acquire. Mentally, Laura is superior to Clara, and her affectionate disposition, would bestow a thousand charms and endearments, which mere wealth could not give. I do not care for money, solely. I only want enough to be comfortable, and I am rational in my demands."

The pleasing manners of Laura, her sympathy of heart, and the versatility of her mind, had a powerful ascendancy over his feelings. Sceptic as he was, her religious principles, which guided her, were not disagreeable to him. On the contrary, they possessed charms delightful, and he really admired and respected anything and everything which sprang from sincerity. He disliked everything that could not be

depended upon, though his own actions were of the same objectionable hue. To his own misfortune, he did not respect religion as a Christian, nor even as a moralist, because he thought it all originated from fear. He had tried to believe there was a God, but he had tried harder to think there was none, and infidelity was the result of his reflection. Allowing that it was the universal belief that every race believed in the supremacy of God, he could not see the solidity of such conclusions. If the Hindoo, the barbarian or the savage, who lived by instinct, whose intellectual faculties had slumbered, saw in the lightning, and heard in the thunder, evidences of the "Great Spirit," why could not he, whose mind was cultivated, whose imagination and instinct were controlled by powers of reflection, see the same desirable manifestations? It must be fear or imagination. Yet, coming as he did to these conclusions, he acknowledged the utility of religious institutions, as regulators of society; without them intelligent society would be in a state of anarchy; for fear and superstition had, in his opinion, a greater controlling power than human laws, laws which all can construe as they please. Herbert prepared himself to return home, settled his bills with the

landlord, by a promise to adjust satisfactorily all claims in a few days, and jumping into the carriage, ordered the coachman to carry him to the depot. He reached the station just as the cars were on the point of starting, and as he was jumping upon the platform, he fell, and struck his head. A gentleman, who saw the occurrence, politely assisted him to arise, and gave him the support of his arm, whilst he led him to a seat.

He manifested his sympathy at the accident, and inquired of Herbert if he was bruised badly?

"Not very bad, sir; nothing serious, I assure you. We should not enjoy or appreciate the sweets of life, did we not have a few knocks, now and then, and I have had a pretty good share, sir."

The gentleman, who was a clergyman, liking Wells' appearance, entered into conversation with him; and as one subject quickly introduced another, he found that he was conversing with a person as intelligent as himself. Religion at last became the topic, and Herbert, being anxious to acquire all the information which a professional man ought to be capable of imparting, listened, and replied to his arguments with attention and respect. In the excitement of their ear-

nestness, the neighboring passengers caught the enthusiasm, for they were completely carried away at the eloquence that both displayed. But Herbert was mentally the superior here, and was the greater object of their admiration. He displayed as much biblical knowledge as his opponent, and infinitely surpassed him in eloquence. Whilst he spoke there seemed to be a fear that a word should be unheard, so complete was the attention he controlled.

"Young man," said the clergyman, "you are to be pitied. I will no longer argue with you, for it is an old and true saying, that arguing from false and wrong principles, is a species of insanity. When you know the full importance of virtue, and the evils of vice, with the reward and the punishment, then you will see the errors of your present thoughts."

"With all due respect, sir, to your opinions," said Herbert, "I would ask, to what do virtue and vice owe their importance? Is it not from the consideration and construction which man gives them? and weak as you have just allowed the human understanding to be, how can we expect anything but an exaggeration of their magnitude?"

Herbert arrived at the place where he was to take

the stage for Hamilton, and kindly shaking hands with the clergyman, expressed his desire that they might some time meet again. He replied that if he ever met him again, he hoped it would be with different feelings. Bidding him good-bye, and a pleasant journey, Herbert left the cars.

He immediately took the stage for his home, and reached there late in the afternoon. Wishing to surprise his mother, he got out of the stage, soon as he reached the village. He imagined he could see Laura beckoning him home again, with out-stretched arms, and the music of the sleigh-bells seemed to him to welcome his return. Herbert, for years, had thought that Laura's affection for him was strong and lasting, and though she had never promised to be his, yet the intimacy which once existed between them, led him to consider it an engagement, till Laura wrote him the letter which we have a few pages back recorded.

Hence-forward, thought he, I will never again give expressions of my belief, so offensive to everybody, and so destructive to my own happiness, if I can again enshrine myself in her affections. As he saw the smoke curling gracefully from the chimney of his own home, and saw his mother sitting at the window,

his reflections were, for the moment, broken up, and other thoughts took their place. His mother opened the door, and he affectionately kissed her, asking of her, at the same time, "If there was any news, any births, deaths or marriages? I presume something of the kind has taken place, since I left here?"

"A great many events have transpired," answered she, "but the most important and sad one, is the death of Mr. Wellmont, whom the community long will mourn."

"Important, not sad, mother, for upon that event is the foundation of all my hopes of enjoyment in this life. It is the annihilation of an impediment that destroyed all my hopes of earthly bliss."

"What mean you, my son? how did he stand in your way?"

"Mother, it was once my self-congratulation, to feel independent of all affections that the human heart can bestow, except your own. To my deep regret, I am no longer independent. My pride, my boast, my once free and unshackled mind, is humiliated, as I look into myself. I love, mother, Laura Wellmont, with more strength than I ever imagined I was capable of; but because I could not see or be-

lieve as she did, I was refused. This letter I have construed into a thousand different ways, because I knew her rejection was caused in some degree by her father's influence. Now that he is dead, I am led to hope that my love, so deeply rooted in my heart, will be requited. My opinions, once so offensive to her, I will never again give utterance. My actions shall all be guided by her choice, even if at variance with my own judgment. All my nature shall be moulded anew, by her chaste and plastic mind, if she will but love me, mother."

"Herbert, be not so violent. I doubt not that your affection would be returned, if you could eradicate those principles and thoughts, so destructive to a happy existence."

"That is impossible; belief does not come from the *will*, or from desire. It comes unsought; it cannot be avoided, and is therefore a self-development."

"Belief is nothing more nor less, Herbert, than the result of reflection. Reflect, consider deeply, and perhaps by long and intense reflection, your views may materially change."

She kissed his forehead with the fervor of affection, and for the first time for years, the tears moistened Herbert's cheeks.

"I will call on her to-morrow, and if she refuses me, I shall still be a man, for nothing shall break my spirit. She is but woman, after all. I already feel ashamed at my weakness. What a fool I have been. How disgusting our follies are, when we see them?" He left his mother, to while away a few hours in the library, and read quite late that night.

The next morning he prepared himself for an interview with Laura Wellmont. It was a beautiful, clear cold morning, and the chilly atmosphere gave a slight color to the dark cheek of Herbert, as he traced his way to the residence of Laura. Ascending the steps, a thousand associations, both agreeable and objectionable, recurred vividly to his mind, but pulling the bell-handle, the past vanished like lightning, and the future anticipations were equally and strongly indulged in.

Cousin Edith opened the door, and, manifesting some surprise at seeing one whom she thought would never dare present himself again in Laura's presence, opened the preliminaries of the conversation, by inquiring the nature of his business.

Herbert respectfully informed her "that he wished to see Miss Wellmont, and trusted that she was at home."

Cousin Edith, not knowing whether Laura would consent to see him or not, replied "that she would see if she was at home."

In a few moments she returned, and invited him to take a seat in the parlor. This, thought he, is the most unpleasant moment of my life. I know not what to say to her when she comes. I am dumb. Laura presently made her appearance, and shaking his hand friendly, told him "she felt pleased that the letter she had written to him had been answered by his return again to Hamilton. It must indeed be a consolation to your mother," added she.

"I trusted, Laura, that you would congratulate my return upon other reasons, besides the consolation which you think it will give my mother. I trusted that your letter was written from other motives beside those of sympathy which you have for her; at least, what friendship could with propriety suggest."

"I am pleased to see you again, independent of the pleasure I enjoy on your mother's account, yet pleased to know you still recognize the duty which a son owes to a mother's request, by its fulfilment so voluntarily."

"Laura, listen to me. What I have to say, is sincere, and comes from the heart.

"When I left Hamilton, I was suffering with"—

Laura interrupted him. "If you speak to me of love, I shall not listen to you. I am affianced to Edgar Clifford."

"Laura Wellmont, you have done me the greatest injustice, then. From our childhood you have been assiduous to create in me a reciprocity of feeling, in return for your own illy-concealed affection. The most casual observer of the intimacy of our childhood, predicted what ought to have been the result of that companionship, and its obligations. How little you know the feelings of an injured heart? What excuse do you give, when you declare it to be your will and desire to forget the past, when you have tacitly consented to be my wife? Think you *that justice is given*, under the cloak of your Christian views? does justice, in its fullest sense, crush the ambition and aspirations of the whole soul, when that soul was blended with your own?

"If I had offended you, or wounded your feelings in any manner, your conduct, even then, would be reprehensible; but you cannot accuse me of this. On the contrary, I have done everything that is honorable and candid, since the commencement of our

youthful companionship. What then are the reasons of your desire to obliterate all the remembrance of that happy intimacy, which we both thought would last through life? are they reasons so substantial that you feel justified in pronouncing and carrying out your verdict, which destroys all my hopes, and makes the past an idle, futile dream? What is the cause, besides what you call my infidelity? nothing, absolutely nothing. Your principles of Christianity, then teach you this is right. I looked upon Christianity in a more favorable light. I thought it taught you to forgive the erring, and look with a friendly eye upon those who differed with you in opinions or in actions, and not to instruct you to turn your back upon your brother. I am mistaken, for I have found it but a monster, created from a diseased imagination, a bigoted mind, and a contracted heart, unsusceptible of feelings, too mean to heal the heart it wounds.

"I will teach you what infidelity can do. It can forgive those who have injured us, it reasons with those who differ from us, and harbors no resentment to our worst enemies. I wish you, Laura, all the prosperity this bigoted world affords, and if there is a life hereafter, may you enjoy its existence, as happy as your

mind conceives. Laura, what answer have you?" said he, looking at her, as the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"None, Herbert, none. All I have to say, is, if you should, ere life's curtain drops forever, remember this interview, think not I harbor one hard thought against you. You have my forgiveness for all the injury you have this day done me."

"This, then, is all the answer you will condescend to give me. Good bye; I will never again intrude, intentionally, in your presence."

Herbert took his hat to go, and as he reached the door, Laura went up to him, and kindly taking his hand, while the tears were streaming down her cheeks, said, "Herbert, my earnest prayer, nightly, is that God will pour his blessings upon you; such will ever be my prayer."

They parted, and as soon as Laura returned to the parlor, cousin Edith gave vent to her curiosity, by making all the inquiries she could concerning the interview.

"Just as I told you. If you had only taken my advice, you never would have seen that villain again; but you must,—oh, yes, you must write to him. Now,

miss, you see the consequences. You will have him here all the time, depend upon that, miss. I think, Laura, that all the men are fools and villians. Mr. Metcalf has grossly insulted me."

"Why cousin!"

"He thinks I am *indicted* to the foolish habit of taking snuff. Just look at this."

Cousin Edith lifted up her dress-skirt, and thrusting her hand into a pocket of almost unfathomable depth, drew forth a beautiful perfume bag, highly wrought, and in the shape of a heart."

"Why Edith, that is not a snuff-box, it is a scent-bag."

"Scented snuff! what could the man think I wanted of that?"

"No, no, no; you don't understand me, it is a perfume-bag. It is intended to be put among your clothes, to give them a beautiful scent."

"I don't care about scent-bags," said cousin Edith, who was rather offish because she could not understand."

"I wish you would give it to me, then, cousin."

"Well, I guess I will keep it, so long as it is a present."

"I begin to mistrust you and Mr. Metcalf. I should not wonder, Edith, if you were married, now, before I am."

"Pshaw! nonsense! If I suspected he had any such intentions, I should refuse to receive all his presents. No, Laura, I don't think he has got such a foolish idea in his head;" and cousin Edith smoothed her hair, and gave an extra elevation to her comb, a little awry, and re-adjusted her collar.

"Well, cousin, time will show. We shall see, when an opportunity presents itself, what you will do."

CHAPTER X.

WINTER, old rough, conflicting Winter, had passed away, with angry breathing, and hollow moans, and the little birds heralded with their cheerful warblings the approach of the brighter sun of Spring and Summer.

Subsequent to the scenes of our last chapter, weeks have elapsed, and within that time, an intimacy had sprung up between Herbert Wells and Fannie Thorne. One pleasant afternoon, as she was returning home from school, she met Herbert, by an appointment agreed upon the day previous.

"Fannie, you look beautifully," said Herbert, "are you going to the party, to-night?"

"Party! what party?"

"Why, you surely are not ignorant that Miss Wellmont is to give one, this evening?"

"Yes, I am ignorant. I have not received a card of invitation."

"I thought you were very intimate friends," said Herbert.

"I never was willing nor desirous to be her companion, and I think it would cool any one's ardor to visit her, if they had to see and converse with that ugly, comical old maid, who calls herself Edith Jane Joy."

"That reminds me that I have got something to tell you which will make you laugh. Did you know that old Metcalf was waiting upon Edith Jane Joy? and he intends to marry her, I suppose."

"I always hated that man, he is so conceited. He was the only man who voted against my having the school. The old fool engaged to that old spinster? Why I have heard her say, time and again, that there was not a man in the whole universe that she would trust her precious body with; and to think that old Metcalf has captivated this old bird at last. Ah, Edith, if you do get married after all you have said against the institution of marriage, I shall believe it is the very first offer you ever had."

"It is undoubtedly the first offer she ever had, and

she intends to make the most of it. I think she shows good sense to accept the proposal of so rich a man."

"I should, too, if he was not such a perfect scarecrow."

"Never mind looks, Miss Fannie, for money hides a multitude of imperfections."

"He must have passed a rigid examination in his affairs, to make her believe he was in such good circumstances, as she has often told me and others, never to believe what men tell us, for they practice so much deception upon our sex."

They continued their conversation and walk till dusk, when Fannie, reminded of the objections her parents had to her being out late, without their knowledge of her whereabouts, turned her steps towards home. Herbert, as he left the gate of the house, told her he should take the privilege of calling upon her, the following day, at school.

When Fannie took off her bonnet and shawl, her mother reprimanded her for staying out so late in the evening. "Fannie," said she, "I have felt very anxious for your return, on your father's account. You know how it worries him, to have you stay out so late."

"I don't care if it does," said Fannie. "I am not going to stay in the house, after being in the school toiling all day. I am not going to be tied to the bell-rope, for anybody."

"Stop, Fannie, talking so. Think of the many kindnesses your father has bestowed upon you, and under what obligations you ought to feel towards him. If you cannot repay him, try, at least, to make his home happy, and grant any little request of his, when that request is solely made for your own good. You are setting a very bad example to the children."

"What a fuss in this house there is continually, because I will not stoop as a child, to obey all foolish commands."

"Fannie, take my advice, and do not continue to be on intimate terms with Herbert Wells. You know not the danger you are placing yourself in, by insisting to do so."

"You don't know anything about him. I shall go with him if all the world oppose it. I am not such a fool as Laura Wellmont, to refuse such a chance, just because her father did not approve of her course. I don't believe there is any sensible girl in Hamilton who would refuse him."

"Fannie," said Mr. Thorne, entering the room, "I have just been told that you have been walking with that detestable fellow, Wells. I thought you had more sense. I expressly forbid you doing so again."

"Whose business is it? don't I earn my own living? and am I not capable of doing as I please?"

"No, Fannie, you are not capable of doing what you please, when public opinion is against your conduct. Do you not know that you imprudently hazard your reputation, by associating with such a character as that profligate Wells."

"What do I care for public opinion, when it is unjust? I don't see as Mr Wells is any worse than any one else. To be sure, he was expelled from college, because the Faculty thought him a little wild, yet I know he is as good as those who talk against him."

"Do you not see the folly of going with such a man? How long, think you, if you continue so obstinate, can you remain in your school? Do you think the community would feel satisfied to keep their children under your charge and instruction, when you keep such reckless associates, and you know I cannot support you. I have been too unfortunate to lay up anything."

"You don't expect that I am always going to keep school, do you? I won't do any such thing. I mean to get married, the first chance I can get."

"I trust when you do get married, your choice will result happily."

"I don't believe any such thing," said Fannie, "otherwise you would not treat Mr. Wells as you do."

"Wells marry you? God forbid! I had rather you would die, than to be married to such as he. Your life will be one of continued misery, if you consent, voluntarily, to lead a life so full of misfortune. Fannie, why will you not take my advice. You certainly know I wish nothing of you but that which is for your own good. Why, why will your perverse spirit never be guided by advice and reason?"

"I have got as much reason as any one else. I am not a fool. I wish you would let me alone, and not censure me continually for imaginary errors of conduct. You would not bother me so, if you knew how hard I have to work in school every day. I had much rather be married than keep a school, it is so laborious."

"If you continue to associate with Wells, you will one day sigh for that cheerful mind which now enables

you to perform what you call drudgery and labor. Beware of the path that folly leads to. Accept the advice of one true friend, and that friend, your father, one who loves you. You know not the danger that tempts you, and if you deviate from the path of honor and virtue, remember, you will be irrecoverably lost. Think over what I just said, and consent to follow my request. Good night."

"How absurd he is," said Fannie, as her father closed the door. "Just as if I did not know what is right to do."

We need not dwell upon the character of Fannie Thorne, for the few last words of her conversation have probably given to the reader an index of her peculiarities. There are many who will recognize such a character. The world contains plenty of them, to the great detriment of good society. Their example undermines the happiness of their associates, and blights the enjoyment of their parents; but justice and punishment come at last, and folly and wickedness must finally settle with that stern master, retribution.

CHAPTER XI.

HERBERT's last interview with Laura—so destructive to all his hopes—hopes which, had they been realized, would have filled to the brim the cup of his aspirations, with joy and contentment, unfortunately resulted in his recklessness and carelessness. He now disregarded all rules established by respectable society. He despised all laws which opposed his opinions, or rather opposed the active expression of his principles. With Laura as his companion, he would have humbled himself, he would have sacrificed opinion, comforts, in fact, everything; but without her, nothing else was important enough to cause his sympathy or consideration, and consequently, without any certain purpose in view, his career became daily more dissipated and irregular. At the request of Fannie Thorne, he called upon her, at the school. He

fathomed the depth of her character, the first time he ever saw her, for her's was a character he could solve intuitively, and the result was an intimacy, which subsequently proved her destruction.

His visits had become frequent and expected, and it was upon one of these occasions, when he was quietly seated by her side, that our old friend Metcalf entered, and interrupted their colloquy. Mr. Metcalf had a few minutes before been the object of their ridicule and censure, and his sudden appearance, so unexpected, in some degree disquieted Fannie Thorne. Wells remained but a few minutes after the arrival of the "great committee man," as he called him, but before he left her, they mutually agreed to meet that evening, near the common.

Fannie looked and felt very much confused, at the great disorder of her school, when the committee man arrived; and that committee man, too, whom she thought to be her most incorrigible opponent.

"I have called upon you to-day, Miss Thorne," said Mr. Metcalf, "in behalf of my brother committee of this school. There have been, I regret to say, various reports in circulation, derogatory to the reputation of yourself and school, which, if true, are deep-

ly to be regretted, and some method, some rule, or something practicable, must be invented, for its avoidance. Your school, it is said, is remarkable for its disregard for order. Now, the observance of order, your committee declare, is the first lesson that should be taught in a school. In fact, it is the very foundation to build upon; it is the source from which *success* must inevitably flow."

Fannie replied "that she had tried to instil into their minds, that good order was the first lesson required of them; and she flattered herself that laborious drilling and discipline had, in some degree, rewarded her efforts, and though they are not yet perfect, their teacher should by no means be blamed. I have visited schools," she continued, "where the teacher only looked at the scholars, and the most quiet stillness reigned."

"Now you have come to the point," said Mr. Metcalf, "those teachers rule by proper government, and that government is moral suasion. I tell you, Miss Thorne, that a kind word will reap more substantial benefit than a hasty and foolish blow; yes, indeed:

'A word, a look, has crushed to earth
Full many a budding flower;
Which, had a *smile* but owned its birth,
Would bless life's latest hour.'

Mr. Metcalf requested her to think over what he had just said, and trusted that he should not again hear of any more trouble concerning the school. "I think all the remedy that is required, is to lay aside the ferule. At any rate, you can see how it will operate upon their youthful and timid minds."

Fannie said she would try his method; and trusted it would prove effectual.

"If you cannot gain the mastery over them," said Mr. Metcalf, "you must send for one of the committee; me, for instance—and we will see, then, the efficacy of that experiment." And taking his hat, he left her to meditate upon his instructions.

The hour had arrived to dismiss the school, and the scholars were requested to sing; it being the usual ceremony before the school closed.

"We have not recited," said a little girl.

"I know that as well as you do," replied the teacher. "If your parents inquire of you the reason, tell them the committee took it into their heads to

break up the recitations, by paying us a visit. You can now sing as I requested of you."

After they had finished singing, Fannie dismissed them; and, throwing on her shawl hastily, and tying her hat, she left the school, and called upon her friend Estelle. She found Estelle busying herself by copying a beautiful picture that Laura had loaned her.

"I have heard some news concerning you, Estelle."

"Indeed, Fannie! What is it?"

"I was told you were preparing to change your situation; in a word, you will soon have the honor to subscribe yourself Mrs. Wellmont."

"Who told you this news?" asked Estelle.

"Oh, I heard it from a particular friend of mine; the authority was good, I assure you."

"I presume then that the '*particular friend*' was Mr. Wells," said Estelle.

"You have hit it."

"I thought it was he; but will you please inform me how he came by the information? I thought Fannie, you would not allow yourself to be on terms of intimacy with him."

"Why, Estelle, you are as prejudiced as my father; he don't allow me to speak to him. But I know he misjudges Herbert. Now, Estelle, I will tell you a secret. I am engaged to Herbert Wells. There, does not that surprise you?"

"You engaged to Wells, Fannie? Why, I heard only yesterday, that he was engaged to a Miss Clara Woodville, of Albany; reputed to be very wealthy."

"Do not believe all you hear, Estelle; if you do, you will learn to despise everybody. It was only yesterday, that an acquaintance of mine thought she was doing me a great favor, by telling me that Mr. Wells was a dissipated and extravagant young man; but I was confident that the story originated from some jealous old maid, who would, at the same time have been glad if they could have possessed his affection. Nothing will make me believe that he is false. I declare if it was not for being in a school, I would leave this village at once. What is the reason that people enjoy themselves so much, by scandalizing their neighbors?"

"Fannie, my dear friend, you know lovers frequently let their reason and circumspection slumber, and give themselves up entirely to the strength of

their passions; yet you, my friend, I trust are not blinded by the affection of a sudden and romantic love. No doubt you will one day be convinced that the stories concerning Mr. Wells are true. In a word, *I could*, if I thought it necessary, verify all that has been said. Take the advice of your father, who comprehends his character, and refuse all Wells' solicitation to see you again, at any appointed place. Certainly your father would not advise you to do anything that was not for your own interest."

"Estelle," said Fannie, "I am confident you do not know anything against his character, all your knowledge is mere slander and hearsay; for I am certain no man could express such sentiments as Mr. Wells, if he was really so debased."

"Fannie, beware of the man who expresses much sentiment. It is the music of the rattle, but the venom of the serpent. The villain, in order to conceal his thoughts and intentions, clothes his language with polished, and apparently refined sentiment, which frequently amounts to irresistible fascination. If you happen to refute his arguments, sentiment upon sentiment will issue from his fluent and eloquent tongue, to substantiate his first assertions. Yet there is a kind of sentiment I do not condemn."

"Why, how many kinds of sentiment are there, Estelle?" said Fannie, interrupting her.

"There are two distinct kinds of sentiment," was the reply; "one is the studied creation of the mind, and the other, the spontaneous effusion of the heart. And that which emanates from the heart is generally the safer guide, and the most valuable. I pray of you, Fannie, think no more of sentiment; for it is almost impossible to detect, whether it comes from the mind or flows from the heart."

"Have you finished your sermon, Estelle? I shall stay at home from church, next Sunday, surely; for I think I have heard sufficient preaching this week to last me a month. But I wish to have this conversation dropped for the present; I am sick of it."

"You are unjust, Fannie; I have not been preaching to you; neither have I pressed my advice upon you. I only referred to the subject, not for the purpose of instructing you, but to recall to your mind that, which you have in your unwise passion, temporarily forgotten. But if you will construe my friendly intentions wrongfully, and will not see your danger, I have, at least, the consolation of having done my duty as a friend."

"Well, well," said Fannie, going to the door; "I will consider the subject; and if I learn to see, as you have labored to instruct me, I will never forget the debt I owe you."

Estelle, after Fannie's departure, appeared to be in the most profound thought. She laid aside the picture, and tried to devise some measure that would open to Fannie's view her danger.

She did not know what would be the best plan, as kind words had already failed to make a favorable beginning. Yet why could one so opposite to her by nature, be capable of having her feelings enlisted so powerfully? The answer is, that the heart-strings are ever attuned to sympathy and distress, and it needs only their presence, when they will discourse their sweetest and most consoling music. Hebert had proceeded but a few steps after he left Fannie, when he was accosted by one of his former college chums.

"Come over on this side, Wells," said he, "I have some questions to ask of you."

"What are your questions? Sedley. I suppose you have heard the foolish reports concerning me, and wish to inquire if there is any foundation for them."

"Yes, Wells, I have heard some funny reports concerning you. You remember the night we paid the landlord of the B— a visit, and you sang that bacchanalian song?"

"Oh yes! I remember; but what are you coming at?"

"Well, a story is in circulation, that the night succeeding that frolic, you visited Laura Wellmont, and told her you attended a meeting."

"What of it? I see nothing very remarkable about that; it was a meeting of jolly good fellows."

"Very good," said Sedley, "I shall *know* whom to call upon, when I am in a similar predicament, to extricate me. I will not make any further inquiries of you, because you always answer them in such a way that I get very little satisfaction, after all."

"Sedley," said Wells, taking his arm, "you are the only man that can serve me; and being such, I am going to impart to you, something that requires the utmost caution and secrecy."

"Depend upon my silence, Wells; for I never communicate anything that I once agree not to disclose. Now what is it?"

"Sedley, my dear boy, I hope I shall not shock

your modesty, when I tell you that my inordinate passion for Fannie Thorne has resulted in what she calls her ruin and disgrace. So you see the romance has turned out to be such a disagreeable reality, that my affection for her has grown 'small by degrees, and beautifully less.'"

"And I presume has flowed into a different current."

"Precisely, Sedley, my dear fellow."

"I do not see how you are to extricate yourself from Miss Thorne's power over you," said Sedley.

"Listen to me. I can extricate myself from the dilemma, with your assistance, for you know that two heads are better than one. I must, in the first place, absent myself."

"How can you absent yourself," said Sedley, interruptedly, "without exciting her jealousy and suspicions?"

"That is the one thing requisite. I shall spend the next few months in Albany; and you must, in the meantime, convince her of my lasting affection and deep regard."

"Are you then engaged to Miss Woodville as reported?"

"No bonds, Sedley, and no pledges. But there is an implied engagement between us, which is as precisely binding, as if we had gone through the foolish ceremony."

"What do you wish me to do, then, concerning Fannie Thorne?"

"Suppose you call with me this evening, and get an introduction to her," said Wells, "and frequently alone, before I leave Hamilton; then you can, without doing violence to your effeminate modesty, call upon her in my absence. Be sure to get well and familiarly acquainted with her. Show her letters from me, praising her — and you may be sure there will be plenty of them. I shall write often to you, in order to dispel any doubts of my sincerity and constancy, which her impulsive and sensitive mind might create; and you will, of course, show her all the letters when I refer to her."

"Very good," said Sedley; "but will she give credence? will she not think strange that you write so freely concerning her?"

"Not at all, when she considers how long you and I have been on terms of intimacy, and have confided to each other our most important secrets. How can

she think strange? She has often heard me speak of you, and cannot suspect our motives. Oh! I had forgotten; the old gentleman has forbidden me to call at the house; so you see I am obliged to visit her at the school. But I am reminded that this is the hour that I agreed to meet her; so come along with me, and I will introduce you to the pretty school-mistress." Fannie had been awaiting some time at the place of appointment, when Herbert and his friend presented themselves. "Permit me to introduce to you my friend, Mr. Sedley, an old class-mate of mine."

Fannie extended her hand, and remarked, "that she already felt some acquainted with him, as she had frequently heard Mr. Wells speak of him."

"I am going to Albany," said Wells, "having been suddenly called upon business there," and leading her aside, he continued, "that he had made arrangements with his friends to forward to her all the letters he should write. I have thought it necessary to use this precaution, because your father, you know, would intercept all the letters that I might write to you."

Fannie thanked him for the forethought he showed

for her. Poor child! little did she know of the plot laid out to blind and deceive her.

Sedley, tired of waiting for Herbert, left them, after telling his friend, that he was obliged to leave to fulfil an engagement.

"I cannot bear the thought, Herbert, of your leaving for Albany. I hope and trust you will not deceive me. Why not marry me at once? Herbert I dread my father's anger; you know he is very severe, and if he once hears the truth, he will show no clemency, no matter how contrite I feel. Oh! if I had only heeded his friendly councils, and the advice of my friend Estelle, this would not have happened. I have indeed made for myself a bed of thorns. Herbert make me your wife this month, and you will never have cause to regret it; but if you deceive me, your life will be darkened with misfortune, as gloomy, as you have made mine."

"Fannie," said Herbert, "how can you doubt my sincerity? think you my mind is volatile and capricious, that my heart is ever varying, like the vane on yonder steeple? that I am incapable of constancy? think you that I would desert you now in this your greatest affliction? No! no! on the contrary, I

shall use all my exertions to accumulate sufficient means to maintain us, and to bring about a speedy marriage; but to do this it is necessary that I should go to Albany. The reasons for so doing, I cannot now tell you; but will write to you soon of my success, and hope you will, in the mean time, place implicit confidence in my affection and continued regard."

"Herbert," said Fannie, "that which we wish to be concealed, cannot long remain so. I am at your mercy, but if you prove wrong and unfaithful to me, remember that God, who knoweth all things, will be your judge. I will trust you; but a month's postponement must be the farthest delay; then *you must* return and make me your wife."

"Fannie, I promise you that not a day over a month will I extend for delay."

"But Herbert, I cannot see how you will be in any better circumstances, in a month, than now. Do you intend to do business in Albany?"

"Oh, no," replied Wells, "but I have some few hundred dollars owing me, and I am consequently obliged to go and collect it—for in getting married, you know, it is necessary to perform the ceremony with some show of decency and propriety."

"I thank you Herbert, for this explanation. I trust you will prove prosperous;" but the tears rolled down her cheeks, which denied the existence of a happy heart.

———Oh! why should woman love —
Wasting her dearest feelings, till health, hope,
Happiness, are but things of which henceforth
She 'll only know the name?

She pressed her hand to her throbbing temples, for bitter thoughts were passing in her mind, which could not be controlled.

"Do not," said Herbert, as they were about to separate, "believe any of the reports circulated about me. I will prove to you my constancy."

"I will pray hourly, Herbert, that what you say may prove more than idle words, for which we all will have to render an account."

"How different you seem, Fannie; you, who always have been so gay and merry, quoting scripture."

"Yes, it may seem strange to you, but I have really changed, even though it is at the last hour. You will hereafter no more see in me, the light-hearted, frivolous girl, but rather one who feels she has been wronged, begging for mercy, at the feet of her destroyer."

"Fannie, silence your fears and look upon life as having much comfort in store for you. Remember my words to you, and learn to put confidence in me. Good-by."

"Is there not one word of consolation you can give, before we separate?"

"Yes, Fannie, and that word is *trust*, and all will yet be right."

CHAPTER XII.

CLARA WOODVILLE was brought up in luxurious ease. Her father was a prosperous and distinguished lawyer, who denied his only daughter no reasonable indulgence, or request.

His house was elegantly furnished, and he displayed an intellectual taste and refinement by the choice of his selection of rich paintings which adorned the walls, and gave an aspect of decided taste and attraction, to the visitors. Surrounded as Clara was with profuse affluence, her life, fortunately, had not been attended as yet, by any painful results. No evil passions, like loathsome weeds, had sprung up to claim affinity with the luxuriant growth; no enervating power had intruded its sting, for her pleasures were rational as well as exhilarating. Her person was rather genteel, than attractively beautiful, but the

foundation of all her charms, was an artless and unstudied manner, which oozed from an affectionate and virtuous heart.

It was a lovely day in June. Clara was half reclining upon the lounge, abandoning herself to the enjoyment of her thoughts. Herbert had made a deeper impression upon her, than she was willing or cared to acknowledge, and he was the only one, who had, as yet, created such strong feelings of interest — feelings which, though they may not be called love, were those which immediately precede love, for they were what the bud is to the full-blown rose. She had, since they last met, desired that some accidental circumstance might give her the means of seeing him again; but how to bring about such an event, she could not imagine.

“I wonder,” said she, thoughtfully, “if he visits at Mrs. Ashland’s. If he does visit there, would I not have been likely to have seen him? I will call upon Mrs. Ashland this afternoon, and learn from her everything concerning him. I know it is silly to do so, but I really should like to see him again.”

At this moment, a tall man in a black frock, ran up the steps and violently rang the bell, and handing

the servant who opened the door, a card, observed it was for Miss Woodville, though there was no direction on the outside.

Clara took the card from the servant, and read the following :

MY DEAR CLARA,

My coachman has been trying to drive up as far as your door, but there are so many vehicles out to day, it is impossible to proceed. I wish you would put on your hat and shawl, and loan me your company for an hour or so. Baylies will lead the way — excuse my not calling — I will explain when I see you.

Yours in haste,

ISABEL ASHLAND.

"This is indeed fortunate," said Clara, "I can now have my curiosity gratified, without having the imputation of inquisitiveness cast upon me. Isabel knows all about Herbert Wells, and if she is as communicative as usual, I can learn all that is necessary to know. I will be bound, she can tell his pedigree, and the history of his family, as well as he himself."

In a few minutes she joined Baylies, the coachman, who led the way to the carriage.

"Dear Clara," said Mrs. Ashland, "how are you to day? what a stranger you are. It is nearly three weeks since I saw you last. I say, Clara, have you seen Wells lately?" She looked searchingly at Clara, as if something important was pending the inquiry; but when she was answered in the negative, she resumed her gayety and volubility. "Is it not strange that he has not called upon you? I thought you were old friends, and judging from his assiduous attentions to you one evening, one would suppose that he was deeply in love, or else renewing an intimacy that had temporarily been cut off."

"You are disposed to be rather facetious to day, Mrs. Ashland. But how could I renew an intimacy that never once had an existence?"

"Then I have been misinformed, Clara, for rumor says that he was formerly an intimate friend of yours, and it was his intention to renew the intercourse."

"I deny any such assertion, for believe me, it was the third time only that I ever saw him when at your house, and I have not seen him since."

This was precisely the answer that Mrs. Ashland desired and sought to obtain. If there was not yet any intimacy existing between them, she thought

there might possibly be a chance to ingratiate herself in his affections.

It is true, thought she, there is a disparity in our ages, but four or five years, at our time of life, will not reasonably become an objection. He looks older than I do, that is in my favor. What attraction Clara possesses for him, enough to make her his wife, I cannot see, unless it is her fortune; and even her fortune is insignificant compared to mine. I see my way clearly. I will display my wealth temptingly before him. The power of wealth over the human mind, fortunately for me, transcends all other power, in despite of those moralists who decry it; for the "filthy lucre," as they call it, has its temptations even for them, for once within the influence of its magic circle, they cannot withstand its powerful fascination. Wells, thought she, is an adventurer, and money is one of the objects of his ambition; I possess it, and will appropriate it to my own advantage. My ambition is to be his wife, and if I can once get on familiar terms with him, no other power shall intrude its gilded bait.

After a few moments had transpired in silence, she remarked "that she did not think that Wells was very fond of female society."

"He has always appeared to have enjoyed himself when I have seen him in company," said Clara.

"It was merely an outward show, depend upon it; it was the compulsion of etiquette, for I have heard from good authority, that he once remarked, that he never yet saw a woman that ever pleased him. He thinks we are all too frivolous and superficial."

"I do not believe those were his sincere opinions; they are too unreasonable to be thought so. Any man who makes such a foolish remark against the character of our sex, is either very fond of affectation, or lamentably ignorant."

"Why Clara, you ought to belong to the 'Woman's Right's Association.' Your energy of manner qualifies you for an excellent advocate. There is latent animation in you that I never dreamed of."

"Indignation always brings it out," said Clara, laughingly.

"Proper indignation is truly commendable, Clara, but I supposed you would be the last one to feel so towards Mr. Wells."

"Oh, pray, Mrs. Ashland, do not misconstrue me. I was only indignant with the sentiment he expressed, which you will allow I had a right to repudiate, but not with the author of it."

"Then you do have some regard for him?" said Mrs. Ashland, inquiringly.

"The fever is very prevalent," said Clara, evasively. Yet the reply seemed to be construed by Mrs. Ashland differently from what it was intended.

"Fortunately for him that the fever takes so mild a turn, for if the epidemic took the form of *love*, instead of *regard*, you could not hope again to monopolize his company."

"I was not aware that I ever monopolized his company. If I did, it was the result of his inclinations, of which circumstances I had no control," was Clara's reply.

"And you made no effort, I suppose, to do so, as you were so completely happy in his society, that you regretted when the hour of parting came. Ah, Clara, confess to me that you have feelings for Herbert Wells stronger than those of ordinary regard, and that they partake rather the complexion of love."

"Why Mrs. Ashland, how earnest you are to find out the nature of my feelings. I hope you are not jealous of me?"

Mrs. Ashland felt piqued at this remark, and, much to her mortification, she thought Clara divined her motive, by making such inquiries.

"Herbert Wells," replied she, "never has, never can create stronger feelings in me than those of friendly esteem. And the woman that harbors love for him, must necessarily sacrifice her independence of character, for her opinions and ideas he will insist upon moulding in conformity to his own. I had rather not gain his love, than to submit to such a mental degradation, and without this sacrifice, there would be no hopes of having a place in his affections."

A shade of sadness fell on the brow of Clara. The picture that had been drawn, displeased her. She thought how humiliating it would be for a woman of Mrs. Ashland's independence of character, for instance, thus to sacrifice everything to be a wife, and yet not treated as such; and much more lamentable, because more insignificant, would that wife be, who had no solidity, no character, thus to become a slave.

Mrs. Ashland watched her countenance closely. She hoped she had given a blow to her desires, if any existed, of wishing to gain Herbert's love.

"What is the reason," Clara inquired, "that he would insist upon this humiliation? Why not be satisfied with love?"

"Because he possesses what everybody does not,

prominently—character. You yourself have witnessed its power; the mere casual observer has witnessed it in his presence. Though it is undefinable, it assumes itself upon all occasions, and to approach him we must bend, and to gain his notice, would be because we were his toys.”

“What do you call character?” inquired Clara.

Mrs. Ashland looked at her a few moments in astonishment, for she did not expect such a question from the simple Clara. “It lies here,” said she, placing her hand on her head, “and the faculty, well developed, makes the heroes destiny; but those who have it not, become their slaves.”

“What a strange creature you are. One would think that Wells was a demi-god, to hear you talk.”

“Oh no! I do not exaggerate him, for I assure you he is no ordinary man. His history is not unknown to me, Clara. But let us drop the subject, and talk upon something less mystical to you.”

They had nearly finished their ride, but the clouds, dark and sombre, forewarned them of a heavy rain; and bidding the driver to accelerate the speed of the horses, and leave Miss Woodville at her residence, they soon arrived at her house.

“I shall expect to see you to-morrow evening,” said Mrs. Ashland, as Clara was just opening the door of her house

“I will be at your service,” was the reply, and the driver cracked his whip, and was soon at Mrs. Ashland’s home.

CHAPTER XIII.

FANNIE, when she parted from Herbert, began to entertain doubts of his affection and sincerity. She began to realize, for the first time in her life, the gloom of real sorrow. She slept but little that night. The next morning she arose early, determined to reveal her secret to Estelle. She knew that her parents' opinion of Estelle was high, and she now began to think that to get her influence a reconciliation might be made between herself and parents; at least, Estelle could inform them of her situation. Without some kind friend to intercede for her, she feared her father might turn her from the door. She had walked but a few steps from the gate, when she saw the golden ball rising slowly from the eastern sky, and as she met its gaze, she exclaimed, "Surely, Estelle must be up by this time, for she says she always watches the

sun, to bid him welcome. How beautiful it is! I never saw the sun rise before." She saw Estelle sitting at the chamber window, and beckoned for her to come down. Fannie confidently revealed her secret, and poured forth all her fears, trials and sufferings. Estelle lent a pitying ear to all that she heard, and placing her arm affectionately round Fannie's waist, endeavored to solace and cheer her spirits.

"I shall be obliged to leave my school," said Fannie, "the only means of support I have. I could not earn enough any other way to support myself. Estelle, do you think that Herbert will deceive me? do you not think he will return at the expiration of the month?"

"Fannie, I will give you my candid opinion, though it is unpleasant for me to do so. I know he will never marry you. Did he not introduce you to a personal friend of his, by the name of Sedley?"

"He did."

"Listen to me," continued Estelle, "and judge for yourself. The conversation between them, previous to that introduction, was overheard. Sedley is his accomplice in increasing your evils, and you must beware of him, if he calls upon you. He will show

you letters from Wells, where he declares the sincerity of his affection for you, but of this you must be forewarned, for it is a contrived plan between them to deceive you ; for, depend upon it, when the month expires, Herbert, thinking you place confidence in his constancy, will fix the time of delay to another month, and so on, till months are consumed, and you no sooner to be his wife. This is their plan. Take my advice, and be on your guard, for your sorrows are already as much as you can bear.

"I will do all for you that I can, to ameliorate your present condition, and will ask my father's advice ; but you must not place yourself in the way of Wells or his accomplice, again."

"I will follow your advice," said the broken-hearted Fannie "and had I done so before, this affliction would never have happened. Estelle, will you go to my mother, and let her know, from your lips, everything?"

"I will do all I can to mollify your father's resentment, and I am sure your mother will use all her influence with him, in your behalf. Your home shall still be with them, and your associates shall not shun you, because you have erred, but will still look upon

you as their companion. Cheer up, now, Fannie, all will yet come round brightly."

"Thanks, Estelle, many thanks for your kindness. You have ever been to me a kind and faithful friend. May no evil, no sorrow ever blight your own happiness. I love you, Estelle, and perhaps some circumstance will one day present itself, that I can give evidence of my affection for you."

"I do not doubt your sincerity," said Estelle, and affectionately kissing her, and re-assuring her that she would do all in her power to befriend her, the two friends parted.

The friendship of Estelle was not a "*summer friendship*." It was not of that kind, "whose fluttering leaves shadow us in our prosperity, and with the least gust, drop off in the autumn of adversity," but a friendship that endured all seasons. In the fall of Fannie, though criminal, she saw much to palliate, and refused, therefore, to censure ; and she determined to use all the persuasion, and all the intercession that she thought might prevail, in her defence. She disclosed to her father the facts concerning her friend Fannie, and of the fears that she entertained of Mr. Thorne's severity, unless prevented by the timely intercession

of some friend. She urged her father to see Mr. Thorne, and reason with him. Her father proposed that she and Laura should acquaint Mrs. Thorne with the facts concerning her daughter. He promised, if Fannie would at once refuse to see Sedley, that he would do all in his power for her comfort. He promised to see Mr. Thorne himself, and he felt confident when he heard the story, just as it was, that he would show more grief than severity. Estelle was soon at the house of Laura. Cousin Edith was knitting a pair of gentleman's suspenders, a present intended for Mr. Metcalf, undoubtedly, for she slyly tucked them aside, when she saw Estelle, and blushed not a little. Estelle quickly acquainted Laura with the motive of her visit, and requested her to put on her shawl and hat, and accompany her to Mrs. Thorne's.

"I will be ready in a few minutes," said Laura. "Cousin Edith will entertain you whilst I am getting ready."

"What does Mrs. Thorne say about her daughter's being so parvarse and foolish?" inquired Edith of Estelle.

Estelle told her "that she was as yet entirely ignorant of the affair, but was going to inform her, at the earnest solicitation of Fannie."

"I always thought that something terrible would come out of their going together. I always said that Wells was a villain. I nosticated it when he was a boy; it was born in him. Laura thought he was perfectly beautiful, and I 'spect even now she treasures that piece of gold he gave her, highly. Oh! these men, these men, a courting two girls at a time! There is no dependence to be placed in them."

She was not aware that Laura had returned the gift.

"There are exceptions in all cases, you know, Edith. You should not censure all, because one did not do what was right."

"They are all alike," replied cousin Edith, "there is no choice."

She saw Mr. Metcalf coming towards the house, and she bit her lip, and then said softly, and with a tone of repentance, "I may be too severe; as you say, there may be some exceptions."

Mr. Metcalf had now become a constant visitor, and he had become so familiar with the Wellmont family, that he no longer was required to go through the ceremony of ringing the bell, to announce his coming, and he consequently "came and went," *ad libitum*.

Laura was soon in readiness, and Estelle taking the arm of her friend, they left Mr. Metcalf and his dulcina alone together.

Mr. Metcalf was something of a scholar, but his learning, like Don Quixote's, only made him more eloquent than profound. He was very fond of making quotations and comparisons, and they were always very pedantically and extravagantly applied. His memory was truly astonishing, for he could repeat nearly all of the plays of Shakspear, Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Ford, Shirly, Webster, Middleton, Massinger, and others. He would often repeat, for the amusement of Edith, the sermon, word for word, when she could not attend church herself. Magliabechi, Longuerue, or Critchton's memories, he often declared, could not compare favorably with his. "He had read everything," Wells used to say of him, "and was as stupid as ever." Cousin Edith thought he was a "prodigy of learning," and as his acquaintance with her increased, great similarity of taste sprang up between them, and regard soon deepened into devoted love. Yes, reader, they were in love, but had not as yet plighted their vows.

"You're quite a stranger, Mr. Metcalf. I suppose you have been to see the widow Jones?"

"Now, my dear Miss Joy, do not be jealous of Mrs. Jones. Do you suppose I would prefer her society to yours? Oh, no; for 'The Cyprian Queen,' compared to you, in my opinion, is a negro."

"She slanders everybody's character," said Edith, "and if you visit her, you will find her the most malicious woman you ever laid your eyes on; if she gets angry with you, she will lie about you, mark my words."

"Is it possible that she is so debased?" replied Mr. Metcalf.

—————"O! the malice

And envy of base women, that, with horror,
Knowing their own defects, and inward guilt,
Dare lie, and swear, and damn, for what's most false,
To cast aspersions upon one untainted."

"Thank fortune, Miss Joy, there is in the breast of a virtuous man, a consciousness of right, that all the women in the world cannot destroy."

"That is right," said Edith. "Stick to those sentiments, and you will escape destruction."

"Depend upon it, Miss Joy, I shall. But I wish to remind you, that this day you appointed to tell me whether you would be my wife or not."

"I am not prepared to-day, to decide. I will let you know to-morrow or next day."

"Ah, Miss Joy, this delay agonizes me; do not postpone your answer any longer, for procrastination is anything but agreeable to my feelings. Remember what the poet says:

'Procrastination is the thief of time;
Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
And to the mercies of a moment, leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.'

"I told you that I was afraid you did not have money enough to support me. I never will be a drudge for any man, no how you can fix it."

"Neither do I want you to be a drudge," said Mr. Metcalf, taking out of a huge wallet some papers and handing them to her, "for I have brought you some deeds and certificates of my property, and you will find, upon perusing them, that I am capable of supporting you in ease and comfort."

Cousin Edith, taking her spectacles from her pocket, took a small piece of wash leather, and rubbed her glasses, as she wished them to be as clear as possible. She placed them on her nose, and commenced to examine the deeds. She looked at them till her eyes

fairly ached, and then said to Mr. Metcalf, "I hope these are not forgeries."

"Bless your suspicious heart! can you doubt my sincerity? Those papers are genuine documents, and you will find the records of my property at the office of 'Probate of Deeds.'"

"Well, Mr. Metcalf, I don't want to say I doubt your honesty, but nothing will satisfy me but to see the records. I will call with you at the office, to-morrow, and examine them myself, and then I will give you a decided answer whether I will be your wife or not. That's the only proper way of doing things."

"Miss Joy, your incredulity astonishes me. Mrs. Jones would not be so rigid. She would despise to humiliate one who professed such love as I have for you. Yet with all your circumspection, I am confident that I shall prove victorious. I really feel so."

"You can't blame me. My mother always told me to 'look afore I leaped,' and you don't *pertend* to deny that she was a great woman, do you?"

"If my memory serves me rightly, your mother was over six feet high; and if her mind was as lofty as her stature, she was indeed a great woman. But then that has nothing to do with the present affair. If

you do not think I am rich enough to support you you must indeed be a very extravagant woman, and Mrs. Jones will say so. I will go and tell her all about it;" and he took his hat to go.

But Edith arrested any farther movement, by saying, "My dear friend, don't, in mercy don't go there. Mrs. Jones will be your evil spirit eternally, if you go there. I had rather you would go into a lion's den, or a nest of serpents. I beg of you, Joseph, to be on your guard, and take my advice."

"Joseph! she calls me Joseph! oh, how sweet that name is, when pronounced by your tongue." Walking up to the mirror, he continued: "Joseph, you are a very lucky fellow. I always liked you, Joseph;" and he began to dance around the room, as if he had the St. Vitus' dance.

Suddenly stopping, he took the hand of Edith, and said, "Hence-forward call me by the name of Joseph, and I will call you by that sweet, endearing name, Edith. I am really blest. My happiness is complete. I reject that idea, that 'Man never is, but always to be blest.' Never more will I call upon that ugly woman, Jones. I abhor her. I see now through all her subterfuge. She wished to marry me for my money."

"The monster!" exclaimed Edith, who forgot her object and love of money was similar to the woman's whom she so indignantly denounced.

"Just think of the depravity of human nature," said Mr. Metcalf.

"And particularly in a woman," replied Edith. "It's awful, rarely awful to think on. But here comes Laura, and I think you had better go before she gets here, because I don't want her to know that you have been here all the time that she has been absent."

"I am sorry that my visit must be broken up so abruptly, but your commands must be obeyed. If you insist upon going to the Probate Office, to-morrow, to examine the records, I will accompany you."

"If you please," said Edith, "I think it would be just as well. At any rate, I shall feel better satisfied."

"Well, since you insist so strongly, let it be decided that I call for you to-morrow," said Mr. Metcalf. "I long for the hour when I can say, '*Tandem Felix.*'"

"No, no," said Edith, misunderstanding him, "never indulge again in your tandums, they are so destructive to one's happiness."

Mr. Metcalf perceived that he had indulged too

much, in his usual pedantry, for the intelligence of Edith; and he explained to her that *Tandem Felix* was a Latin expression, and its interpretation meant, "At last I am happy."

"Laura will be here before you go. Now do hasten away, Mr. Metcalf."

"I am gone," was the reply, as he opened the gate. "But remember to be on hand to-morrow. Good-by."

He had hardly left the house, when Laura returned, and she related to Edith the sequel of her visit.

When Laura and Estelle reached the home of Fannie, they learned that Mrs. Thorne had just gone out, but would return again very soon. They were kindly invited by Fannie's sister, to be seated, and wait for her mother's return.

They waited but a few moments, when Mrs. Thorne made her appearance.

"If convenient, I would like to see you in private," said Estelle.

Mrs. Thorne, opening a door that led into the sitting-room, motioned for Laura and her friend to follow. Estelle, then, in a delicate manner as possible, related the object of their coming, and divulged the secret concerning Fannie. Bitter were the tears shed by Mrs. Thorne.

"You are her mother," said Estelle, "you will not forsake her? She is afraid that her father will close the door against her. You will intercede for her? I told her that she could depend upon your forgiveness."

"No," said Mrs. Thorne, "I will not forsake her. I will at least perform a mother's part. Why did she not take her father's advice, when she knew, too, that he was so much opposed to her going with the villain? If she had only heeded his advice, this never would have happened. Estelle, her father is very severe; I do not know what he will say when he hears this story."

"Do all you can for her," said Estelle, rising to go, "for she is nearly heart-broken. We will call and see Fannie, and inform her of our interview with you." And bidding Mrs. Thorne good-day, they left her, to call on Fannie.

Laura, on her return, was beset with inquiries from Edith, upon her success, and wanted to know how the "old lady," as she called her, bore up under the news, and many other questions, to all of which Laura gave her all the desired information.

"You have got a good heart, Laura, and I always

said so ; but you must not be at everybody's beck and call. It is arksome, very arksome, and it can't be expected of you to sacrifice your time in everybody's behalf. You havn't got the strength to think of such a thing."

"I trust, cousin Edith, that I shall never neglect my duty."

"I don't want you to ; but there is such a thing as going quite beyond duty. Don't you know that ?"

CHAPTER XIV.

MONTHS, since our last chapter, had passed away, and Fannie had heard nothing from Herbert. He was now a frequent visitor at Mrs. Ashland's, and she assiduously threw out inducements to him for the repetition of his visits.

At her house, and in her agreeable society, there were attractions for him which could not be easily resisted. Their intimacy had been construed the same as that which always accompanies an engagement, but as yet there had not been any protestation, on Herbert's part, which could be interpreted as language of affection. He admired Mrs. Ashland's wit, vivacity and beauty, and her charming, dashing, and yet graceful elegance of manner, backed by great affluence, but yet he was uncertain whether to proceed or not. His ambition, which came rather

tardy, began to develop itself, and his desires exceeded the limits of mere wealth. A class-mate of his had already distinguished himself in politics, and his success had spurred into action his own latent powers of ambition. Marriage with Clara Woodville, though he had no very high opinion of her, would be the means of gratifying his desires, for she was related to men high in office under government, and who had been distinguished as statesmen and orators for years, and with their influence, he might, at a jump, arrive at success, whereas if he depended upon his own efforts and exertions, he might be years in attaining.

Undecided what to do, he had divided his attentions between Clara and Mrs. Ashland; and the latter, comprehending his nature intuitively, and seeing where the "shoe pinched," profusely threw upon him all that was tempting to his gaze. Had Clara as yet shown any affection for him, Mrs. Ashland would have immediately retired from the field for she was, amid all the follies attendant with a fashionable life, too honorable, and high minded, to destroy the happiness of others, for the gratification of her own wishes. And believing that Clara was not really in love, she thought she was justified in doing all she did to pre-

vent such an advent taking place, even though she did so from selfish motives. Wells, she knew to be crafty and selfish, and, with a fair knowledge of the man, she had strong feelings of affection. Why such feelings, under such circumstances, should exist, was incomprehensible to herself, and she had tried in vain to analyze from what source such feelings had sprung. The affair, she hoped, would soon come to a crisis, and Herbert would be obliged to commit himself; for the game, so doubtful, was getting tedious to her.

One fine, beautiful morning, Herbert was seated in his room, his thoughts entirely engrossed by the recollections of the past, and indulging something like doubt, as regards the future, when the porter of the house knocked at his door, and informed him that he had a note for him. Herbert opened the door, took the missive, and returned to his lounge.

"I suppose she is going to give another gala," said he, alluding to Mrs. Ashland. "She has indeed an El Dorado of wealth. I wish I knew what was best for me to do. My doubts, my incertitude, are anything but agreeable to me. I wish Clara had your mental and external charms. She is not gay enough for me. She is too phlegmatic, and would require

my constant attention when in company, for I should continually fear that she might say something that would jeopardize my character and reputation, and subject me to a thousand mortifications. Isabel Ashland, on the contrary, has better judgment, more artifice, and a quick discernment of human nature. I should always feel as if I had in her an auxiliary, helping me to success. I will console myself with the reflection that, with either of them, I can, with assurance, reap much advantage. I will no longer conjure up unnatural expedients, to supply the deficiency which either of them may possess, but will let time and circumstances decide my choice."

He opened the note, and read, as he anticipated, an invitation from Mrs. Ashland, to another entertainment, at her house.

"She ought to live in London," said Wells. "Albany is not a good location to indulge in such grand extravagances. It is contrary to the Yankee characteristics of prudence and economy."

It is an acknowledged and established fact, that ambition, at some period of our life, invariably finds its way in our minds. Though it presents itself in a thousand different forms, it always comes in the shape of aspiration.

Herbert's ambition did not present itself in the mere desire of wealth, for the enjoyment it might bring him. His ambition took a different direction. He desired to distinguish himself, and to arrive at a conspicuous height of personal aggrandizement, accompanied with popularity. Realizing too long the vulgarity of hard exertion, he was unwilling to devote himself to work, to acquire all this by a slow and laborious process of industry, for it destroyed the romance of the object in view. He was unwilling to creep, and would only venture to walk. Men, at his age, and less, had assumed even the highest offices of government, and acquitted themselves with distinguished success. Why could not I, thought he, be qualified, and thought so without vanity, to fill some subordinate, yet important situation? Are we not represented in Congress by fiddlers, dancing-masters and cobblers? and must educated men, studious men, be excluded from adding the harmony of their wisdom, to the great national musical band at the capitol? With such reflections, he came to the conclusion that his ambition was reasonable, and some foundation must be built immediately, to erect the structure of his demands.

The indulgence of romantic ideas creates a distaste for industry, and often completely destroys the faculty of perseverance; and it was owing to this retarding influence, that Herbert had not sooner chosen some profession, and entered upon its active duties.

But he had now arrived at that period of life when reflection will not be pushed aside, when solid thoughts laugh at foolish dreams, and demolish, at a gentle blow, those airy castles which the uncurbed imagination has been allowed to build; and it needed only some occupation, to dispel this evil, which would bring into exercise his brilliant and substantial abilities.

"What congenial vocation can I find?" said he, after reading Mrs. Ashland's invitation. "I might look over a list of professions as long as Harper's Catalogue, and not find one to suit me, for I have no predilection. I must choose some profession which will give me the means to acquire what my desires demand. I will call on Mr. Woodville, and get his advice; besides, I want to see Clara. It will be a good excuse, to call on him."

He prepared himself to get ready, and was soon at Mr. Woodville's residence. The servant informed him that Mr. Woodville was in the library, and led

the way for him to follow. Mr. Woodville was seated in a large arm-chair, reading some legal book; but as soon as he saw Herbert, he put it on the table, and met him with a smile, and a hearty shake of the hand.

"Mr. Woodville," said Herbert, "I have come to get your advice. I have arrived at that age when the monotony of inaction becomes tedious and irksome, and I have decided, in my mind, that some congenial profession would be the means of producing more contentment and enduring benefit to me. I wish to know whether you think it better to enter a law school, or to matriculate myself in the office of a good lawyer?"

"I have always thought it strange, Mr. Wells," replied Mr. Woodville, "that with your turn of mind, you should have neglected to enter upon a profession so long. The study of law is a kind of literature, that is not interspersed with the flowers of romance — *facts*, dry facts are all the variety the study contains; and these facts are often so intricate, so complicated, that it will tax all your perseverance, if you wish to acquire any degree of success. Yet, in this respect, it is not unlike all professions, for no one can expect to arrive at distinction unless they persevere and work for it. I should advise you to go in the office of some

one, who would be willing to teach you a little every day. Institutions have no better process to teach you any more than the instructions of an individual friend; whichever you choose, everything will depend upon your own exertions."

"To whom would you recommend me, Mr. Woodville? I presume you would not like a student."

"If you would be pleased to study with me," replied Mr. Woodville, "I should be pleased to have you, but before you decide, remember you are to decide upon an arduous profession."

"I have already decided," said Wells, "and will commence my studies on Monday with you. I will, in the meantime, make arrangements to that effect. How is Miss Woodville's health to day?"

"She is quite well, I thank you; but here she is, and she will speak for herself," replied Mr. Woodville, smilingly.

Clara just at that moment entered, and was a little surprised at seeing Herbert alone in the library, with her father, and conjectured everything at once but the real cause. Mr Woodville, being obliged to meet at his office that morning, a client, excused himself, and left Herbert and Clara together.

Herbert informed Clara of his intentions and arrangements to study law in the office of her father. Clara was surprised and pleased at the plan, and Herbert saw upon her countenance evidence of her pleasure, at the idea.

"You will have three years of hard toil, and no recreation," said she, "and even then your labor is not completely done."

"You would not advise me," replied Herbert, "not to enter upon the profession of my choice?"

"Oh no, by no means, on the contrary, if I were a man, it would be my selection over all other professions, because the reward to a competent person, bestows that, better than all other remuneration, *fame*."

"You do not mean to say that all competent persons in the profession, acquire fame do you?" inquired Wells.

"I do mean to say so, with this qualification, *if he adds eloquence* to his other abilities, 'he will be sure to have fame.'"

"You ought to have been a lawyer yourself, you would make a capital advocate. The profession does not hold out much encouragement to one who does not naturally possess eloquence. I do not see why so

many join the profession," said Herbert, trying to see how well she could reason.

"The reason of that is," replied Clara, "because many over-estimate their abilities. The profession, with many, is nothing more than a professional cognomen. There are more, depend upon it, who comprehend the sense of the law, who are not denominated lawyers, than those who assume the legal appellation."

"That reminds me," replied Herbert, "of what I heard your father say one evening. He said that the sole reason why some laws could not be sustained, was because it was owing to the presumption, ignorance and importance of those who had never studied the science of law. Now, do not you think in legal excitements, concerning constitutional powers and rights, justice is very much delayed by the interference of those men you have alluded to, namely, 'those who comprehend the sense of the law who are not lawyers.' I quote your own language."

"Every one can read," replied she, "and has a right to judge for himself."

"To read, does not always follow that we can comprehend, and for a person to judge of the inapplicability of part of a science that he definitely studied, and that

science is law, it is the quintessence of folly and presumption. I will not carry the subject any farther," said he, smilingly, "for I shall get enough of law the next three years, to satisfy the demands of a life time."

"Why do you not own up at once," Clara laughingly replied, "that you have got the wrong side of the subject, and think it prudent to retreat?"

"You would be pleased at such an acknowledgment, no doubt; but if you think you have won any laurels, you certainly have my consent to wear them."

"You are stubborn," Clara answered, "though you must inwardly acknowledge you are fairly vanquished."

"I am glad," answered Herbert, "that the conclusion of the argument has given you so much gratification. I assure you it gives me equal consolation, so much so, that I should be pleased to hear you play and sing. Allow me," said he, taking her arm, "to conduct you to the piano," and he accompanied her to the parlor.

Clara seated herself at the piano, and played and sung a considerable time for the edification of her visitor, whilst he turned over the leaves of the music,

and listened attentively, at the requested entertainment. She played well, and with considerable taste, and to one whose musical ear was as well developed as Herbert's, it was indeed a pleasure to listen to her. A thousand thoughts suggested themselves to his mind while he stood at the piano; but the most prominent one, was to refer to a subject, which had a long time possessed him, and that subject was, marriage. But further reasoning, prompted him to postpone anything that might relate to the subject for the present.

There is nothing so disagreeable as a discontented mind, accompanied with incertitude and doubt, and Herbert was afflicted with this enemy to all happiness. He was determined to lay, immediately, the foundation which was to guide him through life. After Clara had finished playing, he thanked her, and soon left her for his home. He seated himself at the window, and began to plan his course for the future; but he had such a multiplicity of ideas, that he could not make any preferable selection, and he was almost in as bad a dilemma, as if he had none. The more he reflected, the less was the prospect of coming to any determination. Yet something must immediately be done; this *inertia* must be done away with, and activi-

ty must be substituted in its place. Law was a sedentary occupation, and in the intervals of study something must enliven one's existence. A life of single blessedness would not fill up the dull void; something cheering must introduce itself. He could marry — marry rich — and wealth was productive of a great deal of pleasure. Whom should he choose? that was the question! Mrs. Ashland was rather older than he, and he thought disparity of ages might have a tendency to make other things unequal. But like all dreamers, he had no definite idea what other inequality could be bodied forth; he thought it a self-evident truth, and if it came covered in a cloud let some one less lazy than himself unroll it. He was satisfied with the belief of its existence.

Thursday evening, the time appointed in Mrs. Ashland's invitation, at last arrived. Herbert, though profoundly respectful in his manners, was unusually sober and gloomy in his feelings. As he looked upon the brilliant and glittering throng, his thoughts recurred to the happy days in childhood, passed in company with Laura Wellmont, the first and only being, who had really inspired his heart to a sense of affection. Fond as he was of exciting and dissipated

assemblies, he would have willingly left that gay and volatile crowd, could he but have passed a few hours in the society of Laura. Had she consented to have been my wife, thought he, in spite of the differences of our opinions, I could have planned a scheme of happiness both rational and refined, by which her fastidious taste would have been lulled. I am heartily tired of the frivolous insipidity of a life that has no solid pleasure for the present, and no projecting plan or agreeable prospect for the future."

Mrs. Ashland seeing him alone, went up to him, and said, "pray, Mr. Wells, do not isolate yourself, you must adhere to our custom, and that is, to mingle."

"I was, just this moment," answered Wells, "looking for some one to join with me in the dance. Will you honor me?" and he extended his arm.

She accepted his invitation, but much preferred to converse with him. They danced together in several sets. She was easy and graceful in her movements, and her feet, beneath her skirt,

"Like little mice stole in and out
As though they feared the light."

Her cheeks glowed into crimson under the excitement

of the exercise, which gave a beautiful contrast to the clear and transparent whiteness of her admirably formed neck. Herbert gazed on her beautiful face, and into her large, soft and liquid eyes, and thought how beautiful she was. He longed to kiss her little arched throat, and to clasp her beautiful rounded arms, which were worthy to adorn the body of a Psyche or Venus. The amusements were continued as usual till quite late at night, when all, fatigued with excitement, dispersed.

Herbert thought it rather strange that Clara had not been present, as she had always been there, when he had been invited. He was little aware of the game and intentions that Mrs. Ashland was trying to perform towards himself and Clara. Nothing was farther from his imagination, than to think that one, whose character and independence of mind, which had acquired the dignity of respectful regard, should so abjectly debase herself.

Feeling satisfied that, as yet, no evidences of any particular preference for each other had been manifested between Herbert and Clara, she was determined to do all in her power to prevent any familiarity that might accidentally arise. Hence, the deliberate

neglect to extend an invitation to Clara, in order that she might monopolize the society of Herbert herself. But circumstances, in spite of all her plans, were about to occur which would often bring Herbert and Clara together.

CHAPTER XV.

Mrs. ASHLAND, unlike the Harrals which infest all large cities, possessed adequate means to support her munificence; and the numerousness and continual rotation of her splendid assemblies, by no means absorbed the superfluous balance in her treasury. Few knew better how to appropriate such affluent means, or that could more effectually excite admiration by the display of better taste, and no one more sensibly experienced its influence than Herbert Wells. She possessed much influence over him, and he endeavored, from policy, to resist it. Time passed, and at length Monday came round. Wells entered upon his studies, at first with reluctance; but unwilling to change his decision, he gave up to the full bent of his mind, all the attention and thought that the study demanded. Time wore on, and his studies, happily for himself, methodized his habits, which had heretofore been irregular

had listened to the eloquence of Mr. Woodville at the bar, and it made him emulous. His intellect, being quick and vigorous to create and conceive, he consequently made much progress, by the laborious application of his powers. He was now a frequent visitor at Mr. Woodville's residence, and he and Clara were more intimate than ever. Mrs. Ashland's tactics, so far, had proved unavailing; and when she saw how futile her movements had been, she thought it best to no longer contest circumstances which she could not expect to control. As she reflected upon the course she had pursued in regard to Herbert and Clara, she experienced a sense of shame and humiliation, at the retrospect. Hereafter, if Herbert paid her any attentions, she would not try to increase or prolong them. Tears stole down her cheeks as she saw Herbert and Clara walking together by the window.

"Why did she love? Alas! such choice
Is not at woman's will;
Once must she love, and on that cast
Is set life's good or ill.
Sorrows, and timid cares, and tears,
The happiest entertain
But this world has no other hope
For her who loves in vain."

"He little knows what my feelings are towards him, and I am debarred from expressing them. I feel confident, continued she, that if he knew what my heart felt, he would at least show some attachment for me.

"He loves me, I know, but he thinks his love is unrequited. He cannot prefer Clara independent of other influences." Had she known Wells as he knew himself, or as some others knew him, she would not have harbored such feelings. His desertion of Fannie Thorne would have created her unqualified censure, and the object of her regard, would have sunk in her esteem.

Herbert actually preferred Mrs. Ashland to Clara, but the latter had other attractions, more desirable to him than personal qualifications. Months passed away, and Herbert, though he still visited at Mrs. Ashland's, was yet undecided. His studies were nearly completed, but instead of remaining in the office three years as was customary, and is usually required, he was determined to pass an examination. He did so, and was qualified. He now began to practice his profession, and with the assistance of Mr. Woodville, met with fair success. As he

gradually came into public notice, increasing interest was felt by Mrs. Ashland towards him. She predicted that his future life would be one of distinguished success, for she knew he possessed all the mental requirements necessary to acquire popular approbation. His ambition was greater than many would have supposed, from his apparent carelessness of manner. But she had read him well, and knew there laid under his seeming indifference, a mind that desired to be recognized, as of greater capacity, than is generally averaged to humanity.

"Why should I be so foolish, as to wish for fame?" said he to himself. "History teaches me it is nothing but a name, and the felicity of those who once experienced the admiration of mankind, with enjoyment, has finally ended at the grave, and their bodies now supply the wants of the meanest reptile. Can the graves of those heroes, who once maintained an ascendancy over their fellow contemporaries, be distinguished from those of the many which surround them? Why, then, was not he, who burnt the temple of Diana at Ephesus, that his fame might be transmitted to posterity, as wise as others, who have been 'ravished with the whistling of a name.'"

One morning, after indulging in such reflections, he took up the paper to peruse an editorial article that he had partly read the evening previous; finishing that, and as he was about to throw the paper down, he espied the word, "Hamilton," and found, to his surprise, that the paper contained a speech from the Hon. Joseph Metcalf. Mr. Metcalf had been elected to the State Legislature, and thought it necessary to "define his position" to his constituents, upon some local reform.

"I do not see," said Herbert, "why the title of Honorable should be prefixed to his name. Sending to our legislative halls, such fanatics, such fools, is the very means of keeping our Cincinnatus's at the plough. Poh! I am nearly cured of my ambition. Success often comes suddenly to one who makes no effort for it, and Metcalf's election confirms it. Now I might be years, and years struggling to be considered somebody, and perhaps would not acquire so much honor as this booby has, at a jump. Everything depends upon circumstances, and 'they shape our steps, rough hew them how we will.'"

He threw his dressing-gown aside, and prepared himself to go to the office. Arriving there, he found

Mr. Woodville, who wished his assistance, as junior counsel, in a law case. Herbert accepted the proffered kindness, but not with much pleasure, for his ambition had been considerably curbed of late. In due time the case came on, and Herbert had prepared himself with care. As he glanced around the courtroom, he recognized Mr. Metcalf, sitting beside the Hon. Edward Gerritt, a Representative to Congress, from Hamilton. He would give all he possessed at that moment, if he could have with propriety retreated from any further participation in the case. He did not wish Metcalf to know anything concerning his whereabouts, nor his business, and everything would be known, and if he should prove unprepared in the present case, or incompetent, Metcalf would circulate the story, to his detriment.

It was a case involving a large amount of property, and after a number of witnesses had been examined, Mr. G., one of the opposing counsel, rose and addressed the jury, and the effect had evidently made an impression on the minds of the jury. Herbert's nerves were, in no inconsiderable degree, disturbed, as he listened to the eloquent counsellor, and thought, that to answer him, devolved upon himself. When the

time came for Herbert to address the jury, Mr. Woodville whispered to him to be calm, and not to feel so nervous.

As he arose, Metcalf whispered to his friend, but loud enough for Herbert to hear, "that rascal, Wells, is going to speak now."

Herbert suddenly turned his large dark eyes towards him and Metcalf met the full gaze of his angry look, but there was such a terrible expression in those orbs, that he turned his head in another direction. Herbert commenced his address to the jury, nervously and tremulously, but as he progressed, he gradually acquired more assurance of his own powers. At first, little affected, he soon displayed all the natural abilities and eloquence which he really possessed. He had written his argument, that he might not depend for words or thoughts, but they proved of no use to him on this occasion, for the magnitude of the case and his own situation, inspired him with ready thoughts and an eloquent tongue. Argument he piled on argument, and if, as Mr. Woodville told him, "the study of law was not interspersed with flowers of romance," it did not prevent him from giving evidences, in his address to the jury, that his mind

was stored with the flowers of rich and elegant literature.

Wit, logic, quotations and good ideas were at his command, and they were felicitously expressed. He finished his argument, and no one who had listened to him, even Mr. Metcalf, could deny that they had been entertained with an intellectual treat. Though the custom of our courts does not allow audible applause on such occasions, Herbert had the equally gratifying approbation, by the undivided attention of all who were present. All eyes were turned towards him as he retired to his seat, and now, many began to inquire who he was? Mr. Woodville congratulated him upon his success, and remarked, "that he had attained a position that day, which he himself had given many of his best years to acquire, when the triumph came with increasing years and gray hairs."

Further arguments were made by both parties, and the case left for the decision of the jury. Herbert impatiently waited for their return, and when they did so, he was more than gratified, when the foreman decided in favor of his client.

His ambition, he now saw, could be practically realized with exertion, and though such men as Met-

calf were allowed to mingle with the constellation of intellectual stars, it was only to make more conspicuous and effectual the radiance diffused by a gifted mind; and he had vanity enough to think that he had more than ordinary abilities, and perhaps he was justified in believing so, for it does not seem inconsistent for the possessor of talents of any kind, to be conscious of them.

When the case was decided, Mr. Metcalf remarked to Wells, "That, like Belial, he could make the worst appear the better cause."

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. METCALF convinced Edith that he was a man of property, and the records proved all he had asserted. Still she hung back, and thought it better to consider a little while longer.

Mr. Metcalf had already enlisted the sympathy of Laura in his behalf, and she promised to use all the influence she possessed to bring affairs to a crisis.

"Mr. Metcalf," said Laura, one day, "how do you and Edith get along? have you set the day yet?"

"Ah, Miss Laura," was his reply, "we progress, but *progress*, I have found, is a long continued story, and is always as far from the end as from the beginning."

"You must not get discouraged, Mr. Metcalf, a patient waiter, you know, is no loser. Marriage is a serious subject, which requires more circumspection than haste, when left for decision."

"True Miss Laura, but what additional influences can I bring? I have told her all of my affairs to the last sixpence, and yet she still remains undecided. I would not trifle with a heart so susceptible of grief as mine. She must be crazy to refuse such an offer, so advantageous to her in all respects."

"I advise you," said Laura, "to try some other means to induce her to come at some decision or other."

"What means shall I, can I undertake to do this?" said Mr. Metcalf.

"Listen to me, Mr. Metcalf. I have every reason to believe that Edith returns all the affection you bestow on her, and the only reason she does not say as much to you, is this. She was considerably advanced in years, when you first began to bestow your affections upon her, and not knowing what were your intentions, she openly denounced the institution of marriage, when others, more wise and foreseeing than herself, interpreted the reason of your constant visits. Having made such open declarations, she fears public opinion too much to accept your hand and heart, and though she has repeatedly said to me, that she had refused many good offers, depend upon it, she never

would have said so, if she had had the least idea of your feelings."

"I understand. I *think* I understand, she has been telling white lies. I do not believe she ever had an offer of marriage before, and if she has denounced the institution of marriage, it must have been because she never had a chance to get married, till I gave her a chance. What do you advise me to do, Miss Laura, in such an emergency?"

"I should advise you to go to her, and tell her that you retract all you have said to her. Tell her, had you known her great objection to getting married, you would not have pressed the subject so hard, and"—

"Miss Laura," interrupted Mr. Metcalf, "I do not retract anything that I have said to her. I am more ardent than ever, if anything."

"If you wish to succeed, take my advice, and do as I tell you. Tell her that there are thousands in the world who are equally able to make you happy. Mention, among the number, Mrs. Jones, as one competently to sustain happily the title of Mrs. Joseph Metcalf. Tell her you deeply regret your importunities to make her consent to do anything for your own selfish purposes, which you was unaware would prove

so destructive to her own happiness. Ask her to forget your rashness, and inform her that since you have deliberately reflected, you feel that an apology is due to her; and if she does not relent, then, Mr. Metcalf, take my opinion, she will not be worth having."

"Good, good; if she proves a little jealous, you think, then, I have everything to hope. But suppose," continued he, mournfully, "that she appear indifferent?"

"Why then you may learn a little of the depravity of human nature," said Laura, laughingly.

"I will try your advice," said he, "and trust there is efficacy to be found in carrying out your suggestions. But it is a great undertaking, a hazardous undertaking. I am already weighed down, in contemplating the mighty task."

"Cheer up, Mr. Metcalf, you will succeed, I feel almost confident. If you can face your constituents, you can certainly face a woman."

"I do not see why it should necessarily follow. In fact I should prefer, much prefer to meet an infuriated populace, than an angry woman, particularly when that woman is Edith. I always had a decided horror of angry women, and you must confess the sight of them

is anything but agreeable, and it is much more objectionable to be within tangible reach of their nails. There is no use of your laughing at me, for you cannot dispel my fears. I feel that Edith will be very angry, and think that I have been trifling with her feelings."

"I will answer for your safety," replied Laura; "but if she should attempt anything that places your person in jeopardy, let it hereafter be your consolation, that you escaped, for life, the companionship of a virago, and of a Zantippee. Now go to her, and try your luck, and if the enterprise does not result favorably, I will myself go in the sitting-room, and use my personal influence to induce her to come to some decision."

Mr. Metcalf proceeded down stairs to the sitting-room, and Miss Edith coldly received him, for she felt a little put out with him, because he remained so long in the parlor, with Laura. She poked the fire so long, that Mr. Metcalf grew impatient; but being determined to "speak out," he arrested her attention, by addressing to her the object of his visit.

"Miss Joy," said he, "I do not blame you for feeling so towards me, but if you will for a moment stop

poking the fire, I think I can exonerate all blame of intruding upon you this day. I wish you would listen to what I have to say."

"Well," replied Edith, "you must be quick, for I don't like to be hindered in my domestic duties. If you have got anything to say, you must hurry about it."

"Miss Joy," returned Mr. Metcalf, "since I last saw you, I have had many hours of reflection. Feeling that I had urged you too hard to be my wife, when I knew it was much against your inclination, and feeling that I had solicited your society too often, and that you consented to admit me on terms of intimacy, rather from my importunities, than from any personal desire to be with me, I now come to offer you my sincere apologies for my conduct."

Here cousin Edith dropped the poker, and looked at him in utter astonishment. But he continued:

"If, hereafter, you should be placed in adverse circumstances, and should desire any friendly or pecuniary assistance, I shall always be ready to serve you, as also, I trust, my wife will be."

"Your wife? are you married?" inquired she, as if she feared that he was.

"Not exactly ; but I intend, if Heaven spares my life, soon to be. Knowing your great antipathy to getting married, I have thought it best to look elsewhere."

"And would you be so foolish as to marry anybody ? Don't let your rashness turn out an evil to you."

"I am determined to get married. I am bound to get married ; and all I have to say, is, if you do not choose to have me for your husband, there are plenty of handsome women that do—for instance, Mrs. Jones, and Miss Forbush ; and the sprightly Miss Jackson."

Edith was, for the moment, struck dumb. But women soon find their tongues, and she exclaimed, "*Jones, Forbush, Jackson !* what on airth, Mr. Metcalf, are you thinking of, to choose a wife that has so much temper ?"

"I am bound to have some one. I will marry, determined to do so, if I have to marry a negress."

"I don't see what I have done, that you should treat me so," said Edith, and she put her apron up to her eyes. "I didn't think you would forsake old friends."

Mr. Metcalf felt a little touched. He thought he had done right, otherwise he would have taken some method to have appeased her grief.

"You know, Miss Edith, that I would much prefer you for my wife, to all the rest of the women in the world. But you peremptorily refuse to unite yourself to any one. Now you cannot blame me for leaving you, for you can yourself readily perceive the impropriety of our continuing an intimacy, when there is no prospect of our ever being married to each other. Now, either you must consent to be my wife, or, I shall pay my attentions to the next best woman, and that woman, is Mrs. Jones. Now you must instantly decide. I am willing to wait five minutes, and no longer ; for experience has told me that delay will never bring things to a crisis. In the meantime, to save you any unpleasant feelings, I will walk in the garden, till the expiration of the time." And Mr. Metcalf took his hat and cane, and proceeded to the garden.

He walked the paths, to and fro, but the five minutes expired, without any signs of his returning to Edith. He was afraid to return, for fear the sentence would be against him, and so he continued to walk,

till half an hour had expired, and even then he could not "screw up his courage to the sticking-point." Three-quarters of an hour elapsed, and he was still undecided to present himself, to hear the final sentence.

"I was rather hasty, this time, I guess. I have brought affairs to a crisis, but I dare not venture to witness the result. Bless me," said he, looking at his watch, "an hour has almost expired. She will think I was afraid to hear the verdict." And he started reluctantly for the sitting-room.

"Miss Joy," said he, "an hour has transpired. I thought I would allow you ample time to come at some conclusion. I trust you have finally decided what you intend to do; what you feel, and what you do not feel; in fact, I trust you have some mind, something stationary to depend upon, and have collected your scattered thoughts, and have come to some conclusion, and a decided determination. I hope you have seen the folly of a capricious mind, and have found out that it can accomplish nothing. But what is your decision? That is my question, and your answer will govern all my movements in life, hereafter."

"I don't know," replied Edith, "what to say to

you. I don't understand what you are talking about. I don't know what your question is."

"You do not mean to excuse yourself, by saying you do not comprehend what I am talking about? Now that is provoking. I have got to repeat it all over again. Now I will be plain with you. I will condense my thoughts into one sentence—Will you be my wife? There is nothing I can think of in the English language, plainer, and more to the point, than that. If there is, I will adopt it."

"Well, I don't see—what did you say, Mr. Metcalf, the question was?"

Mr. Metcalf, espying Frank's slate on the table, wrote the following:—

"Will you be my wife?"

Cousin Edith read it, and inquired if that was the question?

"That is the question," was his reply.

She looked, and looked at the question, but made no answer. Mr. Metcalf was getting more and more impatient and nervous.

"Miss Joy, you must decide. I am determined there shall be no budging. If you don't want to speak what you will do, you must write underneath what I

have written. You must answer, without any qualifications, either in the negative or affirmative. There is the question—Will you be my wife?"

Edith found she could not shirk, so she wrote on the slate, and handed it to Mr. Metcalf. He could not, for the life of him, tell whether she had answered in the affirmative, or negative.

"What do you call this? Is it a yes, or a no?"

Edith put her apron to her eyes, and said it was "a yes."

"And now set the day," said the incorrigible lover.

"I will fix the day the next time I see you. You ought not to be too rigid. I will sartainly fix the time to-morrow."

"I must have the day appointed now. I have determined to have the whole affair arranged to-day; and if you do not fix the day, why I shall do so myself; and if you do not consent to my proposition, I will find one that can, that's all about it. Your trifling and coquetry you will find consistent to dispense with, and I should think you was old enough to know better. I shall fix the day, next week, Tuesday."

"Oh, Mr. Metcalf, why this hurry?"

"And why delay? If you don't want to get mar-

ried on that day, I can easily find one that does. I am not to be put off any longer. I have made up my mind, immutably, and nothing can change my plans. Will you consent, or not? Remember, though, it is no compulsion. You are a free agent, to do just as you please. Now what is your answer?"

"Well," replied she, "since you urge so much, I suppose I must fix the day, next week, Tuesday."

"I don't want you to solely consult my feelings, and then twit me afterwards. I want you to do just as you please, independent of my wishes," said Mr. Metcalf, after he found where the shoe pinched.

"You're cruel, to be so severe."

"No, I am not, Miss Edith; on the contrary, I assure you I am remarkably lenient. If you think I require any personal sacrifice on your part, you misjudge my intentions. Remember," said he, "Tuesday is the day fixed, and if you are not Mrs. Metcalf on that day, you may enjoy the consolation that you will never be; that is all I have got to say at present. Good-by." And he left cousin Edith to think over the subject.

I guess, thought he, as he traced his steps homeward, that she will be ready on Tuesday. I felt a

leette ticklish, though, when I handed her the slate. I thought that all was up with me. By gracious ! how I perspired when I was in the garden. That was the worst hour I ever experienced in my life. Laura understands her whims better than I. I long to tell her of my success with the poor creature. She found there was no alternative, and, if anything, was rather inclined to be Mrs. Metcalf. It was rather tempting, I suppose.

As he was proceeding on his way, he met Fannie Thorne, and she stopped to speak to him. Fannie had resigned her situation since we last referred to her, and finding that Herbert proved false to her, had given her hand to Mr. Metcalf's nephew, who was well acquainted with her history, and had once been rejected by her, previous to the intimacy between Herbert and herself. Mr. Metcalf, though not as erudite as his uncle, was equally honest and simple, and he really had some affection for Fannie. She inquired of Mr. Metcalf how the school was progressing, and some few questions, and thanking him for the kindness he had shown towards her, again went on her way.

"Poor woman," said Mr. Metcalf, "I feel sorry for her. I wonder if she loves my nephew ; she

makes him a good wife. I must not forget to do something for them, to give them a start in life. Every one needs a little boost, unless they are rascals, and if there are any rascally propensities in my nephew, he has got more go-aheadativeness than I ever imagined. Rascality and energy always go together. Now, that Wells is an instance. He is the greatest rascal I ever knew, but his energy is equally great, and he will venture 'Where angels fear to tread.'

"He is smart, though ; he is very smart. I wish Wells had the manliness to make some provision for his child. A beautiful boy, though he does look like his rascally father. If he is going to neglect the little fellow altogether, I think they had better name it after his step-father."

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. METCALF and cousin Edith were to be married at last. The day had been appointed, and there was no doubt in the mind of Laura, that this time, they would fail to make their appearance at the appointed time.

Edith endeavored to induce Laura to use her influence with Mr. Metcalf, and persuade him to postpone the "*ceremony*" till the next month following; but Laura respectfully declined. As each day passed by, she experienced more timidity. There was no dependence to be put on any man, in her opinion, as she feared that he might not always be so affectionate towards her. But Mr. Metcalf, on the contrary, looked forward to a happy life, with his "dear Edith for a companion," and he waited impatiently for the day to arrive when their two distinct hearts would be made one.

"Mr. Metcalf," said Edith, "the day is fast coming, when I am to be your wife. Now I want you to pause, and consider what my feelings must be, at the thought of it. You must not forget that I might have been married, had I chosen, to as excellent a man as ever trod shoe leather. You must not forget that I am now perfectly happy in my present position, and that I consent to be your wife, upon the conditions that you will always treat me well, and provide handsomely for me. You understand?"

"I solemnly promise you," replied he, "that I will be constant in my attentions to secure your continued love and regard. Do not doubt me for a moment, when I tell you that I will always treat you well, and provide for you to the extent of my means."

"Remember your promise, Mr. Metcalf, for promises and marriages are solemn things."

"I will remember that life is a lottery, my dear Edith, and though there are many blanks in it, I have, in the possession of you, secured a prize; and, feeling all this, I cannot forget my promises to you. I shall be here early to-morrow."

"The day has come at last," said Laura, "when you are to be married."

"Don't mention it," replied Edith, wiping the tears from her eyes. "I feel already bowed down with grief, at the idea of leaving you all I so dearly love."

"Well, you must not think of leaving us. You will see us all very often, Edith."

"O, my dear Laura, I never knew how much I loved you till this minute."

"Cousin Edith," said Laura, taking hold of her hand, "I take this occasion to thank you for your kindness to me and the children. Without your kind assistance, I do not know how I should have succeeded in promoting their welfare. To you I owe much, but I shall never be able to repay you. Should you ever require my feeble services in return, do not fail to call on me. I trust your life will be free from troubles and sorrow, and may you ever be happy in the companionship to which you are this day to pledge yourself."

Frank, just at this moment, entered the room, and said, "Yes, cousin Edith, we shall all feel your loss. You have been a good friend to us all, and have faithfully carried out the request of our poor father."

Edith dropped her head on the shoulder of the noble boy, and sobbed violently. Laura's and Frank's

eyes were moistened. Mr. Metcalf here broke in upon their silence. He was dressed in a snuff-colored coat, with very large gilt buttons. His pants were of the color of blue, remarkably large at the waist, and rather tight around the ankles. His vest was of buff marseilles, straight, and without a turn-over collar, and made loose, so as to give full play to his huge ruffled bosom. His dicky was high, and seemed to be soaring to a higher position; but the white neckerchief was tied to its pinions, and it could get no higher, unless the owner went up with it.

"My dear Frank," said he, "how do you like this coat?"

"Very handsome," was the reply.

"Miss Laura, I at first intended to wear thin boots, but my tailor suggested to me, that a silk stocking, with a neat and pretty shoe, was doing the thing in better taste. But the plague of it is, no gentlemen's silk stockings can be found. You perceive that these are not gentlemen's socks, they are too loose in the legs."

"Your pants are tight enough to hold them up," said Edith. "If they are not, you might wear—"

"Suspenders," interrupted Frank.

"That is not practicable, Master Frank, but something must be done, to keep them in proper position."

"How do you like cousin Edith's dress?" inquired Frank.

"I don't see any improvement that could be made, unless it is the absence of that comb. I wish she would take it out," said he, turning to Laura.

"I never shall dispense with this comb," said Edith, angrily, "so long as I have any hair to hold it, and when I die, as I have told you, time and again, I want to be buried with it."

"Well," replied Mr. Metcalf, "do as you please. I see that in some things you are inflexible."

Cousin Edith looked pale and languid. She was dressed in a brown bombazine gown, with the strawberry cushion dangling by her side, and the high comb, that Frank said, "seemed about to rear itself, and reach the lofty skies." Her slippers were so very tight, that she could hardly stand upon her feet, which were naturally large, but she, wishing to look "very nice," had compressed them as much as possible, and they had swollen so much that they threatened to split the slippers in which they were encased. Laura and Frank left them alone, and when they had gone,

Mr. Metcalf seated himself beside Edith, and encircled his arm around her slender waist.

"How lucky for me," said he, "that chance threw you in my way. I predicted, the first moment I ever saw you, that you was capable of making me happy."

"Well, Mr. Metcalf, I am; but I don't want you to keep telling me about my comb. Why on airth do you want to speak of that all of the time?"

"My dear Edith, you are not aware how it looks. It looks like—like—like —"

"Like what? speak out."

"Well, don't get angry, but it looks like a peacock's feather on a dove."

"If my comb is any objection to you, Mr. Metcalf, you need not marry me. I have been told by several gentlemen, that it is remarkably becoming to my peculiar style of expression."

"It is nearly time that the minister was here," said Mr. Metcalf, looking at his watch.

"Oh dear me, is it?" said Edith. "I don't feel strong enough to go through the ceremony. Suppose you run and tell him that we have concluded to postpone the marriage till —"

"And suppose I don't run," replied Mr. Metcalf,

indignantly. "And suppose I don't tell him anything, and suppose we get married. Why is not that better than postponement? I never saw a woman so fond of putting things off."

"But this is marriage," replied she.

"And, therefore, less excusable," was his reply. "You are the first woman I ever was acquainted with, or heard of, that voluntarily postponed a marriage. You are a curious specimen of your sex. But here comes the clergyman, and now you see that the die is cast already, and there is no choice left you, unless you intend to retreat altogether."

The minister here arrived, and they could not, for the life of them, find, to their minds, a congenial place to stand. They staggered as if they were intoxicated, and Mr. Metcalf was incessantly bowing to the clergyman, and apologizing for Edith. Poor Edith behaved more like a mourner, than one who was about to find a new relation. Edith's comb dropped from her head, disarranging her hair, and Mr. Metcalf, as he reached forward to get it, stumbled, and knocked his head against the sofa.

The fatal knot was at length tied, and, after giving them a little friendly advice, customary on similar occasions, the clergyman left them to their friends.

The wedding-cake was now passed around, and it was pronounced by all, the best they ever ate. Mr. Metcalf, fearing that they might not give justice and credit to the maker, respectfully said that his wife made that cake, and that everything that went through her hands was "*nil ultra*;" and little Frank endorsed his assertion, and helped himself to another piece. They amused themselves until the coach arrived, which was to convey Mr. and Mrs. Metcalf to their new home.

Then came the separation. Laura could not conceal her feelings, and Edith cried, and said, "It almost broke her heart to leave the dear creatures, and she did not feel as though she had done right in leaving them." Laura convinced her that she had always done her duty, and to no longer entertain fears on that account. Mrs. Metcalf promised to call and see the children often. And now cousin Edith has one word to say to the maiden ladies present, ere she takes her seat in the coach.

"Do not take up with the first offer, but rather wait until you are of my age. Never let the opposite sex know you care anything about them. If they offer marriage, refuse, and tell them you prefer

to wait a little longer; and, depend upon it, your miseries will be delayed many years, and your pleasures in life renewed at an age when you can appreciate them as I can."

Mr. Metcalf kissed his wife, as they started off, amid the cheers of the invited guests.

Laura missed cousin Edith very much, yet she managed to perform her household duties tolerably well. Cousin Edith had left everything in order, and Laura was determined to keep them so. It was very lonely there, without Edith, and Laura felt the loss of her parents more than ever. There was a strangeness in the house, and she felt lonely at the absence of Edith. For—

It was her smile, that made the house so gay,
Her voice, that made it eloquent with joy;
Her presence peopled it, her very tread
Had life and gladness in it."

Laura exerted herself to the utmost to make her some cheerful and comfortable to her brothers, which, on some degree, broke up the train of her unpleasant thoughts.

Edgar Clifford was daily expected, and she had a great many duties to perform before he returned. Es-

telle also took up much of her spare time, which otherwise would have been tedious hours. Laura and Estelle were now more intimate than ever. Reading, walking, and the companionship of a true friend, could not fail to produce much enjoyment for her, which, in addition to her anticipatory pleasures,—the return of Edgar,—made her life comparatively a joyful one.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HERBERT WELLS and Clara were now engaged. He no longer remained undecided. He had marked out his plan for life, and was determined to obtain the prize—which was, the gratification of his ambition. He had already distinguished himself as a public speaker, and his party seldom met together, that he was not vociferously called upon to address them. He was indeed eloquent, and the more he participated in public affairs, the keener did his appetite grow for public approbation. Mr. Woodville's brother was a member of the Cabinet of the new administration, and through his influence he received the appointment of U. S. District Attorney. This was, indeed, something to be proud of, but ambition knows no limits in its demands.

The day arrived when he was to be married, and

though it was attendant with a thousand pleasures, it was accompanied with many gloomy thoughts. Fannie and his child, Laura and Mrs. Ashland, occupied much thought. When the ceremony of marriage was over, Herbert met the gaze of Mrs. Ashland. It seemed to him that she looked more attractive and beautiful than ever, yet he thought she looked unhappy. In an instant, all the associations of their past history recurred to his mind. Some evil spirit is determined to strew my path with thorns, thought he. What wrong I have done Isabel, I now plainly see; but why I refused to act differently towards her, when there was so much happiness in store for me, I do not understand. Mrs. Ashland intuitively read his thoughts, and his moistened eyes, as he met hers, interpreted the emotions of his heart.

Mrs. Ashland remained but a few minutes out previous to her leaving them, she went up to Clara, and congratulated her upon her marriage—wished her much prosperity in her future life. Clara, as she received her congratulations, for the first time, remembered their conversation in regard to Herbert, and she attributed Mrs. Ashland's sadness, as fear for her own happiness. No marriage was commenced under more

gloomy auspices. After exchanging a few words with the newly-married couple, Mrs. Ashland left them.

Many of the guests present, as she departed, exchanged knowing glances at each other.

Some attributed her cause of grief to Herbert's marriage with Clara, others, to some pecuniary loss, and others, more uncharitable, to some other reason. That was the last time that Herbert Wells and Isabel Ashland ever spoke together.

She no longer gave entertaining assemblies. Her splendid residence, once the centre of attraction, was no longer thronged with brilliant coteries, the gay and volatile crowds of extravagant fashionables. She felt a partiality for Herbert, which was not a fugitive passion, and she felt wounded at its being unrequited.

As Herbert gradually acquired fame and distinction, he came up fully to her standard of excellence. She would have given all her fortune to have been his wife, and begin life anew. For, with his abilities, she felt confident that success would follow his career. But Herbert was not happy.

"I shall never be a happy man," said he to himself, one day. "A few years ago, had I thought I

could have achieved all this, I should have been a happy man. Now, that I possess wealth and fame, I feel no more contented. If it was known that my child was the offspring of an illicit connection, all these honors would cease, and my hopes be crushed. Its mother must have heard of me, and if she once, out of revenge, gives publicity to an act which society condemns, how completely would it crush me. Will she do it? What a fool I was. I am doubtful whether to send money to her or not. I am afraid she will think that I wish to obtain her silence. And yet, if I neglect the boy, he may demand rigid satisfaction when he grows up to manhood. What shall I do? It is strange that she never wrote to me. My son — and looks like me, they say; by Heavens 'tis torture."

Clara entered the room, and requested him to assist her in hanging up his portrait.

"Where is Baylies, why don't you get him?" he inquired.

"He has gone with father, and I want to hang it up before he gets back."

Herbert accompanied her down stairs, and assisted to arrange the picture.

It was his portrait, taken when he was twenty years

of age. He looked in the mirror, and then again at the portrait, and then turning to his wife said, "Eight years have passed since that was taken, have I changed much in that time?"

"You look a little maturer, but certainly not eight years older. It is your beard that makes you look older."

"Eight years, how soon they have passed. When they come three times more, I shall be rather an old man. Time is hastening us all to the grave; it is a consolation that old age cannot be any more perpetuated than youth." He spoke sorrowfully, keeping his eyes fixed all the while upon the picture. "Could our lives," continued he, "be lengthened out, and glide along tranquilly as a peaceful stream, smooth and joyous as an Indian Summer, we would not feel the oppression of time, and life would no longer be irksome."

"Herbert, how strangely you talk," said Clara. "You are dwelling upon impossibilities. I thought your mind was of that mould, that could enjoy life as it is, and could meet it manfully, without wishing it otherwise than it exists."

He looked at her for a moment, and said "Our

minds are not contented long with anything. We are constantly wishing for a change. No one is so foolish as to wish to throw off youth and welcome old age."

"True, but when it does come, it is well to submit," was Clara's reply.

"Submission, is not desire."

"But is it not foolish to murmur, Herbert, at that which is inevitable?"

"I have not murmured Clara. I was looking at the canvas, and only made the comparison of animated life, with its copy. In a few years it will bear no resemblance to the original. As age steals on—my head sprinkled with gray, my forehead wrinkled with anxious thoughts, and my whole frame weakened, there may be a resemblance, yet a greater contrast. But when death comes, the last act in the drama of life, what resemblance can you then trace?"

"Why do you talk so, Herbert."

"I was thinking," he continued, "that when all this took place, this picture would still look youthful, though it existed years and years. No furrowed lines will find their way upon the smooth brow. Nothing will obliterate its happy expression. This pic-

ture, Clara, suggested to my mind, the desire of perpetual youth, with an Indian Summer of existence."

An unexpected interruption was here occasioned by the entrance of Mrs. Sheverly, a very large fat woman, and an aunt to Clara. "I will leave you alone to entertain her," said Herbert, "for I have got tired of hearing her history of Bonaparte."

Mrs. Sheverly had four topics of conversation, which she always dwelt upon, when an opportunity occurred. She always brought forward the history of Bonaparte, when she wished to entertain her friends, as an instructor, and though her knowledge of the great Hero, was confined to the "Child's History," she amplified and lengthened the abridgment, by relating a great deal that had never been published. Her son Thomas, was another remarkable instance of what character and energy could do. "My son Thomas," she would often say, "believes this, or believes that, and his opinion is better than any body's else." But unfortunately for her and her son Thomas, no one thought a vast deal of him. Another subject of conversation, which she used to dwell upon, was the relation of the domestic troubles of her acquaintances, which were greatly magnified. Her own relatives were the subjects of her scandalous loquacity.

Law was another subject of her remarks, and her opinions were freely given. Her knowledge of the Constitution of the United States of America, was as extensive as a broken yard-stick, and she talked more about law and its modifications, than Vattel, Blackstone, Kent and Story combined, ever wrote or thought about the science. And, no doubt, if she had not been a very fat woman, she would have practiced law herself.

She admired Madame Roland and Charlotte Corday, and their history moved her into enthusiasm, and she would often repeat, "Oh liberty! how many crimes are done in thy name?"

She admired the "lean and hungry look" of the president of the Woman's Right Association. Like Cassius, she thought the president must be a great observer, and "could look quite through the deeds of men." But enough of comment.

"Well, Clara," said Mrs. Sheverly, "are you going to attend any of the meetings of the anniversary?"

"I think not, Aunt, they are too apt to carry things to excess."

"How foolish you talk, Clara. These anniversaries are for the sole purpose of promoting the natural rights of liberty, and to obtain our rights, we must not

be lukewarm; on the contrary, where liberty is concerned, there you will always find it accompanied by enthusiasm."

"My son Thomas thinks it very strange that you do not participate in the meetings."

"I am not fond of being made a subject of public comment, and it is against my notions of refinement and modesty."

"You are wrong, very wrong. Woman is, by nature, intended to have equal prerogatives with man. Mentally, they are superior, but custom has degenerated our physical natures. Yet history tells us, sense tells us, that we can acquire the strength of the Amazonian women, if we only exercise."

Clara made no reply, for it was a subject that had no interest for her.

After a few moments of silence ensued, Mrs. Sheverly informed her that the history of France was very instructive and entertaining, particularly the history of "Bonaparte."

Clara smiled, for she expected Bonaparte would have been mentioned before. Mrs. Sheverly wished to talk about something, and she finally pitched upon her relations; but finding that Clara was not in such

a voluble mood as herself, soon left, to find somebody else that would like to hear about Bonaparte or her own relatives.

"Well, Clara," inquired Herbert, "how is Bonaparte, the Constitution and your aunt's relatives? I suppose Mrs. Sheverly introduced the old subjects."

"Yes, she did; but I was not disposed to converse with her on such themes. I have a decided distaste for anything of the kind. It is strange that she should always harp upon the Constitution and woman's rights. I should think she would get satiated."

"Mr. Metcalf, and your aunt, would have made a capital match. There is nothing he likes better than a loquacious woman; and your aunt, with her scandal—her Bonaparte—the Constitution—the woman's rights association—the regeneration of society—and her incomparable son Thomas, would afford him a plenty of amusement, and ample material to display his own learning. They would, indeed, have made a capital match. Don't you think so?"

"I don't think she scandals any one Herbert; you mistake her."

"Not at all. She is a malignant and deceitful woman—a spy upon the actions of her neighbors—envi-

ous of the success of her relatives, and a libeller of every one who does not happen to please her fancy. She possesses no refinement, and is the worst specimen of female fanaticism that ever lived. In fact, she has not one redeeming or commendable quality."

"Now, Herbert, don't be so severe, she never has done you any harm."

"She has circulated stories against me with the sole purpose of militating my character. She is an evil-minded, bigoted, revengeful old woman, and I have no charity for such."

"You forget, Herbert, that she is my mother's sister; do show a little clemency."

"She does not deserve to be tolerated in decent society," he continued, "and I request of you never to accept of an invitation at any of her entertainments, for I will not accompany you. Her son Thomas, one would think, to hear her, was equal to her Bonaparte; but the papers, you must know, record the court proceedings, and if you will look at the record, you will find his name mentioned in such a way that would make any decent man ashamed of such notoriety. Look into this morning's paper and convince yourself."

She read the "court proceedings," and was convinced that her husband's opinion of her cousin was correct, but saw nothing that should implicate her aunt.

"Clara," said Herbert, "your aunt has made a doll of her son, and indulged him in all his weakness; and now that the result is so generally known among the family and her acquaintances, it makes one feel disgusted to hear her praise his judgment and abilities. She is an intolerable piece of impudence, and you know it, but will not confess it. It is her profession of superiority over every body else that I cannot endure."

"What good, Herbert, can be done by such expressions of anger?" inquired his wife. "We must not be too hasty in forming an opinion, even when sober, but much less in such ebullitions of anger; pray do control yourself."

"It is enough to make any one, who has just pride, indignant. If she would only let my affairs alone, I should not, perhaps, feel so towards her; but this continued scandal against me, which, of course, must be detrimental to my character, I can endure no longer with patience."

"What does she say against you—what can she say?" inquired Clara.

"Say anything that she pleases."

"Why should she, Herbert? you never did her any harm."

"She is jealous of you, Clara, because you go in different society than herself, and she thinks that the only way to hurt you, is to denounce your husband. When you see her, be careful you keep all of your secrets to yourself. If you do not, she will circulate your affairs to every neighbor. Depend upon it, that though your mother was her sister, she experiences very little affection for you. She is selfish and jealous, and is not a fit associate for anybody."

"I shall never refuse, Herbert, to give her a welcome in my home. She has, it is true her weaknesses, but it is her misfortune. Your suspicions of the jealousy she feels for me I think is unfounded. What should cause her to feel so, I cannot conceive. You misjudge her, Herbert."

"Well, Clara, you know my opinion concerning her, and you will, I trust, regard what I have told you. I must leave you, now, to assist your father in some business matters, and shall not return till late in the evening."

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. METCALF had now become a conspicuous character in the political field. His wife had caught the inspiration of ambition, and she longed to see her Joseph elevated above everybody else. Mr. Metcalf frequently delivered speeches at the "Town Hall." It was indeed amusing to hear him. No matter what subject was to be discussed, he would invariably introduce a string of classical quotations, and was as likely to quote Plato, in connection with the subject of the Tariff, as upon the "immortality of the soul."

"While words of learned length and thundering sound,
Amaz'd the gazing rustics rang'd around."

And, like the parson in the "deserted village," though "vanquished, could argue still." Hours and hours he would talk, without any prospect of coming to his "*and lastly*," yet he acquired, generally, their full attention.

"And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew."

But speeches are not so effectual as prudent silence, sometimes, for silence never commits itself; and Mr. Metcalf found that only a few could go to Congress, and not every one that aspired to a seat at the Capitol. It was very much like success in business, and he came to the conclusion that fortuitous circumstances must accompany industry. In his mind there were but few men that could make circumstances.

Few men, like the "great American expounder," were so gifted or so intellectual, that could raise or quell a revolution, and by whose silence, could defeat or conquer movements, and which could control the destiny of the nation. Mr. Metcalf had enough wisdom to see all this after a little experience, which, unfortunately, all politicians do not.

Yet Mr. Metcalf was in some degree a philosopher, and though he might not possess mental calibre sufficient to "achieve greatness," he might be thought like a great many others, to have "greatness thrust upon him," and some high office would be very lucrative.

Mr. Metcalf, though he was not a political trickster, occasionally had to use a little subterfuge, but he consoled his conscience that it was all for the public good. "*Pro bono publico*," was the motto, and he seized with avidity all possible means which would, in his estimation, result favorably for the public interest, and earnestly opposed any thing which, in his judgment, was inimical to the State. Unfortunately for his hopes his aspirations, and his profound regard for his country, his constituents were not numerically strong enough, or failed to appreciate his patriotism, and consequently he never succeeded in getting to Washington. Determined to be known, and failing to make himself distinguished with one party, he went over to the ranks of another party with decidedly opposite views, and when asked why he had done so, he replied, in that well-known answer, "That a man who never changes his opinions is never open to conviction." Disavowing sentiments which he had once strongly advocated, and suddenly declaring his approbation of a policy which he had once strenuously denounced, his townsmen suspected him, and attributed his sudden conversion to his strong desire of personal aggrandizement. Continuing unsuccessful, he went over to a

third party, but his political star was not in the ascendant, and, to use his own words, his chances grew small by degrees, and beautifully less. His ambition had overleaped itself, and fallen on the other side. He could not understand why others could so nimbly jump upon one political platform to another, and always come upon their feet. Poor Metcalf was no tactician. With a mind "replete with the thoughts of other men," he had none of his own, he could not see why an exclusively local, independent party could not wield as much power as a national party. He forgot that local parties cannot grow into importance when their leaders stigmatize all other parties with offensive epithets. He forgot that the intemperance of party spirits, even when reform is necessary, is the bane of justice, and of public virtue. The leaders of such parties may gain an unenviable notoriety, and the noisy, but pigmy party, have to fill the purses of their advocates. Mrs. Metcalf, at her husband's request, attended one of the political meetings in which he was to address his fellow citizens. It was his good fortune at such meetings to receive the cheers of his townsmen. In fact, they attended the meetings more for the purpose of applauding him, than to listen to his declamation.

At every ten words, or before he had finished his sentence, he was sure to receive the most enthusiastic and vociferous applause of his audience. Mrs. Metcalf felt proud of her distinguished Joseph, and at every expression of *apparent* approbation which fell upon her ears in favor of the orator, she would inform those around her, that the man to whom they were listening was her husband. After Mr. Metcalf had finished his speech, nearly every one present desired to get an introduction to him, though most of them had been introduced twenty times before. They told him that he was the palladium of his country, and congratulated him upon his happy marriage. Upon the occasion of his wife's attendance, one facetious youngster proposed "three cheers for Mrs. Metcalf," and a storm of applause followed the proposition. Mrs. Metcalf arose, and thanked them for the courtesy. "A speech," cried one of the crowd, "a speech;" but she excused herself with the plea of being unaccustomed to public speaking. Mr. Metcalf gallantly thanked the assembly in his wife's behalf, for the urbanity showed towards her. As he proceeded, his wife moved her head up and down, as a token of assent, and smiled upon the audience with one of her sweetest smiles.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "the kindness and approbation which you have this evening extended to myself and wife, is fully appreciated, but language is inadequate to express the emotion which we mutually feel. My wife was wholly unprepared to receive such laudable manifestations of respect and regard, and the enthusiasm which you have so spontaneously shown on this occasion has completely taken her by surprise.

"I trust that all the ladies present equally feel an interest in the welfare of the country, as she to whom you have just bestowed your generous applause. Napoleon once remarked 'that good mothers make the greatness of a nation.' In a sense it is true, but I should have qualified the observation with, provided they are patriots. Patriotism extends and defends our rights, and woman, divine woman, is better qualified by nature to teach those primary facts to our children, which shall nurture in the youthful breast an ardent love of country, and an unfailing devotion to her interest. Yes, fellow citizens, let us not forget that liberty was 'baptized in blood,' and our children must not forget the sacred lesson.

"Again, we thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for

your acknowledged approbation extended to us, and we promise you that it will be our earnest endeavor ever to be continued in your regard and esteem."

He had hardly got his hat on, when a young man, who seemed more full of fun than the others, knocked it over his eyes. It fitted so tightly over his brows, that it was some time before he could get it off of his head. The young man apologized, and said "he mistook him for somebody else." Mr. Metcalf took the apology with good grace, assuring him that no harm, not in the least, was done, and the mistake was one which was common to all disposed to be mirthful and frolicsome."

Mr. Metcalf and his lady had hardly arrived home, when a musical delegation, composed of juveniles, entertained them upwards of an hour, with a serenade. Among the instruments used upon this occasion, were to be heard, over all others, the fish-horn, tin-kitchen, penny whistle, and brickbats, used as cymbals. The discordant notes brought Mr. Metcalf to the window, and he spoke the following words:

"No doubt your intentions are perfectly good, but such is the peculiar state of my nerves this evening,

that I should fail to appreciate the sublimest music. You could do nothing, I assure you, less likely to please or soothe my troubled mind, for all around and about me is one unharmonious discord; and though you may insist upon honoring me, I earnestly solicit you to take some other means of expressing your feelings.

"Boys will always be boys," and the words of Mr. Metcalf were ineffectual, for they continued their blasts upon the fish-horn, to bang upon the tin-kitchen, to blow upon the penny-whistle, and to strike the bricks together, upwards of an hour.

"What on airth are them fellars thinking of?" said Mrs. Metcalf; "if they think there is any music in that noise, then I have lost my musical ear."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Metcalf, "my political enemies are doing this out of revenge, for certainly there is no music in those discordant notes. I wish they would go home, and let us retire in peace."

The crowd, after giving Mr. Metcalf and his wife every tune in the programme, dispersed, and left them to conjecture to whom they were indebted for the "serenade."

If it is lamentable that a naturally strong and vig-

orous intellect, should fail to distinguish itself, or become useful, for the want of cultivation and proper discipline, it is nevertheless not a less sorry sight to see a learned fool—one, like Mr. Metcalf, whose mind was susceptible of acquiring much valuable information, but incapable of applying it with any advantage to himself, or for the benefit of others. Acquisition of knowledge, fortunately, does not entirely depend upon the strength of the intellect; not more than profound thought, or impassioned eloquence, depends upon scholarship. Yet such is the regard, at the present day, for education, that, let one speak ever so sensibly, unless his conversation is interlarded with Latin or Greek, he must invariably be set down as ignorant. Metcalf was born with a soft place in his head, and his learning had never hardened it. His erudition had, in no inconsiderable degree, increased his mental imbecility. His mind was like the camel's back, when overburdened, and, being naturally weak, he staggered under the load.

He was one of those individuals, who gave credence to all he heard. Anything that was said complimentary to himself, gave him the most unqualified delight. Poor, simple man! He knew not that

he was the sport of the villagers, that he was regarded as foolish, though he invariably carried his college diploma in his pocket. He was unaware that he was the best commentary of the truth, that learning can never usurp the place of *mind*, but must always be subordinate to, and under its control.

CHAPTER XX.

THE shades of night had gathered round Hamilton. Edgar Clifford and Laura Wellmont were seated at the window.

"Come, Laura, tell me all the news you can think of. Remember that I have been absent six months, nearly, and much must have transpired in that time."

They sat together till late in the evening, and Laura related every incident she could think of, which she thought might be agreeable to him. When she finished her history of occurrences, they separated for the night.

Early the next morning, they sauntered over the hills and valleys, indulging, to the full measure, the gifts of nature, and its scenery. As they were about turning the bend of the valley, they heard two youthful voices, singing "Sweet Home." There was such

a plaintive melody in their strains, that Edgar and Laura involuntarily stopped and listened. They had never heard it sung so well before. Every varying sound seemed to penetrate their souls. The voices ceased, and Clifford and Laura proceeded towards the place from whence the sound came, and there they saw a little boy and girl, with their arms entwined around each other's necks, with youthful affection.

"Who taught you to sing so well?" inquired Clifford, of the little boy.

"My mother, sir," was the little fellow's reply, "but she is dead now." And the little girl began to cry.

Edgar began to feel an interest in their welfare. "Can't you sing any other song but 'Sweet Home'?"

"Oh yes, indeed; but when mother was dying, sister and I sang the song, at her request; and it being a favorite of her's, we like to sing it, for we think she still listens to us."

"Why did she want 'Sweet Home' sung to her? It says nothing about heaven."

"It was not the words, she loved to listen to, so much as the air. She said she always thought of heaven, when she listened to the air, and the tears would fall down her cheeks, just as if sister or I had

died. Poor mother! I wish she could hear us sing now; but she has gone home, father says, gone to that 'Sweet Home,' where the choir of God sing better than sister and I, and where there are no tears shed."

"Who takes care of you?" inquired Laura.

"Father takes care of us."

"What is your father's name?"

"Richard Howland, sir. We have just moved to the village. We used to live in Utica."

"Richard Howland!" said Edgar, in astonishment. "Why, my mother's sister married a gentleman of that name, though I never had the pleasure of his acquaintance."

Edgar continued to question the boy.

"And what is *your* name?"

"My name is Edgar Clifford Howland. I was named after a cousin or nephew of my mother's. I forget which."

"Laura," said Edgar, turning towards her, "this must be a cousin of mine. My aunt, I believe, married much against the will of her family, and that is the reason I am so ignorant of her affairs. But I feel sure that she married one Richard Howland, and

these children must be my cousins. We will go home with them, and see their father, and I can then learn if my suspicions are true."

At the request of Edgar, the children showed him the place where their father lived. Arriving at the house, the little boy opened the door, and motioned the visitors to follow him.

"Take a seat," said he, "and I will call my father;" and he left the room. In a few minutes he returned, accompanied by a gentleman.

"This is my father," said the boy.

Edgar rose, and extended his hand towards him, and the gentleman shook it, though not very cordially. Edgar related the interview with the children, and his suspicions that they must be related to him, and if so, he desired to make the acquaintance of his family, and claim their friendship."

The gentleman looked surprised, and remained silent a few moments; then looking at Edgar, searchingly, inquired his name.

"Edgar Clifford," was the reply. "My mother's maiden name was Gilmore. I have every reason to think that your wife and my mother were sisters."

"Mr. Clifford, your suspicions are undoubtedly cor-

rect. But why you, or any of my wife's relatives, should now claim any connexion, surprises me. Her own parents deserted her, and your mother, her own sister, neglected to bestow her sympathy and protection, when her spirit was nearly crushed."

"Sir, you do my mother wrong. I have heard her frequently, when I was a child, speak of her sister with much affection."

"Why, then, did she not answer the letters my wife wrote to her?"

"I was not aware, sir, that she received any. I was too young to know much of the affair, at the time."

"Too young? Why it was only twelve years ago that we were married, and she wrote several times to your mother, since then."

"There must be some mistake, sir. My mother has been dead twelve years, next December."

"Twelve years, in December? That was the very month we were married."

"I think I can solve it now," said Edgar. "It must be aunt Margaret. She, too, married a Clifford, my father's brother, whom I have never seen."

"Then it was your aunt, I allude to. I took you

for her son. I remember your mother, of her promised influence to appease and reconcile her parents to her sister. But you say she died twelve years ago in December? My wife never knew of your mother's death. There was no one to inform her of it, for all the rest of the family neglected her. I presume, sir, you are acquainted with my wife's history?"

"No sir, I am not," replied Edgar. "I only know that there was some difficulty, at the time of your marriage, but am not acquainted with the circumstances."

"Then I will tell you," said Mr. Howland. "Thirteen years ago, I first became acquainted with Emily Gilmore, your mother's sister. I was at that time in copartnership with your uncle. In a few months, an intimacy had sprung up between Emily and myself, which resulted in an engagement. I was quite young then, and had become somewhat dissipated. All I was worth was invested in my business; but by some unaccountable reason at the time, your uncle and myself failed. I gave up everything to the last dime. In a few days after the failure, Mr. Gilmore your grandfather, forbade me ever to enter his doors again, and attributed my misfortune in business to my excessive

dissipation. Emily mistrusted that your uncle had deceived me, and disobeyed her father's request never to see me again; but my partner being her sister's husband, she refrained expressing her suspicions. Yet without the sunshine of a parent's blessing, or a sister's wish for her prosperity, she became my wife, and we removed to the West. The sacrifice which my wife had made for me, resolved me never to indulge in an hour's dissipation again. Not wishing to carry with her the reproaches of her family, or their censure, she wrote them, one and all, of my determination to renew my exertions, and rise again above misfortune. She wrote them of her unchanging love towards each, and wished them much joy and prosperity through all their lives. Not one, no not one of them, ever answered her letters.

"Your mother, more just and generous than the rest, promised to intercede for her, before we started on our journey for our new home, but we never heard from her, she must have died before we arrived at our place of destination.

"But let me remind you, that hardly had our business affairs been settled, when your uncle seemed to have acquired sudden wealth, and I learned that he

was living in great splendor. In a word, sir, while I gave up everything, he, on the contrary, became rich. You can draw your own inferences. The facts are now before you. The grave tells the subsequent history of my wife."

"Sir," said Edgar, "I was not acquainted with your family history before. My mother would have informed me of the facts, probably, if she could have done so without saying anything injurious to my uncle. I feel confident that her sympathy must have been with her sister. But sir, I trust you will not extend your displeasure towards me, for I remember that aunt Emily and myself were the kindest of friends. She used to call me her favorite."

Mr. Howland smiled, and remarked, "this little boy she insisted on naming for you, though much against my own desires. I assure you I no longer regret it, you are not responsible for the faults of your relatives."

After a few moments of silence, he inquired of Laura if her name was not Wellmont. She replied, that she was the daughter of Louis Wellmont.

"I thought so," said he, "from the resemblance. I knew your father well, he was my guardian, ap-

pointed by myself. I hardly had become in possession of my property, when I became wild and dissipated, and my relatives, thinking that I was incapable of managing my affairs judiciously, took it upon themselves to see that it was secure. Having the power to choose my own guardian, I selected your father."

"I never heard him mention it," said Laura.

"You were not living then. I was only twenty-two years old, over thirty years ago. But I have sown all my 'wild oats' now, and look upon my past life with unfeigned regret. Experience, has at last produced reflection; but reflection, forced by experience, is not always pleasant." He spoke the last words sadly, then turning to Edgar, he resumed, "I have seen the bright and dark side of life. I have seen it in all its hues; yet with all my experience, I cannot reduce the practice of life to a rule to be guided by. Men are apt to act by precedents. If they happen to succeed in one adventure, they think that further success will ensue by following it up, and the results are often contrary to their expectations. Then again if they take hold of something new, which turns out at the time to be injudicious, they will never try

it again. This is one reason why so many are unsuccessful in life, because they act solely by experience, just as if the practice of life could be reduced to a rule. All is luck sir, all is a lottery; if you will go into any of our large cities, you will find plenty of smart men unsuccessful, while their less shrewd neighbors, are rolling in wealth. Not one hundredth part of the great and desirable results which occur, either individual or political, are the works of pre-meditation. But you, probably, Mr Clifford, think that everything can be reduced to a science."

"I must confess I do not agree with you," was Edgar's reply. "I should not want to start in life with mere chance in my favor, I should not only use my own experience, but that of others."

"You must come here and discuss the subject some time. I think I can soon open your mind to conviction, but will not attempt it now, as it is too dry a subject for Miss Wellmont."

"Come here, Edgar and Isabel," continued he, "I wish to introduce you to your cousin." Edgar took the children upon his knee and kissed them.

"Is not the lady my cousin too?" inquired the little girl of her father.

"I am sorry to say she is not, but," continued he, smilingly, "perhaps she will be one of these days."

Laura blushed a little, and then good humoredly remarked, "that they might claim any relationship they chose."

The little girl was remarkably handsome. Her features were small and regular, and the shape of her head, with the long flaxen ringlets, falling upon her beautifully formed neck, were such that a city belle might envy. Her eyes were of light blue, intelligent and expressive, which gave dignity to her appearance. Her brother was two years older, decidedly masculine in his appearance. His forehead was high and wide, and his large dark eyes, gave him an intelligent look. After a few more words were passed between the new acquaintances, Edgar and Laura left for home, but not without receiving an urgent solicitation from Mr. Howland to call again, which they promised they would do with pleasure. As they returned home they met Estelle.

"Ah! Laura," said Estelle, "next week will be a great week in Hamilton; every body is talking about it."

"Why, what is to happen next week?" inquired Laura.

"Are you not going to be married next week?"

"Yes; but is a marriage anything extraordinary here?"

"Oh, no; but that is not all that is going to transpire."

"What else, Estelle? I must confess I am quite ignorant of the proceedings about me."

"Why, did you not hear of the Hon. Herbert Wells coming here?"

"Do not provoke us Estelle, tell us at once, what is he coming here for?"

"Why, it is commencement week you know, and he has been invited to deliver an address at the college, and I shall certainly go and hear him. I have a great curiosity to see him again."

"Is it possible," interrupted Edgar, "that he has been invited to deliver an address, at the very college where he was once expelled?"

"It is true," replied Estelle, "for I heard it from good authority. They say he is remarkably eloquent. I always said, Laura, that he was quite a genius. But then, that is not all that is going to transpire."

"What other news, Estelle?" inquired Edgar.

"Another marriage is to happen," replied Estelle.

"Another," inquired Laura, "what other?"

"You must guess."

"I cannot think."

"Why, our new neighbor, the widower."

"Widower! what widower?"

"How dull you are, this morning, Laura. Why, Mr. Howland."

"To whom is he to be married?" said Edgar.

"Why, to my cousin."

"Your cousin?" inquired Laura, surprised; "what cousin?"

"Why, Mrs. Ashland, the same lady that Wells formerly waited upon."

"This is, indeed, news," said Laura. "I never heard of it before. The beautiful Mrs. Ashland, to be married to Edgar's uncle-in-law. It will indeed be a busy week in Hamilton."

"Edgar's uncle-in-law," repeated Estelle. "Edgar's uncle, how is that? This is as much news to me, as the other is to you."

Edgar then related the morning's adventure, and the history of his aunt, which he had that day learned of Mr. Howland. Estelle seemed surprised, and expressed her doubts as to Mrs. Ashland being acquaint-

ed with Mr. Howland's former marriage. They had by this time come to the parting roads, and here Estelle left her friends, for another direction.

"Laura," said Edgar, as they proceeded on their way homewards, "Herbert Wells has, by the mere force of talent, acquired considerable distinction; yet his popularity, I predict, will not be of long duration. His principles, his individual life, will interfere, ultimately, with his public success."

"It ought to do so, surely," was Laura's reply; "but you seldom see men of great abilities, in public life, whose individual honor is questioned. So far as my own observation goes, a man of great abilities, and corresponding ambition, generally is successful, at least, in this world."

"Wells is, undoubtedly, a man of fine abilities, and his confidence in his own powers will ensure his success. Yet no man, whose private life is bad, can, in my opinion, be depended upon, when the public good requires his influence."

"In that, I agree with you, but you must confess that it is seldom that one so young as Herbert, attains to such a distinguished position as he has already acquired."

"That I will allow, Laura, but he has, and always had propitious influences in his favor. He married into a family who placed him in the way of using his talents, and any one with his ambition, in the same circumstances, would have been equally successful."

They had now reached home, and the name of Herbert was not mentioned again that day, but other matters, fully interesting to themselves, were dwelled upon. About to be married, what other subject, reader, would likely to be more frequently spoken of? When Laura had taken off her bonnet and shawl, she sat beside Edgar, and they conversed upon the prospects of the future. They, like others, who dwell upon the future, thought only of its brighter spots; sorrow, nor misfortune, nor deprivation, nor cares, nor troubles, once entered their minds. The future was to them, as they had drawn it, one uninterrupted scene of bliss. A scene of shadowy groves, silvery lakes, and lofty trees, verdant lawns, smiling visits of the golden sun, and the sweet minstrelsy of nature. They had drawn their *future* from the rising of the sun, not wisely from its majestic setting. Youth sketches *life* from fancy, old age from experience.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was evening, and Herbert Wells sat alone in the neatly furnished parlor in his mother's house, at Hamilton. Though not a wrinkle had as yet furrowed his brow, there was an expression of incessant thought, continually shading his naturally dark visage. Yet young, the buoyancy and vivacity of youth had fled forever. His features seemed like marble. For upwards of an hour, he rested his forehead upon the table before him. Suddenly starting up, and looking around him, with an expression of intense mental excitement, exclaimed:

"Will she do it? Oh, fool that I was, to accept this invitation, merely for the honor, when a word from her will change all, to my perpetual dishonor. Where was my prudence? One word from her could destroy all my success in life. All my plans would

be futile, and all my energies crippled. If society contemns my individual acts, all my ambition is thrown away."

Herbert Wells never went before the public, without associating Fannie Thorne in his mind. One act, only one act, of his varied life, had caused him many sleepless nights, many gloomy hours. His child was a living proof of his guilt, an ineffaceable evidence of a crime that could crush him at a blow. Naturally misanthropic, he had found, with sad experience, that every individual depended, in some degree, for the fulfilment of his desires, upon society; not only for its acquiescing and charitable opinions of individual acts, but also for its benevolence, approbation and sympathy. No man living can exist without desires, or without wishing that the world was somewhat different from what it is. There is a continual desire for change. And when one says he is the most independent of society, he generally acknowledges his dependence. Herbert had achieved a position in society, commensurate with his talents and ambition. He was acknowledged as a scholar, and a profound thinker; his address and eloquence had rendered him popular, and his opinions had as much weight in soci-

ety as those of twice his age. Duplicity seemed to be his ruling passion, and he used it as an auxiliary to carry out his designs. He intuitively comprehended human nature, and he never delivered a speech, but that he knew when, and where, he should receive applause.

"To-morrow," said he, "*she* may be present, and to meet her gaze would embarrass and confuse me. Well, well, I will be ready ; 'tis too late to feign sickness, now."

He finished writing his address, and after committing it to memory, he retired for the night.

Commencement-day was all life and gayety in Hamilton. Citizens from the surrounding counties came to witness the intellectual entertainment at the college. The class-mates of Herbert Wells were all present, most of whom he had not seen since he was expelled from college. All had received a diploma, but the only passport he had to attain what some wanted, was natural abilities. The hall was crowded, and some of them relating over the follies of the "orator of the day," when in college. Herbert had not yet arrived, and they were expecting to see the wild, reckless Herbert Wells, of other days. Laura, too, expected to

see nothing more than a brilliant and vivacious man. Soon the buzz of voices ceased, and Herbert Wells was sitting on the platform before them. What a change in his appearance had taken place since they last saw him! The massive head seemed to have grown twice its size, and his features, once so varying, seemed almost inflexible. There was a gloomy dignity in his manner, and his large, full, dark eyes, when gazing at one object, rendered his expression solemn and thoughtful. The hour arrived when he was to address them. The same solemnity was with him, as he arose before them. He spoke, and the sound of his voice, as it fell upon the ear of Laura, was like an electric shock. Old associations revived in her memory. She recalled the evening walks, the interchange of sympathy, the happy moments of days gone by, and the finale of an intimacy of unfeigned happiness. Herbert slowly looked around the hall. Suddenly his gaze met that of Laura. The color mounted to his cheeks, his eyes seemed to have acquired unusual brilliancy. His manner of action changed, and became more nervous. But, as he proceeded, he soon acquired his wonted coolness, and his manners relaxed again to their usual solemnity.

His delivery, though at times slow, corresponded with his heavy thoughts, and the construction of his ponderous sentences. Now his manner is quickened, and logic for the moment is substituted for metaphorical illustration, and classical allusions. His imagination gives rapidity to his utterance, and a flow of eloquence streams through his lips. Now the gravity of thought checks his fancy, and he presents his argument directly to the understanding. He has finished his address, and, without noticing the vociferous applause bestowed on him by an appreciating audience, slowly returns to his seat. Many old acquaintances present, would have been pleased to have been recognized by him, and it was only his stern, cold expression, which forbade them from introducing themselves.

After Herbert had finished his oration, he looked again at Laura, but her head was turned aside, and he could see only a part of her face. In a few minutes, however, she looked directly towards him, and met his steady gaze. He observed her eyes were moistened with tears, yet he was unaware that he had said anything to cause such evidences of grief. Wells had that day uttered sentiments noble and beautiful ;

sentiments, that found a place in the heart, as well as the understanding ; and Laura, reviving all the recollections of the past in her memory, applied his every thought to their old associations, commencing in childhood.

Generally incredulous of what Herbert said, she could not but feel, that he had, on this occasion, felt all that was so nobly uttered. But dangerous indeed was the influence, for she felt her heart yearning as of old, fondly for him.

Yet no one else present, would have appropriated what she had that day heard, as she did. It seemed to her as if all was spoken directly to herself. Herbert, too, experienced again sensations, which had long been hidden, but never died out. He thought of his wife, and of his duplicity towards her. He never married for affection, but for wealth — for honor and ambition. With Laura, he could have obtained, by the application of his abilities, all that he now possessed. “ ’Tis too late now,” said he to himself, “ too late, I have thrown my life away — or else everything is fate.”

In passing out of the hall he met Laura, and they exchanged salutations. Nothing was said of the past,

nothing referred to of the future. Herbert's demeanor was so gloomy, that Laura noticed it, and inquired if he were unwell.

"Not well, nor ill," he answered sadly, "at least nothing but what I can bear."

His words betrayed to Laura that there was something he did not wish to reveal. She pitied him, for she really believed he was suffering under depression of spirits, but afraid that she should express too much sympathy, she bowed, and left him at the residence of Estelle.

"Well Laura," said Estelle, taking her friend by the arm, "how did you enjoy Mr. Wells' address? I intended to have gone and heard him, but was prevented. How does he look?"

"Changed, very much changed Estelle, and has the appearance of one suffering from misfortune and trouble. He looks old too, and very sad. His address was beautiful, though there were some portions of it I could not comprehend.

"He is a talented man, Laura, there is no use of denying that, but only to think of his infidelity?"

"I trust he has by this time seen the error of his views. Every one this morning enjoyed his eloquence,

but could he only appropriate his powers for christian purposes, he would yield much influence. Fannie was not present this morning. I should have thought she would have gone."

"I think," said Estelle, "that his sadness may well be attributed to the desertion of Fannie. How could he so injure one that never wronged him? But notwithstanding his great crimes, he has succeeded well in life, which shows that success is not always accompanied by virtuous actions."

"You do not interpret, Estelle, rightly, the true meaning of success. Success does not consist in the mere acquirement of wealth, of honors, nor distinctions; for all these desirable objects must be inseparable from happiness, otherwise success can never be attained. Herbert is by no means a happy man, for his looks and manners show to the contrary; therefore success is not yet his."

"You are quite a philosopher and moralist, Laura, but had I for a moment reflected, I should have looked upon the subject precisely in the same light as that in which you have just expressed yourself."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE smiling sun gradually rose over the hills of Hamilton, and gilded the steeple of the village church. Damsels, with rosy cheeks and roguish eyes, old ladies and their lords, and young men, many of whom were collegians, had already assembled in the sacred temple. Herbert soon entered, and, for a moment, gossip was suspended. Many eyes gazed upon his noble features, features that were stamped with intellectuality. He seemed to be unconscious that he was an object of attention, but kept his gaze fixed incessantly at the doors. Suddenly a shade of mournfulness clouded his brow, and in a few seconds, Edgar and Laura stood beside the altar. She was dressed in white, and her beautiful head was crowned with roses. In her hand she held a large bouquet, which Herbert had anonymously sent her. And when he saw it, he felt both pleased and pained.

The venerable pastor came down from his pulpit, and after the usual ceremonies, the twain were made one. Instead of leaving the church as is customary, they went into a pew directly opposite to that in which Herbert was sitting. He thought it strange, but hardly had he time to look around him, ere Mr. Howland and Mrs. Isabel Ashland, stood directly before him. "Isabel Ashland," exclaimed he, in surprise, "is it possible?" He spoke audibly, and she turned her eyes in the direction from which the words proceeded. Their gaze met; it was long and steady. Herbert was unmaned, and his eyes were suffused with tears. She read his thoughts, and trembled as she tried to control her own feelings. Mechanically she went through her part of the ceremony, but Herbert was constantly before her.

Her eyes expressed a mind troubled with distressing thoughts and doubts. Love for Herbert had only slumbered; circumstances had revived and quickened the sense of affection, and she was miserable.

It seemed as if this man was destined to destroy the happiness of all that came in contact with him, and to be himself an object of misery.

The assemblage slowly dispersed, and it was not till nearly all had gone, that Herbert arose to leave the church. As he descended the steps, a graceful figure passed by him, and suddenly stopping before him, exclaimed with surprise "*Herbert Wells.*" It was the injured Fannie Thorne, and she was leading by the hand, a bright and intelligent little boy, whose dark and beautiful hair hung loosely over his shoulders. Wells started, and uttered her name. Perceiving the boy, he said, "is this —"

She anticipated what he would say, and replied, "yes, this is the fruit of your treachery, but may God forgive you, as I do."

The boy riveted his eyes upon his father, and leaving his mother for a moment, took the hand of Herbert. He lifted him in his arms, and kissing his son's forehead, wept tears of unfeigned repentance.

"Believe me," he said, "I truly regret the injury I have done you, and though I merited the severest punishment, you generously overlooked all, and my crime has passed with impunity. I am sorry, sincerely sorry that I deceived you. I know not what your circumstances are, but if they are indigent, henceforward look to me for support. Give him," he con-

tinued, putting his hand on his son's head, "all the advantages that money can obtain, but above all, bestow upon him, the advantages of a good education."

"I am neither in affluent, nor in indigent circumstances," she replied, "but I feel it right to accept your offer. If you could send me a regular allowance for the maintenance of the child, I would appropriate it exclusively for his benefit."

"Do you want nothing for yourself?" inquired Herbert.

"No, nothing. My husband provides for me. I have all that is necessary, and when I come to want, Mr. Metcalf stands ready to assist me. You know, I suppose, that my husband is his nephew?"

"Yes," was the reply. Herbert took from his wallet a roll of bills, and handing them to her, told her to appropriate the money as she pleased. Kissing once more the little boy, and bidding the mother good-by, he left them.

"What a strange thing is this world of ours," said he, to himself. "My whole life has been an embittered existence. All my energies have been put forth in acquiring pleasure, and I have reaped nothing but vexations, troubles, and misfortune.

Could I believe in the immortality of the soul, how easily all my troubles would vanish. But to believe this, is not a mere energy of the will, but rather the result of a credulous and weak mind. To believe in that of which we have no exact knowledge, to clothe our imaginations with futurity, to speculate upon a vapor, upon a chimerical, intangible, invisible nothingness, how foolish — and yet as foolish as it is, I wish I could believe in futurity — for I never knew a believer in the doctrine of the Deity that was not happier than myself.

What a useless life I have led, and how many injuries I have done to my best friends. My poor Clara, destiny has linked your fate with mine. Why do I not love you? you, who are so kind and gentle, so studious of my comforts, so earnest in your endeavors to please. How indifferent I have been to all your kind attentions. Why do I remember them so vividly now? Kind heart, no more will I wound you, but requite to the full, your kindness bestowed upon me."

Reader, happily for the world, that human nature is not all depraved; happily for humanity, that the heart is not so selfish as to vitiate the seeds of gratitude and affection. Herbert Wells, the base, bad-

hearted man, feeling gratitude? Was the process of regeneration taking place? or were the latent springs of manly emotion gushing forth from their hiding-place, developing the true impulses of the man?

Reader, judge for thyself; for so strange is the mechanism of the human heart; so deceitful are appearances, that we will not venture to pass the sentence, nor analyze the motives we cannot comprehend. Yet we cannot forget that

"There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would man observingly distil it out."

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford, and Mr. and Mrs. Howland, after the marriage, immediately repaired to Laura's residence. Cousin Edith had prepared everything for the occasion, with her usual taste and promptness. Mr. Metcalf, the pedantic little man, was full of facetiousness and good humor.

"Well, Edgar," inquired Mr. Metcalf, "what do you think of the married life?"

"I think it is very pleasant," was Edgar's reply, "particularly, when you have a good wife."

"A very good qualification my boy," observed Mr. Metcalf; "but when you have lived as long as I have, you will agree with La Bruyere, that there are few

wives so perfect as to hinder their husbands from repenting, at least once in a day, that they have a wife, or from coveting the happiness of him who, fortunately, has none. Perfect felicity with a woman, I have found to be a chimerical expectation."

He was roguishly looking at his wife whilst making the unjust observation, and there was an expression of fondness, as he met her reproving glance, which belied his statement so injurious to the fair sex.

It was remarked of Mrs. Howland and Laura, that they looked far from being happy. Those more familiar with Laura's history, attributed her apparent sadness in connection with Herbert, whilst others conjectured, that she was laboring under the influence of sadness, which the marriage ceremony invariably creates in every reflective mind. It was an epoch in her life, whose influence would follow her to the grave. Laura took advantage of a few minutes, to be alone, and she gave herself up fully to the influence of her thoughts.

She looked sadly at the noble form of her husband, and mentally exclaimed, "I do not love Herbert, but did Edgar love any one else, or feel for any one beside myself, that which I feel for Herbert, I should be mis-

erable indeed. I wish I had not seen Herbert to-day. How sad, how very sad, he looked at me. I wrong Edgar to have such feelings. Would to Heaven I could banish them. I feel guilty, and yet I cannot control my guilt."

She looked out of the window and started suddenly; Herbert Wells stood before her. He had been watching her motions intently, and when she met his gaze, he came up to her, and grasping her hand, said:

"If there is a God, may he forgive you as I do."

Laura screamed loudly, and fell upon the floor. The greatest consternation prevailed among the guests, and they all ran to ascertain the cause of the alarm; but Herbert was nowhere to be seen. They soon after broke up and departed for their homes, but not without a thousand conjectures upon the cause of the scene they had just witnessed. Mrs. Howland alone knew the cause of Laura's excitement. She was acquainted with her history, and she saw and heard Herbert. She, too, when she saw again the man she once so fondly loved, experienced those indescribable feelings, resulting from unwise and unavailing affection. Naturally stronger-minded, and

having greater control over herself than Laura, she concealed effectually the real cause of her sadness, and her fond and credulous husband attributed her paleness, to the solemnity of the hour and occasion, which brought them together that day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HERBERT WELLS returned to his home at Albany, unhappy and dejected. His wife met him at the door, and putting his arm affectionately around her, he kissed her forehead.

His manner towards her was unusually kind, and she felt both pleased and surprised. He spoke so mildly and respectfully to her, so unusual for him, that the tears started to her eyes. He noticed them, and kissing her again, left her, and went to his room. Clara, when she heard Herbert shut his door, retired, to offer up her fervent thanks to heaven for the change in her husband's conduct towards her. She resolved to be cautious in her demeanor towards him, and was determined to do all in her power to retain his attentions and affections.

She could not account for the change in Herbert's

manner. Countless thoughts sprang into life, and hopes long smothered, burned intensely and brightly again. The room in which she sat, had often been a witness to her tears, but now the sun peered through the windows, and seemed to rejoice that he had found an object of joy.

Clara had long since found out that Herbert had married her solely as a means of increasing his fortune and success in the world ; but his conduct towards her this day, gave her hopes that she might win his tenderness and affection. She was determined hereafter to renew her exertions to please him, and was willing to sacrifice, what some might call pleasure, by training her mind to conform to his will and tastes. No marriage can be a happy one if the marriage is an *ex-parte* one. Marriage is devoid of felicity, unless there is a reciprocity of affection of both parties; otherwise, "the *twain* can never become *one*." Though Herbert had never used bitterly severe language to his wife, his apparent indifference in regard to her, had produced anything but pleasant thoughts in her mind. In one short, bright hour, a kind word had dispelled all traces of sorrow, and stamped the seal of hope and gladness upon the young wife's brow.

Generally, a husband's indifference, if it does not produce inconstancy and hate, at least neutralizes the affection of his wife. But it was not so in the case of Clara. Her affection for Herbert, in spite of his neglect, had never reduced itself to apathy. Her heart was not a mere cistern, from which the waters of affection might be drawn, but an exuberant fountain, gushing ever with generous and noble impulses, but sparkling brighter under the sunshine of requited love.

If he will love me, thought she, how happy I should be again. He is capable of loving, I know. How sadly he looked at me. I wonder what has happened.

Hours glided rapidly by, and still she soliloquized. She could not conjecture the real cause of her husband's conduct towards her, and she attributed it to everything else but the real motive. The dinner-bell rang, and she bathed her eyes hastily, that she might conceal from Herbert that she had been weeping. Her husband met her again with a sad but affectionate look. His countenance was very pale, and his expression indicated that he was suffering mentally, but at the same time using exertions to conceal his feelings from those around him.

"Clara, would you like to take a ride this afternoon?" inquired he, without looking up.

The kind words penetrated the heart of his wife, and with moistened eyes, and stifled voice, she replied in the affirmative. Herbert was unusually attentive to her at the table, but he did not venture to speak again until the meal was over.

"Shall I take Orville with us?" inquired Clara.

"Yes; I think the air will do him good."

The servants wondered, and looked at each other, at the manifestations of change they had just witnessed. They could not comprehend fully what they saw, but their hearts experienced joy and gladness, when they saw their mistress leaning upon the arm of her noble-looking husband, as he led her to the carriage. Clara held Orville on her lap, and the little fellow seemed to experience as much pleasure from the new state of things as his mother. Herbert caught hold of his wife's hand when he first seated himself in the carriage, and held it till he returned home. It was indeed a holiday for Clara. She had not spoken to her husband once while riding, nor he to her; yet there was a sympathetic communication between them, stronger and more effective than words.

The current of better feelings and nobler sentiments were evidently taking possession of the mind of Herbert. The ride was over, and Herbert still kept the hand of Clara, as he led her up the door-steps, nor did he loosen his hold even when he entered his house. Orville, who had seldom received any attention from his father, climbed his parent's knee. Clara looked pleased, as she witnessed this first gush of confidence of the child, so long neglected by its father. Herbert read her looks, and he felt a sense of shame, as he thought how tardily he had bestowed those affections and attentions upon those who had a natural and legitimate right to them.

"Clara, go put your hat and shawl away, I have something to tell you," said Herbert.

She arose to go, but had hardly reached the door, when she returned, and placing her arms around the neck of her husband, the first time in her life, she said,

"Tell me now, no matter about the shawl."

He then told her the why and wherefore he had married her, of his ambition, and of his desire to increase his wealth, as a means of acquiring his desires, of his infidelity, decidedly atheistical, and of his complete failure of all his plans through life."

"In regard to you, my Clara," said he, "I cannot analyze my real feelings; but of this you may be certain, that at no time of our acquaintance have I experienced such strength of friendship, as I have this day entertained for you. I appreciate and admire your excellencies, and if you have failed to call forth, heretofore, my affection for you, there is no one to blame but myself. Circumstances, which must ever be a secret to you, have occurred, which will give us the means of greater intimacy, and as all affection springs and commences from intimacy, we will improve our intercourse by endeavoring to cultivate a spirit of mutual attachment. You must not think that it is not feasible, for if you love me, I assure you that my feelings for you are already of a nature that would cause you more pleasure than pain, did you fully understand them."

"Thanks, Herbert, my hearty thanks for your kind expressions to me. My sum of happiness would indeed be complete, if your feelings were as strong as my own. You know not the misery of unrequited affection.

Heaven only knows what I have suffered; but oh, Herbert, if time will only produce a correspond

ing change, a unison of feeling, of mutual attachment, it will, indeed, amply recompense me for the many hours of sorrow and depression I have experienced.

"There is another reason, Herbert, which causes me much pain, and I think you, too, can attribute much of your unhappiness and misfortune to its baneful influence. I allude to your infidelity. It destroys the very soul of pleasure and goodness, and kills the natural fruit of the soul, as intended by God. It destroys the natural inheritance of life, and its contagious and pernicious influence destroys its possessor, body and soul, and blights the happiness of those who come in contact with it. There is no evil on earth compared to it. It is worse than intemperance, worse than uncontrolled passion, infinitely greater than the worst of crimes, for it experiences no repentance of heart, and feels unconscious of the protecting power of Him whom it rejects. The infidel is ever miserable, without knowing the reason of his misery. It incorporates itself in his nature, it runs in every vein, and is felt at every throb of the pulse. The original image of God, once under its influence, becomes its victim. He becomes misanthropic, he denies the ex-

istence of God, and, consequently, hates God's image. If these evils are not with the infidel at first, they gradually terminate equally disastrous. But Herbert, dear Herbert, you are not an infidel. Your mind is shaded with the tinge of scepticism, only a little. 'Tis not infidelity that makes you so miserable, is it, Herbert?"

She buried her head in his bosom, and sobbed like a child.

"Generous heart," cried he, "your nature is stronger than I thought it;" and his tears copiously fell upon the neck of his wife. Some minutes elapsed, ere either spoke, when Herbert broke the silence.

"There are some things so strongly impregnated in our nature, that, let our desires be what they may, are still unsurmountable. My infidelity was not sought for, but is the result of opinion. Opinions flash upon the mind, independent of the will, and will not be driven away. They go as they came, leaving room for each succeeding thought, which, in its turn, influences us, so long as enthroned in the mind. Am I, then, so much to blame, Clara?"

"Seek, and ye shall find," was her reply, and she fondly ran her fingers through his curly hair.

"And have I not? Have I not studied the scrip-

tures for the last twelve years, dilligently, and with a desire to think as you think, to feel in regard to the future as you feel?"

"Still seek, still seek, and you may yet see as I see. Still seek, and you may find the jewel of Christian belief. But whilst you are seeking, try to banish those thoughts which claim no affinity to religion.

All will yet appear as bright as noon-day; and when the heavenly vision once has a foothold, the clouds of infidelity will vanish forever. Still seek."

"If opinions were tangible, we could select and grasp those, which produce the most consolation. I might 'seek' for years, and years, and yet not entertain the same thoughts, that you are urging me to have. I tell you, Clara, opinions are beyond the control of the will. I will still continue on in my studies, with the hope that my opinions may change, for I assure you, they are anything but pleasant companions."

"Will you grant me one request, Herbert?"

"What is it?"

"I wish you would attend church with me, next Sunday. You know you have not been to church since the first month of our marriage."

He looked a little perturbed, when Clara made the request, and made no immediate answer.

"Perhaps I am requesting too much," resumed the fond wife, "but I feel as though it would result in your good."

"I will accompany you to church, next Sunday," replied he, after a moment's reflection, "if it will oblige you, but—"

"But what, Herbert?" interrupted Clara.

"I shall feel so strangely."

"It may be the means of your soul's salvation," was her reply.

'Twas Sunday morning. Herbert proposed to his wife to start early for the church, as he wished to be there ere all had gathered. His pew was situated directly in front of the pulpit, where he could hear every word. The regular pastor of the church, to Clara's regret, was not present, but, to Herbert's surprise, he saw a familiar face ascend the pulpit, which called up recollections which had temporarily escaped him. It was the clergyman whom he once met in the cars, on his way to Hamilton. He was a man of eminent ability, and extensive practical knowledge. His sermons were logically profound and argumentative.

At the same time, he addressed the heart, as well as mind. His Christianity was exemplified by the uniform tenor of a virtuous life, and by a mild and affable temper. He saw and recollected Herbert, and a look of pleasure revealed itself upon his intellectual features.

The sermon was peculiarly appropriate for an infidel, and Clara felt strong hopes that conviction might take place in the mind of Herbert. He listened intently, but there was no expression on his countenance that indicated change of opinion.

As Herbert and his wife returned home, Clara inquired, "how he liked the sermon?"

"A very good literary production, Clara."

"What effect did it have upon your mind?"

"My opinions are unchanged. Besides, I think they are immutably fixed. I heard no new idea to-day, none whatever. Everything in regard to religion is speculative and visionary."

"It may appear so to you now, but 'still seek,' and seek earnestly and ardently. It is your duty to do this. I feel as though something serious was about to take place, concerning yourself. I know it is only a superstitious feeling, yet the presentiment may be re-

alized. Would to Heaven you were prepared to meet all the emergencies of life, as a Christian."

Herbert, upon arriving home, immediately proceeded to his room, and seating himself on the lounge, gave himself up to the reflections which the day had inspired.

Religion is a mystery, thought he. It springs more from superstition, fear and weakness, than from any other cause. To me it has been an *ignus fatuus*, which I have chased and sought in vain. I have pursued it more from an intellectual impulse, than from affection. I have tried to grasp it, in order to find out its material. But it is of so ethereal a substance that it vanishes at the touch. Cannot an unbeliever live like a Christian? The beautiful life of Shelly, the chaste child of nature, confirms it. And yet he was persecuted by a noble band of Christians, robbed of his children, whom he loved as himself, decried, condemned, despised, and left to die, friendless and alone, in a foreign land.

Are these the promptings of Christianity, or only the individual imperfections of a few, who represent the "doctrine divine." Men, like nations, are immortal only in history. We cannot analyze ourselves

now, yet the day may not be far distant, as science produces science, when the world will be enlightened to the full, with the knowledge of the nature and destiny of pigmy man.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MONTHS have passed since the occurrences of our last chapter. Herbert Wells gradually lost his desire for worldly distinctions. His ambition was checked, and he mixed but very little in society. With great natural powers, he might have aspired to most any position, and easily attained it; but his love of fame had given way for other feelings.

His conduct towards his wife was sincerely exemplary, and his constancy amounted to devotedness and worship. His wife was untiring in her efforts to do all that was possible to gain his love, and she actually realized the fulfilment of her wishes. Herbert, the more he studied Clara's nature, found more congeniality and goodness in her than he at first cared for, or dreamed of.

Their evenings were spent in social converse, and

Herbert, in all things, save that of religion, moulded and instructed her understanding. He learned, at last, to love, and the object of his affection was worthy the love of the noblest heart. He was still an infidel, yet his life was morally, in one sense of the word, uniform and correct. His opinions were expressed to his wife, only, when they referred to religion, and none knew him but as the best of men.

He longed to reveal to his wife his illicit conduct towards Fannie Thorne, but hesitated to do so, fearing the effect it might produce on her mind. Yet he felt and feared, that if she learned the facts from any other source, the result might be a great deal worse. Most any other subject he would have confided to her, but this one, so full of evil and injustice, prompted concealment. Yet he could not help fearing that Clara might one day acquire a knowledge of the existence of his illegitimate child, and of his treatment of its mother. He feared that such knowledge might lessen her esteem and affection for him. Once he would not have cared a farthing, but now all the pleasure he possessed was what he derived from the affection and kindness of his wife. Time and time again, he was determined to reveal all to her, but the mag-

nitude of the crime was so great, that he was prevented from doing so.

If I tell her all, with my regrets, she may forgive me, thought he; but if I attempt to conceal, and she finds out the truth, what will be the result, I know not.

To conceal what ought to be revealed, is a sin.

"'Tis in man's choice, not to sin at all,
But, sinning once, to stop, exceeds his power."

There are some individuals who can place their affections upon any one, by striving to do so. Herbert was of such a nature. His affection for his wife, was, at first, an exertion, rather than a quick and impulsive feeling. But the object was worthy of the exertion, and was really conducive of much happiness. He feared the interposition of anything that might lessen the felicity of mutual good feeling. It was not always so with him, it was not characteristic of his nature, but time, and circumstances, had wrought the change. Though not what he should have been, yet he was vastly improved. He was more susceptible of kinder and nobler impulses, he was less selfish, and more generous, less passionate, and more thoughtful, of the

feelings of others. The change in his nature was perceptible to all, but more particularly to his wife. She knew not to what to attribute it. She always admired his talents and learning, but of late she had derived more pleasure from his kindness and attentions. He once was indifferent and neglectful of her; now, he never entered the house, but that he first sought her, nor did he ever leave the house, without saying, "I'm going, Clara, take good care of yourself." I tell you, reader, these little things have much importance, in the aggregate, and it is only those who have suffered from neglect, who fully appreciate and enjoy them.

Herbert sent regularly a remittance to Hamilton for the support of his child, and always inquired with tender regard concerning its health. He neglected to do nothing that might prove beneficial for his son, yet the fact of that son's existence destroyed much happiness. It haunted him like a ghost; it was with him at all times, and would not "down at his bidding." His nights were uneasy, and unproductive of rest. Clara noticed it, and conjectured the cause to be, that which she hoped was the cause,—repentance,—and was daily expecting Herbert to reveal his feelings. It was re-

pentance, but, unfortunately, not of that kind superinduced by holy and religious influences. Yet it was a generous repentance of nature and goodness, independent of divine law.

Mr. Woodville, whose quick perception saw at a glance all that occurred about him, was not unmindful of the happy change in Herbert's conduct, particularly in regard to the treatment of his daughter, the first object of his affections and solicitude.

He had seen, with pain, the cruel indifference which Herbert had shown his daughter, whom he had sworn to love, but he expressed no sense of anguish, other than the sorrow marked upon his countenance, now furrowed with the lines of age. And now, when he saw those manifestations of attention, affection and regard, he loved Herbert as a son, again, and would have done anything for his pleasure and accommodation.

One morning, Clara went into her father's library, to get a book. Her father was seated in the arm-chair, and looking intently upon the floor. He was so completely rapt in profound meditation, that he noticed not the entrance of his daughter. She looked for a moment upon his venerable countenance, and then going up to him, said,

"Well, father, what are you thinking of?"

He looked up, and, taking her upon his lap, said,

"Of you and Herbert."

A few moments of silence ensued, when he added,

"Think not, because age has silvered my hair, furrowed my cheeks, dried my blood, and checked my usefulness, that I cease to notice passing events, and that my heart has lost its affection for my child. I will not speak of the few past years, so full of sorrow to me, but I cannot refrain from expressing my congratulations in regard to the new state of things between you and Herbert. But tell me, Clara, what is it that makes this change? and what is it that makes him so sad? It worries me."

"Dear father," said the affectionate daughter, "do not be worried. I doubt not your affection for me. I know that age has neither impaired your intellect, nor dried up the natural fountains of love. You misjudge me, if you think I believe you incapable of sympathizing with me. On the contrary, I have noticed your paternal solicitude for my welfare and happiness, and I assure you, father, it is all appreciated."

Mr. Woodville watched her, attentively, for a few moments, and said,

"What of Herbert, Clara?"

"I know not, father, the cause of his change towards me, nor of his sadness and despondency. Yet it is happiness to know of his affection, even though ignorant of the reason which produced it. He is a mystery to me. I cannot fathom him."

"He is a great mystery to me, too," observed her father, with a sigh. "I earnestly hope and pray that his affection for you may be permanent. Do you know what is the state of his pecuniary affairs?"

"I do not. I only know that all his income is derived from the proceeds of his practice, which cannot be much more than his expenses."

"Has he no real estate, has he no property, bringing him in anything?"

"I don't think he has."

"Perhaps, then, Clara, it may be the cause of his gloominess. His affairs may worry him, and he feels too proud to ask assistance of any one. Ascertain, my daughter, if this is the case, and if I can be of any benefit to him, command my abilities, to relieve his embarrassments."

"Thanks, father, for your kindness. I will find out, if possible, the nature of his affairs, and if he needs assistance, I will certainly call upon you. But

you know Herbert is singular about confiding his secrets to any one. He don't tell me anything concerning his business."

"You must ask him, Clara. It is your duty, as well as your right. Indifference of a husband's affairs, often makes unhappy marriages. Inquire of him. I am confident he will inform you of his difficulties, and be pleased at the interest you manifest."

When Herbert returned home to dinner, Mr. Woodville entered into conversation with him, in regard to the advantages of buying certain real estate, in the south part of the city.

"I was thinking of that myself, the other day," replied Herbert; "that any one who had a few thousand dollars to invest, could not more advantageously appropriate it, than in the purchase of that estate."

"Why don't you buy it?" said Clara.

Herbert looked earnestly at his wife, and her father. Could they be ignorant of his affairs, to such an extent? thought he.

"Why don't I buy it?" repeated he.

"Yes," replied Clara, "why don't you buy it, if you think it is such an excellent chance?"

"I do not buy it," said he, "for the same reason

that Jack didn't eat his supper. A good reason, is it not, Clara?"

"That is a very good reason," said Mr. Woodville. "If you wish the means, however, for the speculation, or any other speculation, you are at liberty to call on me, at any time, for assistance. What I have, will ultimately be yours, and the time may not be far distant. I should like to see you settled, and easy in your circumstances, for irregularity and uncertainty, in one's affairs, are anything but pleasant."

"I thank you, sir, for your proffered kindness, but I do not trouble myself with much care concerning my pecuniary affairs. Though I do not possess enough to invest, I assure you I have enough to live upon, and am free from debt. Allow me to take advantage of a good opportunity to thank you for the liberal assistance you have rendered me, from time to time; were it not for your bounty, I should have been overwhelmed in debt, years ago."

"Do not speak of it. But as regards this property, I think you had better purchase it. I think it is a rare chance. My means are yours. I don't want you to neglect the opportunity."

Before he had a chance to reply, Mrs. Sheverly entered the room.

"My dear Clara, how charmingly you look. Mr. Wells, how do you do to-day? Ah, brother, how do you feel, to-day?"

These questions were all asked at one breath.

"Have you been to the picture-gallery, lately? oh, you ought to go and see it. A great many additions have been made since you were last there."

Napoleon will be mentioned soon, thought Herbert. "What additions have been made, Mrs. Sheverly?" inquired he.

"Oh, the most splendid paintings of Bonaparte. One representing the coronation of Josephine, and the other, the battle of Elba."

"The 'Battle of Elba,' did you say?" inquired Mr. Woodville.

"Yes, the Battle of Elba," repeated Mrs. Sheverly, enthusiastically.

"Is the battle you speak of, a representation of a domestic quarrel?" inquired Herbert.

"Domestic quarrel! Bonaparte, the great Bonaparte, participate in a domestic quarrel? No sir, of course not. What are you thinking of?"

"Aunt, I guess you are mistaken in the name of the painting. Was it not the battle of Waterloo?"

"Waterloo? No, my dear, it was the Battle of Elba."

"In all of my historical readings, I never read that there was a battle at Elba," said Mr. Woodville. "I never heard of it, either."

"Battle of Elba," joined in Herbert, I never heard of it before. I should like to know in what year it transpired."

"You must be mistaken, aunt. I see through it all. It was 'The Return of Napoleon from Elba.' I have seen the engraving of it, frequently, lately."

"That must have been it," said Mr. Woodville.

"Oh, yes, depend upon it, Mrs. Sheverly, that must have been the name of it," added Herbert. "And a most beautiful thing it is, too. I was struck with admiration, when I first saw that picture."

There are times when the best of individuals indulge in the spirit of tantalism, and Mr. Woodville, Herbert and Clara, on this occasion, applied it well upon Mrs. Sheverly.

Mrs. Sheverly was provoked that she had exposed her ignorance concerning the great conqueror, a favorite topic of her conversation, used upon all occasions. Her enthusiasm was much abated, but think-

ing it prudent to change the subject, she began censuring her relatives.

Mrs. Sheverly's cousin was lately married to one David Lorington, a young man of fine talents, and excellent principles, and who possessed an ample fortune.

His profession was that of tax appraiser. Having married her cousin, and he being of the same age as Mrs. S.'s son Thomas, who, by the way, was once refused by this very same cousin, Mr. Lorington became an object of her most unscrupulous censure. He was so infinitely superior to her son, and in such easy, we might say affluent circumstances, that all the feelings of jealousy and ill-will were aroused in Mrs. Sheverly's bosom.

"Did you know, brother," said she, after a few moments of silence ensued, "that David Lorington was appointed Tax Appraiser? I wonder what he knows about taxes, or valuation of real estate. He never was half-witted."

"Lorington only half-witted?" said Herbert. "Lorington ignorant of the valuation of real estate? Why you are laboring under the greatest mistake. He is one of the shrewdest speculators in Albany."

"His profits, last year, were over sixty thousand

dollars. You're laboring under a great mistake, concerning Lorington, Mrs. Sheverly."

"If he is so successful in his speculations, why did he accept the office of Tax Appraiser?"

"Why it is the best thing he can do. It gives him facilities to find out the value of property, and the means of individuals, which he could not obtain any other way. He will not hold the office longer than this year, but will soon enter again upon his regular business."

Mrs. Sheverly was rather angry with Herbert. She hated him almost as bad as she did Lorington. She did not continue the conversation, but wisely held her tongue.

It was a *monomania*, with this woman, to slander everybody that she was acquainted with who was held in esteem, or who possessed means more ample than her own. Consequently, many worthy and respectable individuals came under her slanderous hammer. But she seemed to forget that she could not elevate herself, by ruthlessly assailing the characters of those who were every way worthy of regard and respectful consideration. Feeling that nothing she might say would destroy the character of Lorington, and detect-

ing the opinions which Mr. Woodville, Herbert and Clara, entertained for her, she experienced much chagrin and disappointment at the result of her visit, and as usual, when she felt her slander ineffectual, she excused herself, for a sudden departure.

Mr. Woodville, after she had gone, remarked, "It is lamentable, that one as old as she is, should so debase herself, by foolish tattle, and vindictive slander. She is feared, wherever she visits, and her name is so notorious in the circles she moves in, that she is shunned by all who have any regard for their character and reputation. None of the rest of the family are like her. Who she takes it from, I cannot imagine."

"Charity, father, charity," said Clara.

"I spoke severely, my daughter, but I spoke truthfully. She is a dangerous woman. Even now she may be talking with some of our neighbors, and telling stories about us, many removes from the truth. Nothing but some great affliction, or deprivation, will cure her of this dreadful malady."

"And even that would be ineffectual, I fear," said Herbert. "She has circulated the most foolish stories, concerning me, that you ever heard of. I should have called her to account, long ere this, had she not been a relative of yours."

"I will speak to her about it, the next time I see her," said Mr. Woodville. "Perhaps a little talking and advising may induce her to abridge her stories, if she cannot entirely dispense with them."

CHAPTER XXV.

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford, and Mr. and Mrs. Howland, commenced an intimacy which was long and lasting. There is nothing like pleasant neighbors. They are agreeable companions in prosperity, and angels in adversity. Evening after evening, the Cliffords and Howlands would pass hours in each other's society, in pleasant and instructive converse, or else amuse themselves with hearing one of the party read aloud some new work, or participating in some game.

One pleasant evening, as they were seating themselves around the table, just as Mrs. Howland was about to commence reading, a knock was heard at the door. Mr. Howland opened the door, and in came Mr. and Mrs. Metcalf.

"I have got the greatest piece of news on airt to tell you, Laura," said Edith, "that you ever did hear of. It is great news."

"Let me tell the news," interrupted Mr. Metcalf. I can tell it a great deal better than you can."

"Don't trouble yourself, Joseph, you always exaggerate, with your hisaluton words, so that no one can understand you."

Mrs. Howland, tired of waiting, said, "Do pray one of you tell the story. Don't you see how anxious Laura is getting?"

"That is nothing," returned Cousin Edith, "her appetite will be keener by waiting. But the news I have to tell you, is that the Hon. Herbert Wells has joined the church."

Mrs. Howland turned pale as marble; the name of Herbert again called forth feelings which had been partly dissipated. But with Laura, the mention of his name in connection with the church, set her soul on fire. Herbert Wells, the infidel,—the man she loved with uncontrolled ardor,—converted at last. "Why was I so hasty?" thought she. "If I had only been more deliberate, and shown more charity towards him, who I feel really loves me, all would have resulted happily. His infidelity only separated us, but he is an infidel no longer. Oh, Edgar! Oh, Herbert! how I have wronged you both."

"How do you know that he has joined the church?" inquired Edgar.

"I was told so last Sunday, at the very church he attends, by one of the members," said Mr. Metcalf. "Besides, you know he never attended church till lately. I saw him and his wife together at the Rev. Mr. Fisk's church. You know he used to neglect her shamefully, and she was at one time determined to petition for a divorce, but they say in Albany, that no lover was ever more attentive and kind, than Wells is to his wife at the present time. And I am really glad to hear of it, for she is as noble hearted a woman, as ever breathed a breath of life."

Mrs. Howland and Laura avoided each other's gaze, but Edgar, who knew Herbert's history, in connection with them, intuitively read their thoughts. Laura did not dare to meet his gaze. She felt guilty, but she could not control her affections. For a few moments everything was silent, disagreeably quiet; all at once, the reason of which flashed upon the mind of Cousin Edith. She saw her error, and nudged her husband. "Don't say anything more about Wells, to-night, Joseph," she whispered, "you have raised the Old Harry, already."

"You mean *we* have,—not I alone. Edgar looks a little blue, a little jealous; I did not think that he possessed anything of the kind in his composition."

Mr. Howland noticed that something wrong had taken place, by the demure faces he saw around him. He could not interpret the cause of it. No one had the courage to break the silence for a long time. An hour nearly elapsed ere a word was spoken. In the meantime, Mr. Howland read, and his wife held her book upside down. Mr. Metcalf and his wife looked silently at each other, afraid almost to breathe. Edgar looked at the ceiling, and Laura bent her gaze upon the floor. It was very disagreeable. The clock struck ten; Mr. Metcalf and Cousin Edith arose to go, and Mr. Howland proposed to accompany them home as far as they went. When they got some distance from the house, Edith severely reprimanded her husband for alluding to Herbert Wells. "You might have known, Joseph, that you was treading on tender ground, when you spoke of Wells. What is your learning good for, if you can't learn to be prudent? I should have thought you would have known better; you are growing more careless, about such things, every day. Only just to think, how Edgar feels, and

how Laura feels. 'Tis strange, 'tis plaguy strange you didn't know better."

"Now blame me; I like that; I like that very much. You know you went there to tell Laura about Herbert Wells, and you know you went there for no other purpose. The first words you said were concerning Wells, and when I requested you to let me tell the story, you remarked that I was always very extravagant in my language, and you preferred to tell the story yourself. Now I want to know who made the difficulty? Now I want to know who is to blame? Now I want to know if I am not very much abused? Now I want to know if you, Mrs. Joseph Metcalf, of Hamilton, are not more imprudent than the gentleman you so unmercifully accuse?"

"Pshaw, Joseph, didn't you propose it before I thought of such a thing, that it would be just the news to tell Laura, who once really loved Wells."

"No, I did not propose any such thing, and you know I did not propose any such a thing."

"Joseph, you did!"

"Mrs. Metcalf, I did not."

"Joseph, you did, but you forget it."

"Mrs. Metcalf, my memory never was questioned

before. I say I did not propose anything of the kind. It is not my nature to throw bomb-shells amongst the domestic circle. I am a peace-maker, a non-resistant peace-maker, and do you think that I would be so indiscreet as to throw powder upon the warm hearth of domestic felicity? Mrs. Metcalf, you are nothing but a woman, you will never be anything but a woman. Did you know that, Mrs. Metcalf?

"You're a fool, Joseph!"

"You are my wife, Mrs. Metcalf."

"'Tis true, but what can't be cured must be endured."

"You show a great deal of fortitude, Mrs. Metcalf."

"What have I done that you should treat me so?" said Edith. "There is no use of our quarrelling."

"Well, well, Edith, let us talk of something else, since we can't agree upon the present subject." On the rest of the way homewards, they conversed with better feelings, and choicer words.

When Edgar and Laura were again alone, they did not as usual exchange expressions of fondness; on the contrary, though there was no ill will existing between them, they felt decidedly adverse to communicating with each other. Edgar, for the first time in

his life, suffered the pangs of jealousy, but was too honorable to give vent to his feelings and suspicions. He bore the burden of his grief in silence. He made no complaint. He showed no anger. Laura experienced all the pains of torture. She still loved Herbert, and she knew that her fond and noble husband read her feelings, feelings over which she had no control. Laura, though she never loved Edgar with the same intensity of feeling that she felt for Herbert, still felt, that her feelings of attachment were strong enough to justify marriage. Her only objection to Herbert, at any time, was his infidelity. Her father's and her own preference for Edgar, lay solely in his strict moral principles, his goodness, and because he had selected her, in preference to others, really more congenial to him than herself. But there was an unconquerable love for Herbert, which commenced in childhood, and could never die out. And her only objection to him had been removed. His past follies and crimes were forgiven and forgotten; but Herbert was married to another. She, too, was married, and married to as noble a heart as ever throbbed, but Edgar was not Herbert; the thought was distracting.

Months passed by, and found Edgar greatly chang-

ed ; though never cold or severe to his wife, he was no longer ardent and sociable. He was at home but very little, and when he was at home, he generally shut himself up alone in his study. He never referred to the cause of this change, but Laura needed no information. She knew the cause too well. "My life has been one of sorrow," said she to herself, as Edgar passed her one evening without speaking, to enter his room. "Edgar loves me no longer, and Herbert is lost to me forever. I cannot blame Edgar; I pity him as much as I myself need pity."

The circulation of Herbert's conversion had no foundation whatever for truth. He attended church regularly, with his wife, it was true, but he was still an unbeliever. Laura, as well as a great many others, gave credence to the report, which was dwelt upon much more, on account of Herbert's rigid infidelity, than as an unusual occurrence. Laura's home had now ceased to produce the happiness of its promise. No home can be happy unless it is warmed by unqualified affection, and constant cheerfulness. It was in one of her moments of despondency, when Mrs. Wellmont, Laura's long tried friend Estelle, but now her sister-in-law, entered the room where Laura

was sitting, and, placing her arm affectionately around her waist, said, "I have much to tell you, I am very unhappy."

"You unhappy, Estelle? What makes you unhappy?"

"Your own unhappiness, Laura, makes me miserable. Pray, tell me the cause of it."

Laura thought a few minutes ere she replied. "No one, Estelle, has more confidence in your judgment than myself, but my troubles are of such a nature, that you would fail to find a remedy."

"Dear Laura, is there any difficulty existing between you and Edgar?"

"Yes, Estelle, an insurmountable difficulty, but I am alone to blame."

"Do, pray do, tell the cause to me."

"Think over some of the incidents of my past life, Estelle, and perhaps you will think of some occurrences which render me so miserable now."

"Is Herbert Wells the cause, Laura?"

"He is, Estelle."

"And is Edgar jealous of your youthful intimacy? Shame upon him! I thought he was of better nature."

"Speak not against Edgar, but pity his misery."

"You never loved Herbert, where is the cause for jealousy?"

Estelle, when I was married I knew not my own heart. I thought I loved Edgar; I do, but I love another more, one who has so entwined himself around my heart, that he seems to be a part of myself."

"And is Herbert Wells, the object of this unwise, unhappy love? I thought you rejected him?"

"No no, Estelle, I rejected the infidel. My heart always loved the man, but in the conflict of principle, honor, affection, judgment and duty, I knew not my own feelings. But Herbert is an infidel no longer. The inspiration of heavenly light has dawned upon his intellect at last; but oh, Estelle, I had spent years of childhood in desire and prayer, that this might be realized; but its fulfilment has come when we are separated on earth forever, yet still loving."

"Laura, I know not what to say. Did I not know your strict adherence to principle and honor, I should blame, and attempt to advise you. Yet you have great responsibilities before you — rigid duties, and justice requires their strict fulfilment. Think of Edgar, what must be his feelings? By this blow

he has already lost the natural elasticity of his mind, which, if you be not very careful, will result in the decrease of his attachment for you. Who can he now look to for consolation in affliction? Think of his nights passed in sleepless agonies, of his growing distaste for society, and his increasing desire for seclusion. Solitude is an enemy to comfort and joy, when sought as a companion under such circumstances. If you do not love him, it is no reason you should neglect him. Watch every opportunity to please him; let your attentions be multiplied and exhaustless; let him see that your efforts to make him happy and comfortable, are increasing. He will appreciate them, and if your own feelings for him are not what they should be, you will, at least, find them stronger than they now are. Your success may be slow and gradual, but the gentle hand of kindness, will conduct him along the path of misfortunes, with less sorrows attending him."

"He shuns me, Estelle, and seldom speaks."

"That is because the moment he found out the nature of your feelings, your conduct was changed towards him. Had you at the time, confessed to him your regrets, your ignorance of your own mind, and

at the same time an appreciation of his manly qualities, and a determination to use all your power to make him happy, he would not have shunned you; on the contrary, he would have pitied your own misfortunes, as much as he himself now needs sympathy."

"You advise me to go to him and tell him all; but, dear Estelle, what shall I do if my confession augments his grief?"

"Depend upon it, the matter can be made no worse than it is; but by confession — by the request of his forgiveness, by constancy of attention, and by the solicitation of his society, the result may be gratifying to both of you, and mutual happiness may again be yours."

"Thanks, Estelle, I will follow your advice; but I fear your opinion of me is lessened, you think I am very much to blame."

"Laura, I have not deliberated upon your conduct long enough to pronounce proper judgment. I have never been placed in like circumstances, but I must confess that I am surprised that you, who possess such excellent judgment, should have fallen into such a situation. It looks like fickleness; but let us drop the subject. Perhaps all will come right, and

mpathies of love, and friendship dear,
With all the social offspring of the heart'

may yet be thine again."

"Estelle, you are a faithful friend, and have ever been; your goodness melts me to tears. May heaven bless you for your kindness, and may you never suffer what I have. Harry, I hope, knows nothing of this."

"He has noticed your despondency, Laura, and often speaks of it; it worries him, but he is ignorant of the cause of your sorrows. It is not best to tell him; I know it would grieve him; besides, you would not feel so well, if he knew of such a trouble as this. I will be in again to-morrow and see you," said Estelle, rising to go, "and hope to hear good news from you."

A kind and pleasant word from a friend, may light anew the torch of hope, and bid despair depart. Its magical influence drives away the shade of sorrow, and dispels the heavy sigh. It makes the present supportable, by producing anticipations of a happier future. Kindness is indeed the "golden chain by which friends are bound together," and makes life an existence of rational enjoyment. It is

"The cordial drop Heaven in our cup has thrown,
To make the bitter load of life go down."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A PERIOD of twenty years has expired since the occurrences of the preceeding chapter.

With your kind permission, reader, we will again introduce you to the family circle of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford. Mr. Clifford is no longer young; his hair is slightly sprinkled with gray, and time has wrinkled his forehead unsparingly. Mrs. Clifford, once the mild, beautiful, merry and loving Laura, is seated by her husband's side. Her early acquaintances would not recognize her, so greatly has she changed. Seated directly behind her, at the table, and reading aloud, is their daughter, Laura Clifford, yet upon her beautiful countenance can be traced no resemblance to her mother. She is more animated than her mother ever was, more brilliant, and her temper more vivacious; her nature more impulsive and less under the control

of her judgment than of the gentle Laura we first introduced, yet she is beautiful to look upon, at least so thinks one seated by her side. Does the reader inquire who it is? Clarence Metcalf is his name, the son of the once injured Fannie Thorne. Those who knew Herbert Wells in his youth, would have been much struck with the resemblance the son bore to his father. The same high, round and dome-like brow, the large, full dark eye, and the intelligent features were there; even the expression and manner were not wanting. His mind was disciplined by education, and he inherited the natural capacities of his father; but he did not pervert the powers which nature had so prodigally bestowed upon him. When Laura had finished her reading, Mrs. Clifford said, smilingly:

"There, Clarence, 'tis ten o'clock, and you must go home."

"You speak plainly, I must confess, Mrs. Clifford," said Clarence, laughingly.

"There should be as little ceremony as possible, among friends," remarked Mr. Clifford.

"But that is no reason, father, that friends should be told to go home before the evening has half expired," joined in Laura.

"Youth is very indiscreet—the time passes so quickly and pleasantly that they have no exact idea of time."

Laura blushed deeply at this remark from her father, and said:

"You have not so good an opinion of our judgment as I thought you had. You judge all youth by the remembrance of your own. You must have had a great many follies."

"Go home, Clarence," said Mrs. Clifford, good-humoredly. "Laura is a spoiled child, she is getting to be very impudent. Don't you think so?"

"I will tell you when I call again, I have not fully made up my mind. Good night Laura—good night all."

"Good night, Herbert," said Mrs. Clifford, as she looked at his noble countenance. The words had hardly passed her lips when she corrected herself, and said, "I mean Clarence."

Mr. Clifford looked intently at his wife for a few moments, but said nothing. Clarence looked earnestly at them both.

"'Tis strange," said he. "I met Mrs. Howland this morning, and the moment she saw me she exclaimed, in a tone of surprise, '*Herbert Wells*.' Others have

done the same. What is the reason you, too, call me Herbert?"

No one ventured to answer. Mrs. Clifford turned deadly pale. She looked at her husband, in hopes that he would speak; but his thoughts were more for himself, Herbert and his wife, than for Clarence. Tears started in the eyes of Laura. Clarence perceived them.

"I do not understand all this," said he, "but if there is anything wrong concerning me, I'll find it out, though it cost me my life. I suspect, and have long suspected that—"

He stopped, and hesitated whether to go on or not.

"Why do you not speak? Mr. Clifford, will you not tell me what all this means?"

"I am not at liberty to do so; I never tell my domestic affairs.

"Your affairs!" Are then these tears, these sober looks, matters which only concern yourself? Does the name of Herbert produce all this? I tell you that the name of Herbert has almost crushed my spirit. My mind is constantly filled with suspicions; that name concerns me most. *My honor* is concerned. Tell me, Mrs. Clifford, what all this means."

"I cannot, Clarence."

"Cannot? Is the cause, then, so dreadful, that the victim must not be told what crushed him? This is no new passion for me to be in. I have suffered, from boyhood, from this same cause, and my spirits are nearly crushed."

He sat again in the chair, and laying his head upon the table, burst into tears, with all the paroxysm of grief. Laura spoke not, but putting her arms affectionately around him, kissed his cheek. Mrs. Clifford wept like a child. For years, she had not mentioned Herbert's name. She had regained her husband's affection by her unceasing attentions and kindness to him, but by one moment of thoughtlessness, by the mention of one word, she felt as though she had undone all that she had been trying to do for years. The mention of Herbert's name produced sad feelings in the mind of Mr. Clifford, though he had not heard the name pronounced for twenty years. It was the manner in which the name was pronounced, that caused those feelings. He knew of the striking resemblance Clarence bore to his father, and when his wife mentioned that father's name, he felt as though Herbert Wells, the object of her first affection, was still in her thoughts

with fond and lasting regard. After a few moments of deep silence, Clarence arose.

"I will solve all this mystery, yet," said he. "I will not give up the search, whilst there is room for hope. I bid you all good night, again."

When he had gone, Laura immediately retired to her room, but not to sleep.

Mr. Clifford and his wife remained in the room. "I have something I wish to say to you," said he to his wife. I wish to allude to a subject of which I have never spoken. I do not wish to reprimand, nor advise. I merely wish to dwell upon a portion of our history, and by so doing, we can indulge a little with mutual reflection, upon the strangeness of human existence. Our life has been one of error—both of us are to blame—both of us are unhappy. Had you chosen, for your companion, the man who first loved you, and the man you loved first, (I might say, the man you love now,) your happiness would have been greater, and my life less miserable."

His wife trembled at these words.

"Herbert Wells loved you, and his love was requited. You rejected the infidel, but still you loved him. That was wrong. But your error did not end here.

You received my attentions in such a manner that I thought my affection was reciprocated, and Herbert forgotten. You did wrong, for Herbert you still loved, and yet you encouraged me. At the church, when we plighted our vows, you loved me not, even then, and yet you unhesitatingly swore to love me. But this is not all. You loved Herbert Wells, when you was my wife, and he another's husband. For years I have said nothing of this. In my heart, I forgave you, for, otherwise, you have been a kind, constant, and faithful wife. You have left nothing undone, which ought to have been done, but Heaven only knows what I have suffered, these long years. All because you knew not your own mind. I ask of you, never to mention Herbert Wells' name again in my presence. The past shall all be forgiven, on these conditions."

Mrs. Clifford, too weak to speak, nodded her head, in token of assent. The blow was a severe one, but she thought it just. The tears fell like rain down her cheeks. Her husband noticed them, and said, kindly, "Laura, I would not sit up any longer, you are too fatigued. I shall stay up a little longer myself, as I am obliged to do some writing."

Glad of an opportunity to be alone, she retired to her room, to indulge in those reflections which her husband had conjured up.

When Clarence returned home, he was determined to have the mystery solved. He seated himself in the arm-chair, and pondered upon what to do. As he glanced around, he espied upon the table, a letter. It was signed by Herbert Wells.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed he. "It is addressed to no one, that I can see. I'll read it."

"My life is fast waning. My physicians have given up all hopes of my recovery. I wish to see you ere I die. I want to speak with you concerning Clarence. I want to tell you how he and I must meet.

I have made provision for him in my will. I live at No. 30 S——e St. Do not fail to come this week. It is a dying request.

Yours, &c.,

HERBERT WELLS."

"This confirms my suspicions," said Clarence, after reading the letter. "I now know the reason why Mr. Clifford and his wife refused to answer my inquiries. I wonder what he meant by saying it concerned his domestic affairs. To-morrow I will solve

this mystery. I will go to Albany, I will call upon this man, I will find out everything. This letter is intended for my mother. I will not let her know that I have read it. I will go and see this man, before they see each other. Nothing shall be concealed. To think that I should be brought up in ignorance of my birth, so long; to think that I am a b— I cannot speak the word, without a sense of shame. Laura, too, must know of all this. Every one that knows me, must know of my history. My mother—oh God! I dare not judge her. She is my mother, still.

"The resemblance to this man—I cannot call him father—must be great, indeed, since strangers exclaim, in surprise, 'Herbert Wells.' And then they look, and stare at me, as if he had died, and rose again. I will know all. I will demand justice, even at the hands of the dying. Justice, what justice can I obtain? Who, then, is Mr. Metcalf, he whom I call my father? I am more perplexed, the more I think of it. To think of 'The Hon. Herbert Wells,' a man standing highly and prominently in the estimation of the community, who has filled the highest offices, which should not be conferred upon any but the worthiest, that he should be so mean as this. How little regard we

should pay to position and reputation, if all bad men can so easily obtain them."

Clarence, in this mood, paced the floor, all of that night. The sun no sooner made his appearance, than Clarence prepared himself for a journey to Albany.

"I am going to Albany, this morning, Clarence, and shall not return again till the latter part of the week," said Mrs. Metcalf.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Clarence, apparently surprised. "Is not your intention rather a sudden one?"

"Rather sudden," was the reply.

"What is your object, mother, in going to Albany? Do you know any one, there, that you can visit?"

"I am going to see an old acquaintance, in regard to certain matters. When I return, I will explain everything to you."

"Why not tell me now, mother? Is the object of your visit anything to do with me?"

Mrs. Metcalf pretended not to hear the question. "There, Clarence," said she, "you must go and speak for the stage. I have only an hour to get ready in."

Clarence thought it best not to press his inquiries any farther.

Wishing to arrive in Albany as soon as his mother, and not wanting her to know of his intentions,

he determined to ride upon the outside of the coach. When the coach arrived, Clarence assisted his mother to get in, and bade her good-by; but the moment that her head was partly turned, he took advantage of the opportunity, and mounted the box. After leaving the stage at Utica, he watched his mother, to see what car she got into. After he saw her seated, he entered the adjoining one.

"I hope I shall see him before my mother does. If I do not, they may plan, and try to conceal from me everything, thinking they are doing me justice, by keeping me in ignorance.

"From childhood I instinctively felt that something was wrong concerning myself. What it was, I could not define; but the facts are soon to be made known."

With such reflections as the preceding, the mind of Clarence was occupied, till the cars arrived at Albany, and there, for the present, we will leave him.

* * * * *

"Mr. Metcalf," said cousin Edith, "I have just been over to your nephew's, and he says that his wife has gone to Albany, to see Herbert Wells."

"What has she gone to see him for?" was the reply.

"Wells sent for her. He wrote her that he was dying, and wanted to see her, concerning Clarence. Perhaps he has repented. I knew he would regret that great crime, some time or other."

"Speak kindly, wife, speak kindly. Wells dying, is it possible? 'Twill not be long, ere we, too, will be laid under the sod. I'm growing feebler, every day. I shall be eighty-four years old, to-morrow."

"Well, there is no use of talking about it all the time, Mr. Metcalf, it is anything but pleasant. What can't be cured, must be endured. I suppose," cousin Edith continued, "that Mr. Wells, being a public man, and in high office, will have a great funeral, won't he?"

"I presume so, wife."

A gentle rap was heard at the door. Cousin Edith answered it, by saying, "Come in," and looked to see who entered. Mrs. Clifford and Mrs. Estelle Wellmont were the agreeable intruders.

"Bless your kind hearts," said cousin Edith, "you have not forgotten the old folks entirely. I am so glad you have come, Mr. Metcalf is so very unhappy. You must cheer him up."

"Cousin Edith," said Mrs. Clifford, "I have got

something of importance to communicate to you." She then related the occurrence of the evening previous—of Clarence's determination to solve the mystery, of his grief.

"I fear," said Mrs. Clifford, "that if he hears anything, he will feel a false delicacy in regard to continuing his attentions to Laura."

"He will learn all, soon, my dear Laura, said Mr. Metcalf, "Mr. Wells has sent for his mother, and she left for Albany this morning. He wrote her that he was in a deep consumption, and in a dying state. He wished to see her in regard to Clarence."

"Dying?" repeated Mrs. Clifford, "dying?"

Mrs. Wellmont saw that Mr. Metcalf had spoken imprudently in referring to Herbert Wells as he did, and she tapped him on the shoulder. He looked at her, and she put her finger to her lips, and shook her head for him to stop the conversation. After remaining a short time longer, they returned homewards in silence. Mrs. Clifford's love for Herbert Wells was a strange as well as a lasting one. It could not be annihilated by time nor distance, and when she heard of his expected death, she received a shock from which she never recovered.

There are many individuals who believe that it is impossible for love to last through life, unless it is accompanied by an unbroken intimacy. Could we but recall from the grave, and revivify with life many who slumber there, and let them tell their history, our assertion would be confirmed, that an undying affection is no uncommon occurrence. If affection was only a transient, inconstant and fickle passion, resulting from impetuous impulses, it would possess no attractions nor beauty. True affection never decreases. It is the perpetual spring of warm and delightful influences, flowing onward evermore, terminating not even in death, but continuing with us even beyond this "vale of tears."

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHEN Clarence arrived at Albany he hastened to the residence of Herbert Wells.

What am I seeking, thought he; what is it that impels me to go on without any defined or settled purpose? How can I express my desires when I arrive there? I know not what I demand, but something tells me there is a mystery connected with my life, that none but Herbert Wells can solve. That must be the house, continued he, as he approached a large and elegant mansion a little farther retired from the street than the adjoining ones in the block.

Ascending the steps, he knocked at the door, and inquired for Mr. Wells. The servant informed him that Mr. Wells was very sick that day, and was unable to see any visitors.

"He will see me, I know," said Clarence, entering the door; "tell him I must see him."

"If you will give me your name, I will inquire if you can see him," said the servant, ushering Clarence into the parlor.

"No matter about my name," said the importunate Clarence, "tell him that a gentleman wants to see him, and must see him this moment."

The servant hesitated, and did not move a step.

"Do as I bid you," said Clarence, imperatively, "or I will report you for deliberate disobedience."

The servant went to deliver the message, and left Clarence alone.

"Good Heavens, who is this?" said he, as his eyes fell upon the portrait of Herbert Wells, and he gazed at it with fixed attention. He seemed unconscious of the entrance of Orville and his mother.

"Whom did you wish to see?" said Orville.

Clarence moved not, his whole soul was absorbed in the picture, and as yet they had not seen his face, for his back was turned towards them.

Orville took a step or two forward, and stood nearly before the silent visitor, so that she could see his face.

"Good Heavens, mother, who is this man? look at him, look at the picture!"

Mrs. Wells took a step forward, and giving one glance at Clarence, turned to ashy paleness. She turned her eyes in the direction of the picture, and then again in agony at Clarence.

"It cannot be Herbert's —"

She did not dare to finish the sentence, but sank exhausted upon the floor.

Orville noticed her not. His eyes were still riveted upon the painting.

"Who is this?" at last said Clarence, turning to Orville.

"My father," was the reply.

"And who is your father?" again questioned Clarence.

Orville made no reply, for his father, at that moment entered. The eyes of Herbert and Clarence were riveted upon each other with astonishment. They looked more like twin brothers, than father and son. Herbert, in looks, had changed but little; his hair was still raven black, and his noble and manly countenance unmarked by a single wrinkle.

The high, round and full forehead, was smooth and polished as of old, and were it not for the paleness of his complexion, which consumption invariably

produces, no trace of change could have been seen. They continued to look at the picture, and then at each other, in quick succession, without uttering a word. Orville assisted his mother to the sofa, and waited in breathless suspense for the termination and revelation of the mysterious scene. Herbert's cane broke beneath his weight, and he sank upon the sofa beside his wife.

"Herbert," said Clara, "who is this man?"

Herbert spoke not, but great drops of perspiration started to his forehead. A death-like stillness reigned, while they were waiting for the answer, but Herbert spoke not.

After a few moments of silence, Mrs. Metcalf, the once injured Fannie Thorne, entered the room, unnoticed. She seemed surprised, upon beholding Clarence among the group, and could not think how he had got there.

"Who am I?" said Clarence, putting his hand gently upon the head of Herbert. "If you value the feelings of humanity, I beseech of you to tell me who I am."

Mrs. Metcalf came forward, and, with solemn voice, said, "Herbert Wells, this is your son. Clarence, he is your father."

Orville and his mother looked intently at them, without speaking. They did not doubt the assertion, for the resemblance between father and son, was sufficient proof, without any additional confirmation. The excitement was too much for Herbert's enfeebled state, and death was lifting its arm to strike the blow.

"The time is fast approaching," said Herbert, "when death will emancipate my body and mind from the oppression of worldly woes, and all that is now life in me, and of me, will again incorporate itself, with the original elements of our nature, to that nature to whose mysterious and framing hand, we owe our existence. But before the cords of life shall be severed, and all again return to its primeval state, I would ask your forgiveness, each and all. I ask it not from any superstitious fear of an hereafter, nor from the dictates of diseased faculties. My mind is not yet impaired, therefore I wish you to believe me in my sincerity.

"I ask your forgiveness. I have injured you all. But all evils, I am glad to know, have only a temporary duration. My death teaches the lesson. Do not weep, nor complain, for, like every living thing, I must submit to the immutable laws of nature.

"Do you forgive me, Clarence? Do you all forgive me?"

Sobs only were the answer, for they saw that life was fast wasting away.

"Clara, you know all that I would say to you; your forgiveness is dear to me. I cannot speak more. Come nearer, wife, Clarence, Orville, Frances, come, give me your hands. You forgave me, did you?"

They all knelt beside him, too grieved to speak. His eyes became fixed, and his breath ceased forever. His spirit had gone to God who gave it, to that God whom he had rejected on earth. Herbert died as he had lived—an infidel. Clara clung around the neck of her husband, sometime after life had fled. As she arose, she slightly moved the corpse, and a miniature fell upon the carpet; it was that of Laura Wellmont. Clara did not notice it, and Mrs. Metcalf, unperceived, snatched it up, and placed it in her pocket.

She used all her exertions to soothe and comfort the stricken widow, and Orville, with the generous impulse of true manliness, treated Clarence like a brother, who was every way worthy of a brother's regard. Orville experienced no false delicacy nor pride in acknowledging the relationship, and Clarence,

on his part, fully appreciated the generous kindness extended towards him by his new relative.

The life of Herbert Wells was a failure to himself. In early life, without any settled purpose for the future, pleasure seemed to be his sole ambition, his chief aim in life. But he found it not, and there was yet something wanting, which he could not describe, to satisfy his longings.

A constant demand for something new, made him inconstant and capricious, and also tended to make him dissatisfied with life; and when, in maturer years, with naturally fine faculties fully ripened, fame and distinction threw in his path their dazzling allurements, beckoning him to do great and meritorious deeds, worthy of his abilities, they brought to him no pleasure, for his desires were undefined, and there was ever something to be attained. And when death came, and he glanced at the panorama of a misspent life, unfruitful of substantial joys, and pregnant with unsatisfactory deeds—rejecting the consoling idea of futurity, with which belief, and his talents, he was capable of making the earth a temporary paradise,—he could but feel that his life was a failure. The mind Herbert, though intellectual, was of a mould too

mystical and sceptical to render the possessor happy. His life was like a dream, or romance, full of mystery and misery, of love and hate, of good and evil deeds. And, when collected in the aggregate, and the various colors transferred to life's canvass, the picture was so repulsive, so faulty, in spite of the design, that the good man who looked upon it, could well say, "Here was a splendid failure."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PREPARATIONS were immediately made to have the remains of Herbert Wells conveyed to the cemetery at Hamilton.

On their arrival, Clarence stopped at the Cliffords', to inform them of the death of his father. Mrs. Clifford smothered the rising sigh, but could not suppress the copious tears which flowed so freely down her face. He, who had walked with her in youth, through the green valleys, and on the high hills, and loved the beauty of the starry heavens, and had exchanged with her the first, though youthful and passionate, vow of love, now was dust. But how differently did she look upon death, than upon Herbert, when he was living! Nature was in her mind, not God. Nature was only the mould, framed by God, and subject to His will. Herbert, on the contrary, looked to no

greater power than nature, and believed that he who endeavored to penetrate beyond the circumscribed limits of our mortal life, was foolish and inconsistent, and that man was substituting his imagination, at the expense of his reason and judgment.

Mr. Clifford experienced much feeling, when he heard Clarence give an account of his father's death. He knew Herbert, intimately in his youth, and always felt an indescribable feeling towards him, bordering upon interest for his welfare. What the real feeling was, he could not clearly explain, for he at the same time despised the principles which guided Herbert through life. Mr. Clifford felt as if he had prevented the happiness of Herbert, though unintentionally. He knew the feelings, also, that his wife entertained towards him, and when he considered that he was the cause of their separation, on earth, he could not but regret the reflection.

Herbert's death caused him a pang of deep sorrow, for he well knew the effect it would have upon his wife, and of her additional grief, in attempting to conceal it from himself.

On the following day, everything was prepared for the funeral.

The bells tolled their mournful dirge, and the mourners were assembling to the grave-yard. Venerable and well-known men, who were once associated with the deceased in political life, clergymen, collegians, and citizens, young and old, all were present, to bestow the last sad rites upon the remains of the illustrious dead. We say illustrious, because this appellation always accompanies the possessor of great talents, power and position. Deeds make men illustrious—motives, seldom.

Mrs. Howland gazed upon the chiseled features but a moment. She did not dare look longer, for fear she should betray the real state of her feelings; and as she retired back a few paces, to make room for others, Edgar Clifford and his wife took her place.

Edgar was unmanned, but she looked upon the sleeper calmly, for her feelings were "too deep for tears," and she betrayed no perceptible emotion.

Clara, the fond and loving wife, was inconsolable, and she clung to the remains with frantic paroxysm of grief.

The kind clergyman gently forced her away, and endeavored to console her; but the affliction of death was too great to admit of consolation.

"Weep, mourner, no more, o'er thy grief and thy love;
Still thy heart in its beating; be glad of such rest,
Though it call from thy bosom its dearest and best.
Weep no more, that affection thus loosens its tie,
Weep no more, that the loved and the loving must die;
Weep no more o'er the cold dust that lies at your feet,
But gaze on yon starry world—there ye shall meet."

The dead was buried. The end of life was illustrated by death's great lesson, that "all that live must die, passing through nature to eternity."

CHAPTER XXIX.

IT WAS the mellow month of August. Mrs. Wells was seated at the window, communing with her own gentle thoughts. She had loved, as only woman can love,—once and forever. However unworthy the object had unfortunately proved, the circumstances of Herbert's death, his infidelity, could not diminish the strength of her affection. Her passionate idolatry was kindled for the object which her affections had once pictured; and though they had drawn an untrue portrait, yet it was her destiny to adore the image. She would have given years of life for that image of the mind to have been realized for a moment. She had outstretched her arms "to embrace a form of living warmth and beauty, and, like Ixion, she found it but a cloud."

She was not unaware of the feelings which Herbert once entertained for Mrs. Clifford and Mrs. How-

land, and the knowledge of them in no inconsiderable degree enhanced her grief. She also knew why Herbert had married her—for his own aggrandizement, and to gratify his ambition—and though he was a kind and gentle master, she felt as if she had, in some degree, been his slave.

Her reflections were interrupted by the entrance of the servant, who handed her a letter from Orville, which she immediately opened, and perused the following contents:

"MY DEAR MOTHER:—I have this moment returned from the grave of my father. The monument was erected last week, and a simple, but chaste little fence encircles it. The lot was arranged as you desired, and I think that no improvement can be further made. My vacation will be in two weeks, and I shall then be with you. Clarence is to be married three weeks from to-day, and you must return with me to be present at his wedding. I am much worried concerning your health, and trust you will have improved when I return home. I cannot write any more to-day, and the short time I have been engaged in writing this, were stolen moments, which should have been applied to my studies. With much love I remain,

Yours affectionately,

ORVILLE.

It seems to be something singular and providential, that Herbert's son should love the daughter of the first object of his affection, thought Mrs. Wells, after reading the letter. Everything connected with him, seems involved in mystery.

When the "green curtain of the grave" is drawn around those we have loved, memory will cull from the many transactions of the past, scenes to dwell upon. Mrs. Wells had loved ardently, and though she was conscious that her affection was not fully requited, she did not forget the kind attentions which Herbert, in his latter years, bestowed upon her, and the more she dwelt upon the brighter scenes of her life connected with him, now no more, with increased fondness she treasured his memory. Such is woman's heart.

"That hallowed sphere, a woman's heart, contains
Empires of feeling, and the rich domains
Where love, disporting in his sunniest hours,
Breathes his sweet incense o'er ambrosial flowers;
A woman's heart!—that gem, divinely set
In native gold—that peerless amulet
Which, firmly linked to love's electric chain,
Cements the worlds of transport, and of pain."

Vacation at length arrived, and Orville returned to

Albany. As he walked the hall which led to his mother's chamber, every foot-fall was distinctly heard, so silent was all around. Where death has been, or where sorrow is, cheerfulness is an unwelcome visitor and the buoyant tread of joy grates harshly upon the ear of gloom.

Orville knocked gently at his mother's door, but no answer being made, he entered the chamber. His mother was in the attitude of prayer, pouring out her soul to the Giver of all good.

Her lips were firmly compressed together, and an expression of deep anguish written upon her brow. Her very soul was bathed with a flood of religious feeling and faith. Orville stood silently by the door, fearful he should interrupt her communings.

When her devotions were over, Orville assisted her to rise, and when she was seated he said:

"Mother, you know not how much I have longed to be at home again with you, but everything breathes so much of gloom that all of my cheerful spirits have vanished. Why don't you open the blinds, and let in the rays of the sun? why shut out nature's servant, and man's sympathizing companion? Come! come! cheer up mother."

"Your presence, my son, will cheer me; you know not how much I enjoy your society. I have looked forward to this meeting, with anticipated pleasure. When did you see Clarence last?"

"Yesterday, and he sent his kind regards to you. He is everything that is noble, mother, and there is no one whose friendship I value more. Next week he is to be married to Laura Clifford, and expects us both to be present at his wedding, of course you will go?"

"Perhaps I will," said Mrs. Wells, smilingly.

"But you *must* go," said Orville, earnestly, "Clarence will feel offended if you do not; besides, a change of scene will undoubtedly be beneficial to you."

"Well, I will go if it is possible, my son, if it is only to see Hamilton again."

"Who is not an admirer of Hamilton?" said Orville. "If there is a spot on earth more profusely enriched with the generous and lavishing bounties of nature, I would walk a thousand miles to see it."

"It is indeed a beautiful village. I remember the first time I visited it, and the feelings which it produced. Every flower seemed eloquent with its mellow language, and the green and undulating grass seemed to say I was a welcome visitor."

Orville and his mother continued to converse on different subjects till the hour of dinner, after which he gave orders for his mother's carriage, and for the first time for many months, she again breathed the country air. When they returned home, to Mrs. Wells' surprise, she found the blinds again opened, and her favorite birds were again warbling their joyful notes.

"Who opened the shutters?" inquired Mrs. Wells, when she entered the hall.

"It was done at my orders," said Orville. "Everything looked so gloomy, that I could not bear to remain another hour without some change, and all your canaries are now singing with excess of joy. Don't shut them again, I beg of you."

A week glided by, and Orville and his mother started for Hamilton, to be present at Clarence's wedding. Reader, we will not dwell minutely upon the details of another marriage; we will only say it was like all other marriages, but with brighter and more propitious prospects in view than some of those we have narrated. I commenced my story with a scene of death; it is fitting that the history of my narrative should conclude with a marriage, and now, after relating what became of some of the characters who

have participated in the plot, I will bid the reader a kind farewell.

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford are still living, though not residing at Hamilton, but not far from the scenes when first introduced to you. Mr. Harry Wellmont wife and family, removed to Geneva. And where is Mr. Metcalf and Cousin Edith? inquires the reader. They, too, are still living, though feeble with age, and residing with Mr. Metcalf's nephew. Mr. and Mrs. Howland, too, are living, but removed to the South, and here, kind reader, I bid you — farewell.

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