



"Oh, you miserable fiend in human shape! I would die a thousand torturing deaths ere I should marry you!"  
[Frontispiece.]

See Page 377.

# THE MYSTERY,

OR

## PLATONIC LOVE.

BY

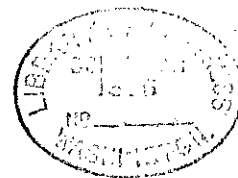
G. S. CROSBY.

---

She was a form of life and light,  
That seen became a part of sight;  
And rose, where'er I turned mine eye,  
The morning star of memory.

---

BYRON.



PHILADELPHIA:  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.  
1875.

PZ3  
C6133M

---

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1875, by

G. S. CROSBY.

In the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington

---

## PREFACE.

---

WERE it possible for us to raise the curtain and behold in one vast panoramic view the domestic life of millions of homes in this broad land, what a world of sorrow and heart-burnings and utter misery would meet our bewildered and astonished eyes!—And how much more should we be amazed when we reflected that in these very same homes there should reign in its stead the most tranquil peace and love and joy supreme.

It is only once in awhile that these domestic jars and difficulties come to light; but that they really exist behind the scenes, no one, who has any experience in the world, or has any judgment of human nature, can help but admit. It is further true that these domestic infelicities are by no means confined to any particular class. No, the casual observer will see them every day around him, as well among the rich and exalted and most brilliant, as among the poor and lowly and most ignoble.

And after mature reflection, does not the inquiry arise, Why is all this? Is there not something wrong? Is there not a great mistake made somewhere, or in some manner, in the marriage relation? Ah! yes, the melancholy answer involuntarily comes that there is something wrong somewhere.

When we further reflect that it is not good for man to be alone, and that therefore marriage is ordained of heaven,

does not, then, another inquiry arise,—What is that relation which exists between man and wife?

The poet calls it love, that magnetic tie which makes twain one flesh. The cold, dogmatical materialist believes that there is nothing spiritual about it, and that it is nothing but a civil contract. Then there are those who choose a happy medium, and say that it is a blending in sweet harmony of both.

Each one, however, being convinced that his own theory is right, refers to the real world, and will there find numerous examples in real life to sustain his position. Then the question arises, Which theory is correct?

It is in vain to attempt to give a satisfactory answer. We cannot pierce the mysteries of the human heart. That there is a tie which binds two devoted hearts together and makes twain one flesh must be admitted. But just what it is, in all its heights and depths and lengths and breadths, we pause in vain for a full and positive answer, and are at last forced to confess that it is all a mystery. Each human heart is in itself a world of its own, and cannot be compared with any other. When the poet's divine theory, and the materialist's cold and heartless contract, and the conservative's happy medium are all taken into consideration, it still remains a mystery, which will never be solved while man remains mortal.

But there is one element in this marriage relation which seems, and really is, as clear as the sunlight of day,—that platonic love is its only true and correct basis. Whatever of mystery there is in which it may be enshrouded, this one element stands out clear, and cannot be gainsaid by any convincing process of reasoning. (That those of congenial tastes and sentiments and dispositions, and with a similarity of mind and purpose, should marry, has both reason and common sense, and the experience of mankind. The mating of the intangible affinities and wondrous magnetisms of the immortal soul should be the primary consideration in matrimony.

And when this happy consummation is achieved, the sweetest joys, the purest happiness, and the most exquisite bliss known to the human heart is found in domestic life.

In regard to this novel, the author has nothing here to say. He has endeavored to say in it all he desires to say about this mystery of the marriage relation. How far it may be interesting or beneficial remains for a generous public to determine.

THE AUTHOR.

PARKER CITY, PA., March 15, 1875.



THE MYSTERY,  
OR  
PLATONIC LOVE.

---

BOOK I.

---

CHAPTER I.

Man was marked  
A friend in his creation to himself,  
And may with fit ambition conceive  
The greatest blessings, and the brightest honors  
Appointed for him, if he can achieve them  
The right and noble way.

PHILIP MASSINGER.

THE mystic twilight hour of an evening in the lovely month of September had deepened into night; the myriads of stars had resumed their accustomed places in the azure skies, and the soft and silvery rays of the moon shed a wide and amber light over the landscape, giving the finishing touch to a scene which breathed into the heart a sweet, calm delight, and swept the chords of memory with joy and hope. It was one of those beautiful, quiet nights when the soul is inspired with some new glory, which gives it flight to a more congenial clime, that a youth of about twenty summers, standing at the gate about to take his leave, enthusiastically exclaimed, "Yes, my fair lady, I am dreaming—sweetly dreaming—of the day when I shall graduate at Yale, and shall then commence the study of that profession which opens the door of the temple of fame, where I can reach the goal to which my lofty ambition aspires. Even now methinks I can see the way opening

up before me, for I see a light shining as from afar, which lures me on, and, being infused with some new glory, I press nobly on, and strain every nerve until I at last reach the sun-crowned heights of victory. Then I shall be covered with immortal glory; then I shall taste that sweet incense and feel that rapturous joy which comes from sublime achievement; then I shall sit down among the glowing scenes of my success and live a contented and happy life."

These words, hopeful and buoyant as they were, filled the heart of the fair listener by his side with sorrow, and she drew a deep sigh as she said, "I have no doubt but that you will reach the eminence to which your ambition aspires, and for your success you have my best wishes. But I now feel in my very heart that the day of which you speak is the echo of the knell to all my happiness. You have told me now that you love me, and should I exact it, you, perhaps, would swear by this glorious scene now spread out before us that it is indeed so. But, when you are gone these four years and come back crowned with honors, you will be so far above the one who now stands so lovingly by your side, that she can never dare approach you; you will not love me then as you do now."

These words were uttered with a sad and trembling voice, and they sank deeply into the heart of the youth by her side. Taking her hand in his, he said, in a low and loving tone, "You see yourself how brightly the moon shines to-night, and her soft silvery rays tinge everything with singular beauty; and yet in a fortnight from this all will be darkness here, and the stars even may have veiled their eyes, and all will be dismal and drear. Such are the changes in this world; but, my dear Carrie, let me assure you of one thing,—this heart will never change. Whatever of glory may cover me on the giddy heights of fame, the companion of my boyhood's days shall never be forgotten; and, if I am up high as you say, I will not be so high that I cannot come down and take you up with me."

Tears were in her eyes when he ceased speaking, and, as it was growing late, he kissed her good-night and was gone,—yes, gone from her side, and, sadder still, gone never more to return—under like circumstances.

Walter Ludwick was about leaving home for Yale College, where he intended to graduate. He was of medium height,

well built, and presented a polite and graceful appearance. His prominent forehead and large brown eyes gave his face that intellectual appearance which portrayed the deep comprehensive mind within. He had been born and raised on one of New England's farms, near the picturesque and beautiful village of Riverbank, which contained about six or seven hundred inhabitants, and was situated on the banks of a small river.

Many years before this there was nothing there save the beautiful valley, with its lovely, picturesque scenery, until John Rivers, after whom the village was named, came and built a grist-mill, when other settlers came in and commenced business. On the opposite side of Riverbank there was a beautiful range of hills, with their tall trees and grassy mounds making a favorite resort in the summer-time for the villagers, where they found a cool retreat from the labors of the day.

Walter's father, James Ludwick, purchased a farm near the village when he was a young man, and, having built a little cottage thereon, married a near neighbor, and commenced domestic life with scarcely anything but their own energy and industry. Having good health and being prospered with fair crops, he, with his natural business qualifications, soon paid for his farm, and a number of years afterwards erected a very fine residence, where he now lives with all the comforts and happiness that domestic life can afford.

His son Walter worked on the farm until he was fifteen years old, and also attended the public school in the winter. At this age he quit the farm and commenced his studies at the academy, with the intention of pursuing them until he would prepare himself for entering college. It was his father's intention, though of limited means, to give him a complete education, for he always said that nothing could take this away from him, and that he could then make his own way in the world. He believed that every father should spare the last dollar, if it were required, to get his children a good education, for he greatly felt the want of it himself. Better,—far better,—he said, to leave them an education, of which nothing in the world could deprive them, than to leave them lands and money, which, if they do not spend themselves, might be taken away by the shrewdness of others.

But there was nothing in or about farm-life that was in any

respect congenial to Walter's taste, or satisfied in the remotest degree his growing ambition. True it was that he loved the pure air, the morning sunlight, the gentle breeze, redolent with the fragrance of roses and flowers that grew up all around him, but these only filled his soul with a longing for something more; and his mind naturally drifted into that channel which breeds discontent and a desire to rise above his present sphere of life, so that he might become a more useful man and better qualified for accomplishing that mission of life which he felt was binding on every human being.

He had a great passion for reading the lives of great men; and there was one feature about them which gave his young heart courage and lured him on with greater zeal to reach the goal to which his ambition aspired. He observed that they were poor and took their flight to fame from the walks of an humble life; that there was no royal road to wealth or honor, but that, in this free land of ours, the way was open to all who might desire to walk therein. "*Labor omnia vincit*" was a favorite motto of his, and he pursued his studies with that close application and energy which invariably insure success.

Boys of his age seldom look into the future so far and contemplate what they are going to do when they become men. Should they do so, we would not have the failures and wrecks of human lives that we see every day transpiring around us.

One of the characteristics of Walter Ludwick was his restless and discontented disposition. When he reached a period in his life to which he looked forward with a great deal of pleasure, he was not satisfied, but longed for something more. So closely did he apply himself to his studies, that when his companions or classmates were perhaps lounging about the village, or attending parties, he would be at home sitting at his midnight lamp, deeply engaged in those studies which fit the mind for engaging in the higher and graver and sterner duties of life. If he were tired in the evening with hard, unremitting study, if he were despondent with failures and obstacles that sometimes almost crush the young student, and which make the world look so dark and dreary, he rose in the morning with renewed strength, clearer perceptions, brighter hopes, and anxious to resume the labors of the day.

Having finished his academical course, he stood first in his class, and the honor of delivering the valedictory address was

bestowed on him. This address was well delivered. For beauty of arrangement and grandeur of expression it was seldom, if ever, equaled, much less excelled. And then the earnest and impressive manner in which he delivered it, the deep pathos that sometimes filled his voice in portraying past scenes and in referring so hopefully to the future, rendered it all the more interesting and admirable. It was no wonder that it brought tears to many a student's eyes unused to weep. Old men said in speaking of it, "He is bound to succeed; he has the mind and energy that insure success."

It was but a month after this exhibition had transpired that we see him this evening, when he said the last good-by to Carrie Merton. They had known each other all their lives, and had attended the village school together until he entered the academy, and then, in a year or two afterwards, she also commenced her studies there, and continued until a year previous to the conversation just narrated. She was a beautiful young girl, about eighteen years of age, with a fair complexion, light blue eyes, and very light auburn hair; of medium height, and slenderly built, so that she presented a very lovely figure; and, with her full, rosy cheeks and rather small, white forehead and sparkling eyes, she gained the reputation of being the prettiest girl in the village. It is true that her intellect was very ordinary, yet she had a fine mental temperament and very warm and strong affections. She was a lady, take her all in all, who would be admired and loved by many gentlemen, yet she was not such a one who could sympathize with Walter Ludwick in all his grand and glorious anticipations. She would have been quite willing to settle down with him anywhere and live a peaceful and happy life. She loved him with all the passion of her soul, and really spoke the truth one twilight evening they were together. It seemed that some gloomy forebodings of evil filled her heart which induced her to say, "It seems to me, after I have heard you speak of your flights to fame, that a dark cloud hovers o'er my soul which nothing but your presence can dispel. Now, as I look into your face, this cloud of gloom has all dispersed, but when you return home and I am alone again, then these clouds gather around me thicker than ever, and I realize but too strongly the startling fact that if you forsake me I shall never survive it. Young as I am, I feel now that I can never love

again. These twilight scenes and evening walks are so indelibly impressed on my mind and heart, that I could never think of spending them with any one else."

It will be observed from these expressions that her affections were the predominating attribute of her soul, and once they were scared or blighted, the day-star of her life disappeared, and her way was shrouded in darkness and gloom. Seeming to be conscious of her own inferiority of mind, she saw the distance between them expanding as he advanced in the shining course that loomed up before him. So it was the dread thought of final separation that so tortured her soul, and sometimes made the world which she so loved all dark and dreary and unprofitable.

But the mind and purpose of Walter Ludwick were as different from that of hers as day is from night. Having a great intellect and a fine mental temperament, and being naturally ambitious, he was always looking forward to brighter and nobler fields of labor. While she was for standing still, he was moving forward, and only felt too much rejoiced when the day arrived for him to leave his home for the completion of his studies at Yale College. It was very seldom that he was away from home but for a short time, and now when he had his trunk packed to be gone for, perhaps, years, his heart was filled with grief, and the world looked dark and gloomy. Ever and anon his mind would wander back to those days, fraught with so much joy and delight; and now as he realized the sundering of old associations, and as he said the last good-by to warm-hearted and devoted friends, he experienced that keen anguish and deep sorrow which one only feels when he is about to leave the scenes of his childhood.

To be a graduate of this famous college had been the predominating impulse of his whole life, and probably the brightest and happiest moments he had ever experienced were in looking forward to the time when he would receive his diploma, which he thought would eminently fit him for entering upon the active and stirring scenes of life. In his day-dreams and twilight reveries he would feel a calm spirit of contentment steal over his soul, as he reflected that he would then, to a certain extent, have reached the goal to which his ambition aspired; and that he could then sit down and pursue the study of his profession with pleasure as well as profit, until the time would come for

his permission to practice the science he so much loved and admired.

But he did not know himself yet. He did not realize the fact that when he would reach one position in life to which he had looked forward with so much pleasure, it would only be an incentive to make greater efforts to reach a higher and more desirable one. Thus it ever is with ambitious and aspiring minds. Never being contented with their present lot, they are always endeavoring to pierce the impenetrable and unknown future to see what may there be in store for them. Time and again have they said to themselves that when they would reach a certain position in life they would then sit down and enjoy the pleasure of their glorious achievements. But, alas! there is no such pleasure in the chronicles of the fates. When their brightest anticipations are realized they but too eagerly seek fairer fields of glory, and thus always lead a stormy and tempestuous life.

## CHAPTER II.

I am devote to study. Worthy books  
Are not companions—they are solitudes;  
We lose ourselves in them and all our cares.

BAILEY.

THERE is but little strange or new in the student's life, if he be an industrious and attentive one. When Walter came to Yale there was none with whom he was acquainted, and for the first time in his life he realized that he was cast among strangers, where he could not see one familiar face. Accidentally, he formed the acquaintance of a young student by the name of Dewitt Lu-Guere, which soon ripened into a warm and sincere friendship. They procured a suite of rooms, where they remained together during the entire college course.

Dewitt was about one year younger than Walter, but of the same height, and more slenderly built, with very dark eyes and black, curly hair, and a face which, always cheerful and happy, would be pronounced by the most fastidious young lady "quite handsome." He possessed fine sensibilities, and

a warm, generous heart; and though he had not so large and prominent a forehead as Walter, yet he had quick perceptive faculties and a very retentive memory, by which he gained a very honorable and desirable position in his class. Being in the same class, they pursued the same studies, and thus they were almost constantly together, and learned to love each other as though they were brothers. This friendship was cemented by their congenial tastes and sentiments, and thus, as time rolled along, they became more and more attached to each other.

Dewitt's parents were wealthy, and lived down on the Hudson, not a great distance from New York. Being their only son, of course they were proud of him, and left nothing undone which would contribute to his pleasure and improvement. In return for all these affectionate favors, he never imposed on their generosity, and was always a kind and industrious boy. Before he had come to college he had studied hard and stood a most excellent examination. Now his ambition never lagged, and he would have considered it a great disgrace to have been behindhand in his class.

Two years of their college-life passed away, and still this same warm and pure friendship existed between them, and they were never happy when separated from each other. They had both been hard and diligent students during these two years that had passed away. Walter was almost invariably found at the midnight lamp, pursuing his studies with that solicitude and diligence which characterized his whole collegiate course. While at the academy, his old professor had impressed upon his young mind the great importance of being accurate in everything that he studied. "Be accurate," he would say; "never let anything pass from your mind until you thoroughly understand it, for that is no education which is made up of doubts and uncertainties." These kind admonitions were treasured up in his mind, and he thus formed that degree of accuracy which almost became a habit. If there were any dispute about the definition of a word, or the translation of a sentence in Greek, or a quotation from any of the classic authors, he was considered good authority among his fellow-students, and not unfrequently the disputed questions were referred to him for his decision. Of course there were a great many such questions that he could not answer, but if he did give them a decision on any such question or disputes referred to him, it

was almost invariably correct. His greatest interest, however, was manifested in the Literary Society of the college. Here he passed some of the happiest moments of his college-life. At the silent hour of midnight, many a time he was engaged upon the composition of an essay or oration, in which he endeavored to cultivate that beauty of expression, that logical arrangement, and that elegance of diction which he so much admired in the authors he had read. And as he looked back over these two years of college-life, and in contrasting how little he knew with what he had yet to learn, the latter seemed almost like a mountain before him. But his zeal never lagged, and all the powers of his mind and soul were centred in the thought of being a graduate of this famous college.

Dewitt Lu-Guere had also made rapid progress in the pursuit of his studies. The main difference between him and Walter was the fact that the latter had an aim in life,—a place on its stage which it was his purpose to fulfill. The science of the law had been the height of his ambition from a boy, and he labored with a fixed purpose,—labored to fit himself to fill that position with honor. It was not so, however, with Dewitt. He had no aim in life,—nothing to lure him on which was calculated to shape his destiny. The reason he kept up in his class was because of that inborn pride and sense of honor which made it humiliating to fail. In the pursuit of his studies at college he labored to attain as honorable a position in his class as his abilities would confer on him. And his anticipations were more than realized, for he commanded a high position among his college chums. And although he did not stand so high as Walter, yet he gained that position in his class which is admired by many a brilliant student.

As these two years of their college-life were about passing away, they had been hard at work one afternoon preparing for examination; but little passed between them while thus engaged in a review of their studies, (and it was only when the twilight hour came that they were reminded of the necessity of having more light before they could proceed further.) The room was a trifle darker than the twilight without, and they sat there apparently lost in a deep reverie. There are periods in the life of every earnest student when he pauses from his studies for a retrospect of the past,—to note the progress he

has made in the pursuit of his studies,—also to observe where his time has been misspent, and the many mistakes he has made, which warn him not to repeat, but, on the contrary, to guard against the same in the future. Thus their minds were engaged. Dewitt was the first to break the silence, and said, “I believe I heard you say the other day that you did not have any doubts in reference to your ability to stand your examination in the Greek? Have you reviewed any of your other studies, so that you have equal confidence to stand an examination in them creditable to your present position in your class?”

Walter looked up in that manner which clearly indicated that his mind had been lost in a deep reverie, and then, after some reflection, said, “I have no doubt, as I told you before, of my ability to stand the examination in Greek, and in fact in all the classics, but my mind now is more engaged on the sciences than anything else. While I like the study of them very much, I am free to say that I have not the confidence in my ability to stand an examination in them that I have in the classics. Nevertheless, it is my purpose to become as proficient in the former as I am in the latter.”

“I wish I could say as much,” Dewitt despondingly replied. And then brightening up, as if a new idea had entered his mind, said, “I do not see the use of poring over these dead languages, at any rate. They do not expand the mind half so much as the sciences, and as I think I will never study any profession, what is the use in spending my time studying them? In fact, why are they taught in colleges at all? What is the use in spending the best part of our lives in poring over the study of languages that have been out of use for centuries? I think the time will come when our professors, being wiser, will exclude them from a collegiate course, and that in their stead there will be introduced other languages now spoken throughout the world.”

Walter looked towards him in very great surprise, and then resuming the view of the landscape as seen from their window, said, in that soft, persuasive, and quiet way which so endeared him to Dewitt in their confidential talks with each other, “I think, Dewitt, that you have not fully estimated the great importance and advantage of an education; you seem to think that it consists in cramming the mind with knowledge and

information on many subjects. Now, in my conception of an education, the main thing to be done is to train and cultivate the mind, and, therefore, it is no matter whether you, even in your adopted vocation, bring the studies you have pursued into use or not. If they have trained and strengthened your mind for *grasping* great issues that may be presented to you, then they have served their purpose, and it is not necessary, in order to make them beneficial, that you must use them in your every-day life. I am free to admit that the sciences contribute greatly to the cultivation of the mind; but then this consideration must not rob the languages of their part in the completion of a thorough education. It requires both of them to give the mind that training and breadth of thought and power which it requires to keep pace with the progress of the age. Besides these facts, you can never master our own language until you have traced every word to its derivation, for then you can fully comprehend its sometimes various meanings. In order to do this you must have a thorough knowledge of those languages from which ours is derived; until you have done this you can never become a master in the language of your own tongue. And again, by studying the classics you imbibe that taste which makes the ancient poets, philosophers, and historians so immortal. For beauty of arrangement and richness of expression, and to cultivate a clear and vivid imagination, you must peruse Homer and Virgil, and many other ancient authors. In the study of these works you will attain that loftiness and grandeur of language which, I may safely say, nothing else will give you; and beyond all these considerations, the men with whom you will find yourself associated in after-years, when you come to fight the battles of life, will be men who are educated, and who are versed in ancient lore as well as modern history and science. It is well, then, for you now to avail yourself of the advantages which a thorough education affords, to the end that you may meet them on an equal ground. It is true that some of the best, and, I may say, some of the first men of our times, are those without a thorough classical and scientific education; but neither you nor myself, nor any person else, can estimate how much more good they might have accomplished, and how much greater influence and power they might have wielded, had they received that mental training

and discipline of their faculties which a thorough and accurate education bestows. If you go back to the early history of these men, who, I am free to say, have written their names on the reflecting walls of fame in characters of living light, you will learn that they had not the opportunities of attaining a thorough education; and I have no doubt that if the subject were mentioned to them, they would be free to say that it was always a source of regret to them that they did not receive in their younger days a scientific and classical education. And this great want, of which all these men, probably without an exception, complain, is in your power to attain. Will you improve the golden opportunity now presented to you? I know of no one who is more interested in the answer than yourself."

Dewitt sat there in silence for some time, and still continued looking out of the window; then, without changing his position, and without seeming to address his remarks to Walter, said, in a slow and absent-minded kind of a manner, "All you say seems very correct, and it is useless my endeavoring to gainsay it; but still, where is the advantage in my studying these dead languages, when I will probably lead a business where they will never be required in any case whatever? At present I have no aim, and do not know what will be my vocation in life."

"That is something I have observed for some time with great regret," replied Walter, in a kind and affectionate manner. "It seems to me now is the time for you to give this subject your most earnest and undivided consideration. Had you an aim in life,—a goal to which your ambition aspired,—then you would have some incentive—some motive-power within—that would prick your flagging zeal, and infuse into your sometimes insipid soul new impulses, brighter hopes, and your labor would be to you more of a pleasure than a task."

"I will agree with you now," Dewitt replied, in a tone something livelier than before. "If I had an aim in life, as you express it, I could then look forward to it as an achievement to be attained, in which I would experience great pleasure, and which would also be profitable and beneficial in the end. As it is, however, I have no purpose in view, nor ambition further than to sustain an honorable position in my class. My sense of honor is too high and my dignity of character too

great to allow myself to be a drone, or to occupy an inferior position among my fellow-students."

"I admire your ambition so far, but if it were imbued with that of your future career, then you would be animated by a higher and loftier motive; and you would then pursue your studies with more pleasure and to a greater advantage. And then there is nothing so important as having the vocation of your life so impressed upon your mind that your every action will be prompted by a desire to fit you the more thoroughly for performing the duties that may devolve upon you."

The lamps were now lighted, and, nothing more being said, they resumed their studies. This is but one of the many confidential talks that occurred between them, the result of which was their mutual improvement and the strengthening of that pure friendship existing between them.

### CHAPTER III.

She was a form of life and light,  
That, seen, became a part of sight,  
And rose, where'er I turned mine eye,  
The morning star of memory.

BYRON.

WHEN the commencement exercises closed the second year of their college-life, a party of the students made all necessary arrangements for an excursion to Saratoga Springs. There was none of them more delighted with the anticipation of having a glorious time than Dewitt Lu-Guere; but on the evening previous to their departure he received a telegram from his father, stating that his mother was quite ill and desired his immediate return home. Of course it was impossible for him to accompany them, and they received the sad intelligence with regret and sorrow. The one, however, who was the most disappointed and grieved was Walter, who would have enjoyed the excursion so much more had he been accompanied by his bosom friend and companion. Dewitt, amid the regrets of all of them, took his departure a few hours after he received the telegram. On the following morning the ex-

cursionists took their departure amid wild exclamations of joy and delight.

Any one who has accompanied a party of students away from the restraints of college can readily imagine what kind of time they would have. They seemed like so many wild deer that had suddenly escaped from their prison. It is enough to say that if there is any real enjoyment in this life these students had it during the week they were at the Springs. But there is only one scene to which I will refer, and the reader will have to draw on his own imagination to fill up the time with the various exploits that engaged their attention.

The incident to which I refer transpired on an evening of one of those fashionable hops at the hotel, where there is so much life and real pleasure, and where any one feels that he has nothing to do but enjoy himself.

The day previous to this a party of young ladies from Vassar Seminary had arrived, who desired to remain at the Springs a day or two previous to their return home, so that they were all in time for one of the grandest scenes at the hotel, which is always looked forward to with so much pleasure by the eager and enthusiastic throng who crowd its thoroughfares, corridors, balconies, and parlors. The large and spacious hall was brilliantly lighted, and sparkled with gems and jewels of gay and lovely ladies. The music was most exquisite, and if there ever were a time when Walter Ludwick was extremely happy it was on this occasion, as he was whirling through the mazes of the dance. All was life and gayety, and not a shadow rested on the happy countenances of that brilliant throng.

Near midnight, as he was standing in his place for the quadrille that was about to commence, a lady and gentleman passed him on their way to the lower end of the hall. His eyes followed her until she disappeared from his sight, and then, as he turned to his partner, he drew a deep sigh, which, had she been looking towards him, she could not have failed to observe. The reader has, perhaps, passed ladies on the street whose grace and bearing and gait so fascinated him that he could not resist the temptation of turning around and looking after them. So it was with Walter on this occasion. He was so pleased with her appearance that, unmindful of all around him, his eyes followed her until she was no longer visible; and when the music commenced, he joined in the

dance as though it were a task rather than a pleasure. After the dance was over, he went to the floor manager and requested an introduction to her, which was willingly granted.

If he were pleased and interested in her merely from what he had observed as she passed him, he was ten times more so when he stood before her. That face! Oh, how shall I portray it? When he turned away, as if chided for his rudeness in looking at her so earnestly, in the very next moment he would find himself gazing, unconsciously, as intently upon her face as before. She was something past seventeen, and the bloom of health was on her cheek, and her dark silken hair hung around her brow of marble whiteness in profuse curls. In her dark eyes, full of that soft, tender languor and sweetness, there shone the pure and noble soul within. Her cheek was of that rich, fresh color, slightly tinged, which was in beautiful contrast with her fair brow and round white chin; and her nose was of that well-formed aquiline shape which adds so much to the beauty of a lady's face. And her form! so graceful, so neat, so elegant! She was one of those ladies who, when you have seen for the first time, inspire so much admiration that you are not content until you see her again, under such circumstances as will give you an opportunity to study the lineaments of her face and every attribute of her soul.

When she had taken his proffered arm, and was walking down the hall to the place in a set for the next dance, he felt himself in the presence of a being who thrilled his very soul, and he could not tell how or why. In gliding through the quadrille, his eyes spontaneously followed her every movement; and when the dance was over, he offered her his arm, and they wended their way to a seat at the eastern end of the hall. They had talked but little during the dance, and he now wished to hear that voice again, which was so soft and sweet and gentle, and which vibrated through each secret winding of his inmost soul.

"There is an enthusiasm inspired on an occasion like this that so takes me away from the world—this hard, real world—that I sometimes think I could wish it to last forever," Walter said, as they had taken their seats in a corner of the hall.

She looked towards him with that tender expression, in



which there is mingled something of regret and disappointment, as she said, in a low, sweet voice, "I am not surprised that you are delighted and enraptured with a scene like this, for indeed the music is so sweet and exquisite that to feel otherwise would show a deficiency of those fine sensibilities of our nature which I always think are the connecting links between man and the angels. But perhaps you do not mean what you say, when you wish it would last forever. You do not forget that you have a mission,—a soul for higher destinies than mere pleasures."

There was a lustre and a beauty in her eyes, and a radiance on her face, which almost approach that sublime loveliness which is seldom found on earth. As Walter looked into that face, so sweet, so full of innocence and nobility of soul, he felt the influence which her very presence inspired, and in a calm, thoughtful, and earnest manner, he said, "There is a candor, a freshness of expression, a loftiness of sentiment in your words, that meet my warmest approbation. They recall to my mind the predominating impulses of my life. I meet with so few who seriously consider that in this world they have a mission to perform, the attainment of which should enlist all the powers of the mind and soul; and as I have been thinking about this subject so long, I cannot express to you how much I am pleased to here meet with one so in harmony with it. Your words sound so sweetly and musically in my ears, that I would only be too delighted to hear you explain or express your sentiments at greater length on this theme."

She looked at him in an earnest, silent, questioning manner, while a bright smile played around her lips at the compliment so unexpectedly bestowed upon her. She was inclined to think, at first, that perhaps he was in jest; but as she looked again into his calm face and observed the earnest expression of his eyes, the interest manifested in his whole countenance, and the eagerness with which he awaited her answer; and, lastly, as she remembered the low and solemn tone in which he spoke, she dismissed the doubt, and he gained her confidence, her esteem, and admiration. Her answer came soft and sweet and full of pathos:

"It has always seemed to me, from the books I have read, and with what little I have seen of real life, that we have all been created for some purpose, and that we have therefore a

mission to perform. If we fail to accomplish this, we shirk a duty imposed upon us, for which we will have to answer sooner or later. There is a calm delight, a sweet pleasure, in anticipated achievement, that so elevates the soul, and so imbues us with a lofty inspiration, that we consider it not so much an effort as a privilege. And thus engaged, we are borne along by a tide so swiftly that the spring-time, with its flowers and bright hopes, scarcely passes away until another comes, and thus it seems we take no note of time. I believe you remarked that you were with a party of students from Yale. Oh, how pleased I am to see young men animated with high and noble impulses! What a pleasure it must be to their parents to see them inspired with that ambition which lures them on to higher and more ennobling positions in life! Oh, how often I have wished, when I see a young man with genius stamped upon his brow, and a brilliant career before him, should he but make an effort, that I could command some latent power, or strike the match that would set his whole being in a flame of enthusiasm, so that he might rise to make himself a power in the land and a shining star in the galaxy of life! Methinks then that I would, to a certain extent, have accomplished my mission, for it seems to me that one who stimulates others to deeds of glory is not without some of the honor thus achieved."

If there ever were a time when he felt the presence of a superior being, when from her lips he caught that inspiration which infused itself into his whole soul, and to whom he would fain listen forever, it was now. To feel their full force and effect one must have been beside her, to have seen her face lit up with a soul so angelic, so full of goodness, and so full of admiration for everything grand and sublime. In her eyes there was a brilliancy, kindled by the enthusiasm of her soul, which one cannot portray. It can only be seen, and once seen, it becomes a part of sight, and never passes from the memory. But, oh, the sweet, molting cadences of that voice, the soft, sweet strains coming through those rosy lips, like the floating of distant music on the balmy air, once heard they never die in the listening ear!

He was slow to make reply, and then, straightening up and looking tenderly into her face, he said, in his usual earnest manner, "If I understood you aright, then, you believe that every one is peculiarly fitted for a certain mission incumbent

on him to perform, and that if he commence its performance in earnest, the duty will not be as much of a task as a pleasure. I think you are very right in this view of the subject, and I perceive how correct a student of nature you are. It is true that I have no taste or desire for an idle, profitless life, and do not think I would ever be contented if I had nothing even to do. But I have always looked forward to the accomplishment of my mission more as a duty to be performed than anything else, and therefore never viewed it in the light of a privilege. The height of my ambition has ever been to fit myself for the profession of the law, and I think if I am to succeed in life at all, I certainly shall in this."

As he ceased, she raised her dark, lustrous eyes, and while that same radiant expression was on her face, she said, "The science of the law has always seemed to me a lofty and noble one. Perhaps I am more favorably impressed with it from the fact that my father is a lawyer, who is very devoted to his profession. I remember when I asked him once why he was a lawyer, he answered me, very satisfactorily I think now, although to my childish mind then I failed to catch the full import of his words as he said, 'The law, my child, in the language of our great master, is that science which distinguishes the criterion of right and wrong, which teaches to establish the one, and prevent, punish, or redress the other; which employs in its theory the noblest faculties of the soul, and exerts in its practice the cardinal virtues of the heart.'

"I desired to know something more about this science which he so loved, and I therefore read some of his law books, in which I became exceedingly interested. And it does seem to me that there is no profession in the world which employs the faculties of the mind so much in its practice, and in which there are blended the liberal arts and sciences so harmoniously. My father has his library of literature as well as his law books; and his range of thought seems to require a knowledge of the former as well as the latter in order to fully master the issues presented to him. But my favorite reading is poetry. Here I find that sweet, calm delight which nothing else affords me. Would you pardon me if, upon such a short acquaintance, I should ask you the question which you admire the most, poetry or prose?"

"You ask the very question," he said, with a smile, "which

was on my own lips to request of you; and since you have so generously told me your preference, I have no hesitancy in saying that I admire the same myself more than prose. Yet there are times when I admire the latter the most, in order to satisfy certain moods of mind of which I find myself sometimes possessed. But when I am tired of study, tired and disheartened at everything around me,—when some cherished hope has faded, and I feel sad and lonely, as at times almost every student does feel,—the book I turn to for that calm delight and pleasure of which you speak is our great master—Shakespeare. Here all the sublimity of nature is presented to the mind, and he treats the world as though it were a stage, and we the actors thereon. And with what an amazing correctness he delineates the character of each actor! There is no writer, it seems to me, so true to nature as he. I have often asked the question, When shall we have another like him?"

She was sitting in a reclining position, with her cheek resting on her hand, looking dreamily into space, and, without moving or looking up, she said, "We shall never have another. The age that required him has gone by, and I think will never return. Yes, I can say with you," she continued, straightening up and looking in his face, "that some of the brightest moments of my life have been in reading this great master's works, if I except music, which is the predominating passion of my soul. Whatever cares I may have, whatever little disappointments in this life that sometimes cross my pathway, I turn for comfort to the sweet and soothing power of music, and am lost in the raptures of song."

That same angelic tinge of inspiration was yet visible in her face, and that same lustre and languor shone from her eyes, and she was the very personification of all that was innocent, pure, and sublime. Walter was about to say something in reply, when the last mazourka for the evening was announced. She accepted his invitation, and they were soon whirling away in this graceful and exquisite dance.

Some time after this, when they were dancing a quadrille, there fell from her hair, on the floor, a rose, which Walter politely handed to her. "Thank you," fell softly and sweetly from her lips; "and as a token of my regard for your politeness and courtesy, allow me to present the same to you."

"A thousand thanks!" he enthusiastically exclaimed. "And now will you permit me, in return, to present you this small cluster of lilies, which is the usual badge of our society on occasions like this?"

"I thank you ever so much," she said, in that same sweet, soft voice, and with such a graceful bow, that the incident, trifling indeed, was indelibly impressed on his heart.

Soon after this, when the floor manager had introduced another gentleman to her, and she was about to leave him, he said, in a low and tender voice, "Allow me to express to you my sincere thanks, as well for your assistance in the dance as for the kind, hopeful, and impressive words you have spoken to me this evening."

All he saw and heard were her graceful bow and her sweet "Thank you." She had gone from his sight, and was lost amid the joyous throng. He turned away and sought the same place, and sat down, a restless and changed man. Long he sat there, brooding over the strange scene which had transpired so recently. (Never before in his life had his soul gone out and blended in such sweet harmony with the soul of another.) Her words were still ringing in his ears, like the chimes of distant church-bells, and her image was indelibly impressed on his memory. Soon he left the hall and went to his room, on the west side of the hotel, where he could see the moon's last rays fading away, and observe the stars becoming brighter when that lucid orb had sunk beneath the western hills.

But still he sat there, dreaming over this little episode of his life, until streaks of coming day shot themselves over the landscape from the east, and met the darkness of the west, and then, "wrapping the drapery of his couch around him, he lay down to pleasant dreams."

O sweet sleep! O soother of all our sorrows and anxieties! Peacefully we glide into thy outstretched arms!

## CHAPTER IV.

The busy have no time for tears.

BYRON.

Upon her face there was the tint of grief,  
The settled shadow of an inward strife;  
And an unquiet drooping of the eye,  
As if its lids were charged with unshed tears.

BYRON.

"Rosy morn with hasty steps came brushing the gentle dews away;" and the very air was musical with the songs of birds, and fragrant with the perfumes of violets and roses, when Walter awoke from his peaceful slumbers. It seemed to him as though he were just awakening from a sweet dream, and he closed his eyes again, that he might perchance dream on forever. But when the sweet feeling which sleep produces had passed away, and the remembrance of the previous evening dawned upon his mind, he quickly arose with the determination of finding the being who now seemed a fairy from a fairy-land.

After breakfast he went to the parlor, and indirectly scanned each face; then through the corridor to the verandas, the summer-houses, and every resort where he saw happy groups; but all to no purpose. Then he went to the floor manager, and inquired if he remembered the lady with the dark eyes and hair to whom he had introduced him. After some reflection, he remembered her face, but the name was forgotten. "Let me see the clerk," he said, "if any one has gone away." On examining the list, he said a party of ten ladies left on the early train. The only incident, he said, that distinctly came to his remembrance about them was that one had a small bouquet of lilies, and she asked for a small box, or anything in which she could place it. "I gave her one like that," pointing to one on the desk; "and after putting the flowers therein, she placed it carefully in her satchel."

"She is the one of whom I speak," Walter exclaimed, in that blank despair which was depicted so transparently on his

countenance. "And can you tell her name?" he asked, in the most intense solicitude.

"I cannot," he replied; "neither can I tell her destination. Nothing was said or done except the incident to which I have referred."

Walter thanked him kindly for his trouble, and turned away with a sad heart. The thought of the lilies only made him more sorry, as it portrayed the great love she had for flowers and everything beautiful in nature, which served to exalt and increase his admiration for her.

There was but little more pleasure for him at the Springs; and as soon as he could induce his companions to leave, they went up to the Green Mountains and passed the remainder of their vacation. He enjoyed the pure air very much, and when he returned he felt invigorated very much in body, but there was a melancholy appearance in his face which had been heretofore unknown, or at least unobserved. When his friend Dewitt returned, he grasped him by the hand with that exulting joy which two devoted friends feel when they meet after even a short absence in the abstract, but which to them seems a long time. The strangest thing in this very strange affair was the fact that he did not tell Dewitt—his bosom friend—anything of it. Heretofore neither had possessed a secret but the other shared it; and had any one asked Walter why he did not confide this one to his confidential friend, he could not have given an answer. The main reason, probably, was the fact that it was an affair so deeply impressed on his heart, and which seemed so like a sweet dream, that he could not have explained the circumstances so as to give Dewitt a clear perception of what had actually transpired. And should it so have happened that he would have lacked appreciation, or should he have treated the affair lightly, it would have grated so harshly upon his feelings that perhaps it might have marred the strong friendship that existed between them. And thus he locked this secret, which probably, if told to his congenial friend, would have relieved him of many years of anxiety and gloom and sorrow, up in his own heart, for he breathed not a word of it to any living being.

Some time after his return, he received a neat and delicately written letter, perfumed with a geranium-leaf, from Carrie Merton. On previous occasions, a letter from her was hailed

with that peculiar joy which none but the lover can feel. It is true that all the faculties of his heart and mind had not yet been developed fully, and had not received the discipline which experience alone can give; yet he loved, or, at least, thought he loved, Carrie; and in his letters to her he breathed out all the love of his soul, in that strong and impassioned manner that was so characteristic of him. But now there was a change,—oh, so great! We can account for changes and explain their causes in the material world; but we find the task more difficult when we attempt to portray the revolutions which take place in the human heart. At other times he had broken the seal with a rapturous, exulting throb of the heart; but now he took the letter up coldly, and held it in his hand some time before he broke the seal. And at last, when he did so, and had commenced to read, there was a cold, passive look on his face, which told how little affection there was in his heart for the writer. When he had finished it, instead of reading it again and again, as he had oftentimes done before, he folded it up indifferently, and laid it aside with his unanswered letters. He did not act rashly. This was one crowning virtue of his. Though naturally impulsive and enthusiastic, he had by cultivation acquired that calmness and consideration which is the true index of a great and noble mind. He was generous, and was the soul of honor, and he realized now, after examining his own heart, that he did not have any love for this little lady, pretty and good though she be, nor yet could he ever learn to love her. The revolution in his affections was so great that he did not think it worth while to harbor such a thought even for a moment. "No," he said to himself, "I will tell her all, and that henceforth I can only be her friend."

The following is an extract of his farewell letter to her: "I know, dear Carrie, that you will feel sorry, very sorry, perhaps, but indeed I cannot help it. I can only say I am changed—yes, greatly changed—by circumstances over which I have no control. I cannot now undertake to tell you how this change has been wrought, for I scarcely know myself; but I will say this, however, that the course I now take has not been caused by any act of yours. I shall regard you in the future, as I have in the past, as the same true, honorable, and affectionate girl I have always considered you; and I shall esteem it a high honor to be still your friend. I am sorry to write this letter.

Would to heaven it were otherwise, and that I could write to you as passionately and devotedly as I used to do! But why should I act deceitfully with one whom I in times past so much admired, and thought, at least, I loved? When I am so changed in my affections for you, to whom should I reveal this change but to your own truthful self? And if I have in any manner wronged you, I do most humbly crave your pardon."

He closed with a few further remarks as to the disposition of their letters: "I will return your letters," he said, "if you desire it; and as regards mine, you can consult your own pleasure,—either to retain or destroy them."

Carrie had anxiously awaited his reply. Hers was one of those affectionate natures that loved with her whole soul. She had been with Walter so much: all the brightest and happiest days of her life had been passed with him; and now that he had gone from her presence, she found her chief joy in reading and answering his letters. Here she experienced that sweet relief for which her romantic and sentimental soul longed. Many a time, at the midnight hour, when the world was wrapt in slumber, and everything was hushed save the throbbings of her own heart, would she seat herself to answer his letters.

When her father brought her this fatal letter, she ran to her own room, and shut herself out from the rude world to read it. Oh, with what enthusiasm, with what gushings of joy, she broke the seal! There was nothing in her face but sunshine and a happy, blithesome spirit; but, alas! in almost the next instant, when she had only read a few lines, what a dark shadow passed over her face! And when she had read the first page, how it almost froze the blood in her veins! Scarcely had the second page been read, when the letter dropped from her fingers, and she almost gasped for breath. Then, recovering herself, she took the letter up in her trembling fingers again, and, with her eyes almost blinded with tears, she managed to finish it. Then it fell again to the floor, and she leaned back in her chair, as she piteously moaned, in the bitterness of her anguish, "Oh, Walter, Walter, I never dreamed that you would blight the most cherished hopes of my young life!" She wiped her tears away, and, with a sorrowful heart, read it again, so as to doubly convince herself that it was not

all a dream; and when the stern reality of the truth was fully impressed on her mind, she would give way to another passionate fit of weeping. All the past swept through her brain with a distinctness which almost paralyzed her. Still skeptical, it was not until she had read it the third time that she fully realized that it was all true, and that he was lost to her forever. And then she sank into a deep reverie, as her mind wandered back through the once happy past, until the dark shadows of the night deepened around her.

This night—yes, at the solemn, deathly still midnight hour—she sat down to answer his letter. There are times when the past and the future are so intimately blended with the present, that all combined tend to contribute to our happiness. The past to Carrie seemed like a delightful dream, and the future like a golden field, toward which she looked with bright anticipations. These two visions, blended together as they had been, made the present almost a paradise on earth. But now, alas, how changed! The future dark and dreary, without one faint ray to light up the dark channel of the soul; the past a summer dream, over which a dark shadow has fallen!

In her letter she referred him to the past,—the many sweet and endearing words he had spoken,—the many moonlight walks they enjoyed,—and all those pleasant little incidents that lovers so much enjoy. And then she begged of him to tell her the real cause.

"Perhaps," she said, "it might be some fault of mine, and that I am thus unconscious all the time of having offended you;" and then she closed the letter as follows: "And now, my dear Walter, when I am about to draw this long letter to a close, tears come in my eyes, and I cannot see to write. Oh, if I could portray to you the deep sorrow that steals over my soul! Oh, how the bright and cheering hopes of my young life have been so quickly blighted! How everything that I once so loved and cherished has so suddenly faded, and I see not one solitary thing on this green earth that gives my aching heart joy! The flowers of spring-time now will have no more charms for me; the sweet songs of the birds will bring no music to my sad soul; and there will ever hang, as there does now, a dark shadow over my heretofore happy and joyous life, which nothing can ever take away. The only meagre and

transient consolation I now have is when my memory reverts to the past, and fondly broods over those scenes which time can never efface. But I have only this to say, that when you find another, and mayhap you have found her now, who loves you as devotedly as I did and still do, may you ever be happy in your new-found relations in life! I shall keep your letters, unless you peremptorily say that I shall return them. They are reminiscences of the past, which are associated with the happiest moments of my life; and now, as I write the last words, and lay down my pen, it seems to me that the end of all things has come."

When Walter read the letter, he felt sad and dejected; but he laid it aside, and turned a deaf ear to her entreaties. He was sorry, very sorry; but still the mental torture which that scene at the Springs produced preyed upon his mind. Long he sat there, brooding over the sad, sad scene, until at length he remorsefully moaned, "Oh, if she had but spoken some harsh and angry words! if she had only reproached me, and said that I was mean and unmanly, then I would have found some relief in this letter! But as it is—full of kindness, and fraught with that same undying love that always filled her soul for me, with not one harsh word that would show that she still harbored any resentment or anger,—oh, it is too torturing to endure!"

Yes, he was sorry, as her sad words touched his heart; but what could he do? The love that he once bore her was gone, and would he retract and still say he loved her, when in reality he did not? "No, no," he said, as he arose to his feet and commenced to pace the room, "that would be worse still, and end in misery to both of us. Better to part now and forever, and live for the future."

There was no trait in the character of Walter Ludwick stronger than the power of resolution. Though the fates were all against him, yet if he resolved to do anything, or to forget some cherished project that failed, he was almost sure to be successful. Soon after this resolution was formed to forget her, Dewitt entered, and they went out to take their evening walk. Many a time this sad scene returned to his memory, but he had but little time for tears and twilight musings, for he was always busy with his studies, which he pursued now more diligently than before, for in them he found that relief

and consolation which nothing else would give. And thus days passed into weeks, and weeks into months, until a year had passed since he met that face divine, as he always considered it, and the image was as bright and distinct in his memory as when he first saw her.

A year had passed away, but poor Carrie Merton never recovered the shock of their separation. Having at best but a delicate constitution, with a strongly predominant mental temperament, she loved the object in whom her affections were placed with all the passion of her soul, and the sundering of this affection was like breaking the very heart-strings of her being. There was no longer that freshness of youth in her face; and her step was not so light and elastic as in days gone by. Her merry laugh was no longer heard; and she moved sadly and sorrowfully about the house, so that she reminded one of a tender plant withered in its bloom.

## CHAPTER V.

Home is the sphere of harmony and peace,  
The spot where angels find a resting-place,  
When, bearing blessings, they descend to earth.

MRS. HALE'S POEMS.

It was in the lovely month of June; and the last glimmering rays of twilight were fast deepening into night; and the birds had ceased their sweet warblings, save the whippoorwill's piercing notes that were heard from the distant hill-tops. The air was still redolent with the perfume of flowers, and everything wore that calm, sweet look which is so congenial to the poetic soul; and the mind spontaneously wanders back to other scenes, so lastingly impressed on the heart.

It was on such an evening that Walter Ludwick returned home from college with honors stamped on his brow. During these four long years he had been unremittent in his studies. Day after day and night after night he had buried himself, as it were, in his books, by which he acquired that discipline of mind and that advancement and thoroughness in his studies

which gained for him the first honor of his class. He pronounced the valedictory oration in that impassioned manner and with that beauty of arrangement and elegance of diction which gained for him the congratulation and admiration of the whole college. When he reverted to those sacred sylvan scenes through which they had passed during those four long years that now must ever be shrouded in the past, it brought to their minds incidents and memories which can never cease to throb the student's heart. And when he referred to the fact that in a few short years many would be missing, perhaps, from the happy and joyous class which was now about to make its entrance into the world, there as actors, it filled their hearts with that sorrow which none but the student feels, and there were but a few whose eyes were not moist with tears. He was warmly congratulated by the faculty for the able and elegant manner in which he delivered the oration.

But he now was home again at Riverbank, the scenes of his childhood, where he had only been once or twice since he first left for college. The reason for this long absence the reader can well imagine without referring to it. His appearance was almost as much changed as his affections. He was something taller, and of heavier build, and wore a heavy moustache, which greatly improved his appearance, but a wan, care-worn look, which told of hard and unremittent toil and study, rested on his face. His step was not so buoyant nor his manner so gay and lively as when, four years ago, we saw him standing beside the object of his affections, then looking so hopefully into the future. Then the flush of health was on his cheek, and he felt strong and vigorous; but now he seemed to have a broken-down constitution, shattered by incessant toil. When other students were away from college in vacations, he would frequently remain and review up his studies in Greek or Latin, and read some of his favorite works in literature. One of the professors told him that he should not do this, but his only reply was "that he did not care to go away," and thus he made the fatal mistake which befalls so many students, who pass to an untimely grave; so that he had come home now, broken down both in body and in spirit. Some of the neighbors shook their heads sadly, and said that he could not last long. That pale, care-worn expression in his face, which was the outgrowth of hard study, they considered an indication of some hidden

malady, which in a few short years would gain the mastery, and death would claim him for his own.

But as he crossed the threshold, and grasped the hand of his mother, who had ever been so solicitous and anxious for his success and welfare, and whose kind, sympathetic nature seemed in days gone by to calm and soothe him, and when he met the father, whose eye brightened when he heard of his success at college by a letter written to him by one of the professors, he felt the shadows of other days creeping over him, and he was for a time himself again. And the meeting of his sister Marian seemed to revive him more than anything else. They had been companions together, and the one never received a present without sharing with the other; nor was an insult given that was not instantly resented; they had read the same books and sung their favorite songs, and were in almost every respect so congenial that it was the greatest pleasure of their lives to be with each other. Marian played some of his favorite music on the piano, and sang some of her sweetest songs accompanied by the guitar. Then followed some incidents of college-life, which every one knows are always interesting and are listened to with the most profound attention. He told them of his college friend, Dewitt Lu-Quere, and showed his portrait. "This," he said, "Marian, will interest you more than anything else. Ladies, you know, always like to hear of fine young gentlemen, and I can safely say of my chum that he is all that any human heart could desire."

It is probably a fact that there is not that clever young girl in existence who would not be interested in the description of her brother's confidential friend. This was true in this instance, for Marian said, with a face slightly flushed, "You might tell us something about him, since you are at home now, for you spoke of him so often in your letters that we are all interested in him."

Marian was a beautiful blonde, with violet eyes, and long, waving, light auburn hair, a fresh, round cheek, moderate forehead, and sweet, rosy lips. In her face there was that deep expression which portrayed a good mind and a kind and affectionate heart. She was born with a musical taste, for when she was scarcely five years old she could sing wonderfully well for one so young. But the crowning virtue of all

was her bright, cheerful disposition. You could not be in her presence without being infused with her lively and happy spirit. Her life had been one genial ray of sunshine, and if at times she was sad and lonely by reason of Walter's absence, she cheered herself up by looking for his return. Thus her pleasant, happy life passed away.

In reply to her question, Walter said, "He is a trifle taller than myself, but more slender, and very straight and graceful in appearance. His dark hair is profuse with curls, and his eyes are dark and piercing, and his long, dark moustache, with a heavy goatee, makes him what almost any lady would consider a very handsome gentleman. Now, how does that suit your fastidious taste?" he asked with a smile which chased away the gloomy expression from his face.

"I am pleased with the portrait, but you forget that I do not admire gentlemen so much for their personal appearance as for their qualities of mind and heart."

"Ah! I forgot," he softly said; "I believe you do place a great deal of importance on the inner temple of our being; and in reply to this, I can assure you that he is a man of extraordinary ability of mind, with a noble, generous, and unselfish disposition, and fine, tender sensibilities of heart. Yes, he is a man whom you could not help but admire, for he is both a gentleman and a scholar."

"How does it come," she said, thoughtfully, "that since he is such a dear friend of yours, he has never visited you here at Riverbank?"

"It was my intention to have him spend his vacation with me about a year ago, but something transpired which, if I remember rightly, obliged him to return home a few days before the close of the session, and he was thus prevented from visiting me. He promised me, however, when we said farewell, to come the first opportunity he had."

Then followed some general remarks and questions, which naturally arise when the absent ones return home, until it grew late and the father and mother retired, with happy hearts, though mingled with sadness that their son was not looking so hearty as when he went away. Walter and Marian were left alone, and, after a brief silence, he said, "I want you to tell me all about Carrie Merton. Is she well, and what is she doing?"

A shade passed over her face as she sadly said, "Ah, poor Carrie Merton! she is not the girl she used to be! Ever since your engagement was broken, a great change came over her. You no longer hear her merry laugh in their house, for she moves around in such a calm, quiet way that it would make your very heart ache to see her. Shortly after she received your letter, she told me of your canceling the engagement, and that her brightest hopes were thus crushed, and that there was no more joy for her in this world. And, with tears in her eyes, she said, 'Still, I do not blame him, for he has told me truthfully and candidly the change that has been wrought in his heart. But, ah! how it has frozen almost the blood in my veins, and how my young life seems to have so suddenly come to an end!' Hers, you know, is one of those confiding natures that always give you their confidence. She showed me one time some of the presents you made her, and read some extracts from your old letters, which, she said, still gave her pleasure. But, oh! she looks so sad and dreary that I could not help but mingle my tears with hers. And she is so good, such a true Christian, that you would think she was almost an angel. She said her only object in life now was to live for Him who gave her being, and that it might be that this was all for the better, and that when she reached the heavenly shore she would be the happier for having suffered here. But she is so delicate, that a few more springs and I fear she will be no more. Yes, Walter, she is fading,—fading like the tender flowers,—and when she blooms again it will be in that higher and holier land which is ever free from sorrow."

Walter turned his face away, and wiped the tears from his eyes, as she ceased speaking; and when he became more composed, he asked, "Did she manifest any resentment, or did she say any harsh words of me, concerning my breaking the engagement?"

"Oh, no!" Marian replied; "I never heard her speak one reproachful or angry word of you; but, on the contrary, she spoke in the kindest terms of you, and referred to many little incidents in your lives that still gave her some pleasure."

"Oh, that is what tortures the very soul out of me!" he exclaimed, in apparently deep remorse. "In her last letter to me there was not one reproachful word; and its whole tenor



seemed, and really was, so kind and loving, that I thought myself at the time a monster. And now, when you tell me that she still does not express any resentment, and speaks but in the kindest and most loving terms, I feel that I have acted so cruelly that my soul is filled with sorrow, and I sometimes think that I will never be happy again. Oh, if she would only say or do something that would make me angry! If she would only say that I was mean, and would so pervert the truth as to lead people to think that she had broken the engagement of her own accord, for the reason that she did not love me, as nine ladies out of ten would do, then I think I could feel contented and happy! But now, when I see how true a lady she is, and still how loving and affectionate, it burns into my very soul. And when I think I may have been the cause, indirectly even, of blighting her heretofore happy and prosperous life, there is no language that can express my deep grief and remorse."

There is no doubt but that Walter Ludwick spoke the truth when he gave utterance to these words. Gladly would he have permitted her to have made the impression, or even said, that she had jilted him, if it should have taken from her heart all the sorrow she felt for her great disappointment. When he thus realized what a true and noble nature she had, he saw what a precious jewel he had thrown away. He cared nothing for his own happiness; but when his soul went out to this poor, sorrowing girl, he was filled with inexpressible grief, and always felt that his burden was greater than he could bear.

## CHAPTER VI.

Oh, there was a time  
I could have heard such sounds with raging joys;  
But now it comes too late;  
Give blind men beauty,—music to the deaf;  
Give prosperous winds to ships that have no sails:  
Their joys will be like mine.

*Fane's Sacrifice.*

THERE is a rapture—a pleasure—associated with the scenes of home that ordinarily soothes all our cares and troubles, and for a time makes us bright and cheerful. For when we come back after an absence of many years, we find nearly everything as we left it: the old elms, the old homestead, the old beaten paths, the summer-house, with its old rustic-chairs, and many other trysting-places, that make home so happy and comfortable. But with all these self-same associations, there may be a change wrought in some way, that these sacred sylvan scenes delight us no more. There may be a change in our inner temple, a musical chord that has ceased to vibrate in harmony with the others; and we turn away from all we once formerly loved, with a sad and aching heart.

This was so with Walter Ludwick. The scenes and associations which once delighted and interested him the most had lost their charms; and there was nothing now in his present position to give him joy or pleasure. He arose early one morning, as he saw the gorgeous sun tinge with a peculiar grandeur the majestic hills, and walked forth to gaze upon the beautiful scenes and to breathe the pure air, which, for the time, he enjoyed; but the rapture which used to thrill his soul in similar walks and rambles had gone with the days that had passed away.

He went to the academy the next day to attend the examination, as the term was drawing to a close. He saw many familiar faces, and grasped the hands of many warm-hearted friends. He also heard several classes after the professor had examined them, and was pleased to note the progress some of his young friends had made.

After the examination had closed, he went to the office of his old friend, Dr. Daniel Patterson, who was a fine-looking man, with dark-brown hair, light-brown eyes, and with a full, heavy beard. He possessed a good mind and a very pleasant and genial disposition. Having no very strong traits of character, he was rather effeminate, and had but few, if any, enemies, for no one could hold spite against him. If you were angry about some difference that may have arisen between you, it would all be banished from your mind by his pleasant words and cheerful face the next time you would meet him. He was a good physician, a true friend, and a gentleman in every respect. He and Walter had always been particular friends; and there were many little secrets that each had told the other which made them to a certain extent quite confidential.

The doctor grasped the hand of his young and early friend in that sincere and affectionate manner which showed how glad he was to see him. A long time had passed since they had met, for he was absent the last time Walter was at home; and their conversation therefore turned on events that had transpired since he went away.

When Walter was about to go, the doctor motioned for him to remain, and they went back into his private office. Having been seated, the doctor said, in his usual calm and confidential manner, "There is something about which I wish to speak to you, and I can find no opportunity better than the present. The most difficult patient that I have is your particular friend Carrie Merton; and I can scarcely tell what is the matter with her. Now, there is no use in my being backward and excusing my inquisitiveness to an old friend like yourself, for the question I am about to ask is not out of mere curiosity, but because it relates to her health, and, I may add, her life. Is the engagement between you broken? Tell me all the facts."

Walter looked at him a few moments in blank amazement. He could not understand what it meant; but presently the cause of his question dawned upon his mind like a waking dream, and he answered candidly enough, in a low and solemn tone, "Our engagement was broken two years ago."

"I was certain of it," the doctor replied, in an earnest and impulsive manner.

The student who was reading with him came to the door, and said that there was a lady in waiting for him; and then

the doctor added, in a scarcely audible tone, "She will never survive it."

Walter left the office, and on his way home, about twilight, whom should he meet, in a quiet and lonely part of the village, just near the croquet-ground, but Carrie herself! The apparition, as it seemed to him, chilled the very blood that coursed through his veins; and he stood before her for a few moments speechless and dumfounded. The change that had been wrought in her appearance was indeed great, for she reminded him of some ethereal visitant from the spirit-land. The only words that escaped her lips were the almost inaudible ones, "At last! At last!" and she sank down on a seat near where he was standing.

He sat down by her side, and as he saw how bitterly she was weeping, it made his very heart ache.

Gladly at that time would he have wiped out the past and joined hands together in the future, if his conscience would let him have done so. The tender chords of his nature had been touched, and he was almost willing to do anything that would bring joy again to this sad and sorrowing heart. Taking her hands from her face, he said, in a soft tender voice, "My dear Carrie, I see you have suffered; there is no longer that bloom on your cheek that was there when I left, and I feel that I am to blame for it. But let me say to you, that I too have suffered, and still suffer, ever since the time I wrote you that fatal letter. Look into my face, and you will see there a hidden grief that bears heavily on my heart; and I sometimes feel that I have not long to live in this world. But if there is anything I can do for you, let me hear it, and Heaven knows it will be done immediately."

She raised her mild blue eyes, and laid her hand softly on his arm, as she tenderly said, "No, my dear Walter, there is nothing now that you can do. You have told me that you do not love me any more, and I take it that you were speaking the truth. Do not think that I would seek a union void of love. No, I should die first. But there is one thing I want to ask you, oh! so much. Was it any fault of mine that you broke our engagement? You told me it was not in your letter, but I want to hear it from your own lips."

"Dear Carrie," he said, warmly and affectionately, "just as sure as that bright-orbed moon is now tinging those beautiful

hills, and if these were the very last words I should ever speak, I tell you now, at this sacred twilight hour, that it was not by reason of one fault of yours that I have changed in my affections towards you. And further, I now solemnly declare to you, from the bottom of my heart, that I cannot to-night lay my finger on one fault that you have. But a vision has passed over my mind, and I feel that my earthly happiness is done. Now, have I not answered you candidly? And do you believe me?"

"Yes! yes!" she said through her tears. "I hope, though, your brilliant career will not be withered in its bloom. You may be of some use to the world, and, as I always predicted, will fill some high position. But I never will; and if I do soon pass away, the world will but little note that I am gone."

"Oh, do not talk so, dear Carrie, for you may live, perhaps, longer than I will, and may find some one more worthy than I on whom to bestow the strong and priceless affections of your soul. But always consider me your friend, and if there is ever anything I can do for you, I shall consider it a favor to be at your service."

"I accept your friendship, but I shall always regard you in my heart of hearts the same as you were in times gone by; but when we meet henceforth, either in private or in the world, let it be as friends, and let the past be a sealed book between us. I shall never love again, for there is nothing now for me to live for, and I shall never more be happy."

In silence he walked with her home, and bade her an affectionate good-night; and when he turned his steps homeward, it was with a weary and almost broken heart. He blamed himself as the cause of it all; and he almost cursed the night he had ever visited Saratoga Springs. That face still passed before him like a dream; and he saw his earthly happiness fade away. He was restless and discontented. The scenes that once delighted him had lost their charm, and he was a melancholy and unhappy man. He seemed to have lost in some way that motive which inspired him on to deeds of glorious action, and he now no longer looked forward to the career he had marked out before him with that joy which thrilled him in former days. The world to him looked dark and dreary enough.

There is no period, perhaps, in the life of any ambitious

young man so fraught with gloom and almost despair as when he sadly realizes that his health is broken down, and that he has no longer that vigor of mind and body which animated him in former days. He sadly perceived now what a great mistake he had made when he had remained at college during the vacations, studying instead of roaming over the hills and valleys and taking that vigorous exercise which would recuperate both his body and mind. What now, he thought, availed his brilliant education if his health were gone beyond any hope of redemption? Ah, it was a dark day indeed when all these sad, despairing thoughts crowded in upon his mind, for he realized now that when he was about to reach and grasp the coveted prize it only receded the farther from him.

## CHAPTER VII.

When he spoke, what tender words he used!  
So softly that, like flakes of feathered snow,  
They melted ere they fell.

DRYDEN.

A WEEK or more passed with no perceptible change in the Ludwick family, except that Walter, by being surrounded with home influences, was becoming more cheerful, and by taking early walks in the morning was improved in his health. But he was still very far from being as happy and contented as he used to be. Marian made every effort to entertain him, and succeeded remarkably well. She played him his favorite pieces on the piano; and, in their twilight talks in the summer-house, played on the guitar and sang so sweetly, that the very trees and shrubs might have been charmed had nature given them the appreciation of music.

One evening they were sitting out in the summer-house, and Marian said, in her usual cheerful and happy way, "I have something to tell you which I know will surprise you very much. It has been on my mind several days to tell you, but have had no opportunity. You see I have not told you about my new lady friend. Oh, she is a jewel much to be

admired, but rarely to be found.' Now she is to be here this week, and I know you will be delighted with her."

Walter was about to reply, when one of the servant-girls called Marian, and he was left to himself to muse over the information she had imparted to him. The image of this lady whom he had now never seen just arose in his imagination almost as vividly as if she stood before him. For two years, perhaps, it is true to say that he never heard any one speak of a pleasing and intellectual lady but immediately, and without any cause or information as to her appearance, he pictured her as being something like the angelic one he had seen at the Springs, with her sweet face and dark eyes and long, wavy hair; and the vision was only dispelled when he saw her; and then he sank down in deeper despair than ever. In each new face he looked to find the counterpart of this being who became so firmly impressed on his memory, but he had so far looked in vain. Knowing the taste and good judgment of Marian, he was convinced that this lady of whom she spoke was something more than ordinary; and he was restless and discontented until he would see her.

The day at length came; and as the carriage was driven up to the gate, Walter was in his room up-stairs; and as he saw her through the window, a dark shadow passed over his face, and he sank down on his chair. She was not the picture his fancy imagined,—no dark eyes,—no long, dark, wavy hair,—but a blonde in every respect. George Langton, a friend of Walter's, accompanied them, and performed the courtesies of assisting her from the carriage. Some time had elapsed since they came, and still he did not make his appearance. He was not fully conscious of what he was doing until Marian knocked at his door; and, on entering, inquired the cause of his delay.

He excused himself, and said he would be down in a few minutes. "But," he continued, "Marian, I am greatly disappointed in your friend; I do not think I shall ever like her, and I am quite indifferent about meeting her at all. I would prefer to remain where I am."

The look of pain and anguish that he saw in her face stung him to the heart; and he begged her pardon, and assured her that he would be down immediately. But she turned and left the room without saying a word.

In a few moments afterwards he entered the parlor, and,

after shaking hands with his young friend George, he was then presented to Miss Eva Drayton. After the usual ceremonies and compliments of the occasion were passed, the conversation became general. Miss Drayton was very reticent, but George was unusually loquacious and cheerful. He was young, only about nineteen, and was preparing himself for college. His was not a face with which one would be impressed at first sight. He had dark-brown hair, brown eyes, and a face rather long, and not so wide in proportion. Though reared in society, he felt that shyness and embarrassment which made him feel very uncomfortable. He was the gallant of Eva's sister, which partially accounted for his accompanying them, as she had gone to the city.

But there was nothing about her appearance which Walter did not like, further than that she did not come up to his ideal. On the contrary, when he was presented to her, and later in the evening, after he had become more acquainted with her, he found that there was something about the young and delicate girl that impressed him very much. She was not a beauty, but she had that manner and appearance which made her beautiful. With her long, wavy auburn hair, and her mild, dark-blue eyes, she combined with these a very fair complexion, an intellectual forehead, a lovely cheek, delicately tinged like a light, fleecy cloud in a summer's sunset, and a well-formed and delicate mouth, and a face over which it seemed a something of grief had gone, but the traces of which were now fading away. She was bordering on seventeen, of medium height, very slenderly built, and very delicate, almost too delicate to be pretty. She had one peculiar manner that impressed itself on Walter this first evening they were together,—her great desire to be alone, to dream, it seemed, over some by-gone scenes.

But little transpired except that she and Walter played a game of euchre, for she was no conversationalist at all. Walter endeavored to entertain her as much as he could, but he was convinced that he had failed. There was no brightness in her face, only when she was talking with Marian, and then there would a flush, or rather a lustre, appear, which made her very lovely.

The next morning he remarked to Marian about this, and she said, "You must cultivate her acquaintance, for you are not acquainted with her, or rather she is not acquainted with

you. You must remember that she has never been in society, and that she has never had any gallants. Lead in the conversation and endeavor to draw her out and get her interested, and then you will see how rich and fertile her mind is."

He felt that there was great truth in these remarks, and afterwards, when he saw her on the veranda alone, he was impressed with the melancholy appearance that pervaded her whole being. When alone and quiet a slight paleness, just enough to notice it, stole over her face, and she looked so sad and sorrowful that you would be drawn towards her in sympathy.

He stood there for some time watching her, and then moved towards her. The sun was warm and genial, with cool, gentle zephyrs playing around them, and the air was melodious with the sweet songs of birds.

"A pleasant good-morning, Miss Drayton," he said, as he approached her.

She arose, slightly flushed, as she bowed and said, so sweetly, "The same to yourself, Mr. Ludwick."

Walter continued, after being seated, "How negligent my sister has been to leave you alone without telling me of it! I have been at leisure for an hour."

"Oh, not at all!" she impulsively exclaimed. "She excused herself, and then she knows how much I like to be alone. She told me when I came here that I had the privilege of doing just as I pleased. I was enjoying the scenery here, which I think is so beautiful, and of which one has such an elegant view. This is really a delightful place to live. I think I should never tire living here. I regret that I did not see the sun set; I think the scene would be grand indeed."

He was surprised to hear her speak so much. That same bright expression appeared in her face, and whatever of sadness there was when he came out had now disappeared.

In reply, Walter said, "I perceive from your remarks that you are truly a lover of nature, in all its glorious and sublime aspects. And I may further add that I admire very much this sentiment of your being."

"I thank you very much," she said, with a bright smile, while a blush came over her face. "I do not know whether it is a virtue or a fault. My sister Cordelia scolds me so for being so quiet and silently brooding over such a scene as this, that I have been for some time trying to break myself of the habit.

I feel though, sometimes, so lonely, that indeed nature, with its lovely landscape, is the only companion I have."

For the first time he now really felt himself interested in this young and delicate girl. He began now to see that she was indeed "a jewel much to be admired." He began now to see in her sometimes calm, pale face the index of the noble soul within. There was an expression in those soft, tender blue eyes that interested him more than he cared to tell, and he replied, with that natural enthusiasm which had for some time been dormant in his soul, "Never, never seek to crush that angel part of your being which lifts you above the sordid things of earth. I am astonished sometimes, when I contemplate these grand and glorious scenes of nature, and then realize the fact that millions walk this broad earth and breathe the pure air of heaven, and enjoy the clear sunlight of day, and behold a landscape so rich and beautiful, and yet whose souls are so dull and their minds so engrossed with the things of earth that they never for a moment give all this grandeur and sublimity one appreciative thought. There is a power, or rather an element of our being, which lifts us up, as it were, and gives us a fair glimpse of that celestial land where we all some time wish to go. And I take it that this is the same element of our being which is filled with rapture on viewing such a scene as this, and we thus have a foretaste of that joy which will then fill our whole souls."

It would be difficult to portray the infinite delight that filled Eva's heart as he ceased speaking. These were just such thoughts as she had oftentimes been thinking herself, but she never gave them expression in words, and never heard any one else do so. And, as her sister Cordelia had often told her that she must not dream over such scenes, she thought it would be worse still to give her thoughts expression; and thus she kept everything locked up in her own heart. Now, when she heard this almost entire stranger give expression to almost the very words that filled her own heart, she felt that rapture and joy fill her whole being which knows no bounds. And she felt that there was a kindred spirit between them, and that they were not such great strangers after all.

Straightening herself up,—for she had a habit of sitting in a stooping posture,—she enthusiastically exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Ludwick, you do not know what joy it gives me to hear you speak words which find such a sweet echo in my own heart!

Since I came to Riverbank, I have seen no one who uttered one congenial word. I feel now that I am speaking to one who, in some manner, represents the sentiments which I have found to fill my soul."

As she ceased speaking, there was a glowing and intelligent expression in her face that was delightful in the extreme.

Walter was pleased, and said, "The poet, I think, is never so much inspired as when he is portraying the scenes of nature. His world is not the world as it is, but as it should be; and he is never so much at ease as when the reality of the object he paints corresponds, in some way, to the ideal which his imagination and fertile brain invents. So, when he comes to write of nature, he has that reality before him which is the same as the ideal he would make for himself. I sometimes think that by nature we are all gifted with a love for the beautiful; but that, in our associations with those who by some cause, to us not known, have allowed this gift to pass away, we imbibe a careless regard for those things which in themselves are grand and glorious. For instance, just as the persons who come out, for the first time, from a great metropolis and have a delightful view of the country. Though their minds never dwell on scenes of nature, or even art, yet the transition is so great, that they involuntarily find themselves imbued with a feeling, perhaps, they never experienced before. As they look around them, and see the green fields and blooming meadows and sunny hillsides, and hear the sweet carols of nature's own songsters and breathe the pure air of heaven, laden with the sweet fragrance of the roses and flowers that are blooming all around them, they impulsively exclaim, 'Oh, how sublimely beautiful!' And yet, by continued associations with these scenes, they may cease to admire them at all. Thus it ever is with human nature."

When he ceased she drew a deep sigh, and dreamily looked over the landscape, as she said, in a low soft tone, "I never heard any one talk so nicely before."

Soon after this remark, Marian announced dinner, and the conversation ended. After dinner, an excursion on horseback was arranged, and Walter was Eva's, and George was Marian's, cavalier. They had a most delightful time. The air was calm and fragrant with roses and flowers, and the green fields and sunny hillsides presented a fine picture, much to be admired,

and in exquisite harmony with the feelings and sentiments of Walter and his new-found friend. They enjoyed the scenes and the excursion, but more especially the conversation that transpired between them, which was mostly on literature. He found Eva to have a mind well stored with useful and valuable knowledge. The books she had read were numerous indeed, and she had a good and retentive mind. And then the natural simplicity of her manner, and the sweetness and gentleness of her disposition, gained his high regard and admiration.

One little incident, trifling in itself, tends to show that politeness so much to be admired in a young lady. When they were cantering along a beautiful lane, her saddle turned, and she was about to fall from her horse, when Walter checked both their horses, and held the saddle until she had time to extricate herself from the stirrup, and then she slid down to the ground without being hurt in the least. When he had made the saddle safe and helped her to her seat again, she thanked and complimented him so nicely and exquisitely that he fain would have done the same thing over again, to have received the same compliment in return.

It was towards evening, when they were returning home, that they stopped on the top of a hill to admire the grandeur and beauty of the setting sun. "Oh, how beautiful! how beautiful!" Eva enthusiastically exclaimed. "I never before saw such a scene. How much I wish mamma could see it! I know she would be so delighted!"

Walter was not so much interested in the grandeur of the scene as in that moral sublimity which was so apparent in her young and happy face. All that was great or noble in her soul seemed to shine forth with that peculiar glory which is above everything earthly. When they returned home, their hearts were filled with that joy which neither had experienced for years; and the clouds that had heretofore hovered over them had been, for that evening at least, dispersed.

## CHAPTER VIII.

She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew,  
 As seeking not to know it: silent, alone,  
 As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,  
 And kept her heart serene within its zone.

BYRON.

A FEW days after the events recorded in the last chapter, Marian gave Walter all the information she knew concerning the Drayton family, which was briefly as follows: Her father, the son of a rich planter in the South, was educated at a Northern college; and while there, he cultivated the acquaintance of a very fascinating and beautiful young lady, which he continued after he returned home. After a short vacation he entered the ministry, and after he was licensed to preach he came North, and, marrying the being whom his heart held most dear, he bore her away to his sunny Southern home. Having located in the city, and having been thus drawn into the first circles of society, it required a great deal more than a clergyman's modest salary to support his family in the fashionable circle in which they moved. While he lived, there was no change in their domestic affairs, as they received ample means from his salary and estate left him by his father. But when death came and took him from them, a sad change was wrought in their domestic arrangements, and they found themselves hopelessly involved. It is a very rare occurrence that you find a clergyman anything of a financier; and when his estate was settled up, nearly all their furniture, costly though it was when new, had to be sold for a mere trifle to pay their debts, and the family was turned out in the world alone and almost friendless, for their mother's relations were few, and his never liked the alliance. They were not disposed, for this reason, to help the widow and her orphans very much, if, indeed, any at all. They had two sons and a daughter who had died of consumption, which was hereditary in the family; and thus the mother, two daughters, and a little boy ten years old were all who were left of a once wealthy and happy family in their Southern home.

Through the solicitation of some of Mrs. Drayton's friends, they moved to a small village in the North, where George Langton lived, and remained there a couple of years. But there were no advantages afforded for giving Eva an education, and through persuasions of their friends and the recommendations of George's father, they had moved about one year ago to Riverbank, where both Eva and Clarence could obtain an education.

Thus at the tender age of thirteen Eva was deprived of the advantages of a good education. Her sister Cordelia, besides having a mind rarely given to woman, had a thorough and complete education, and had also all the advantages of a fashionable and educated society in the city. Poor Eva was deprived of both of these,—education and society,—and she felt it so keenly that a shadow had thus crossed her pathway, which so far in her life tended to destroy in her associations with the world all that might otherwise have been pleasure and enjoyment.

Being thus shut out, I may truthfully say, from the world, at Slippery Rock, where George Langton lived, her only companions were her books. Nearly all the literary works of their father had been preserved from the impious hand of the executor of the law; and to these she turned with that passionate pleasure which knew no bounds. Poetry was her favorite, but she turned at times to prose for a change, and thus her young life was passed until we see her now at Riverbank. She had no intercourse with the world. She looked upon and admired its beautiful scenery, its grandeur and sublimity; and whatever pleasure it afforded her, she treasured it up in her own heart.

She was thus living a kind of an ideal life, which admitted into its companionship no person whom she had yet seen save Marian Ludwick, of whom she was passionately fond. And she did not seek to know anything about the world; and thus "silently and almost alone, as grows the flower, she grew into maidenhood."

Walter was much interested in her history, and the next day, in conversation with George, he asked him why none of the students gave her any attention.

"Because she cares nothing for them," he replied. "They have frequently called, and if Cordelia were out, she endeavor-

ored to entertain them until she would return; and then, excusing herself, she would retire to her own room. She does not seem to be interested in anything or any person here, and her leisure moments are passed in reading, the only time she seems really to be happy."

Unfortunately, and to the sincere regret of all, Mr. Ludwick received a letter a few days after this, which informed him that business of importance required his presence in the city, and he thought it best to take his son Walter with him. They expected to return in a week, but, through the complication of their business arrangements, they did not return for a fortnight.

Eva remained nearly two weeks. As Marian had told her when she came, she did whatever she wanted. Most of her time, when alone, was passed in reading; and, taking everything together, she was perhaps happier than heretofore. It was unfortunate that Walter was compelled to go away, for he had such a good opportunity to become better acquainted with her; but it is vain to speculate on events that do not come to pass.

One evening the two friends were sitting together in the summer-house alone. Twilight's silvery rays were just deepening into night, and Marian had ceased playing the guitar, and both were silent. After the silence was unbroken for some time, Marian observed the sad expression stealing over Eva's face; and, knowing that she was going away on the next day, said, "My dear Eva, you look so sad; do tell me what is the matter."

She looked up in surprise, and then throwing her arms around her and kissing her passionately, she said that there was nothing at all the matter. Then when she had resumed her seat, she said, mournfully, "But, my dear Marian, I will tell you that I do feel so sad when I think that I am going home to-morrow. Oh, how coldly that word home sounds in my ears! It is not the home we used to have. How happy you must be here, with everything about you that makes life so comfortable and joyous! Marian, I will tell you what I was thinking about just now. I am so sorry that I did not see any more of your brother, for he talked so kindly and pleasantly to me, that I would like to have known him better; and now I may not see him again. You see I had no oppor-

tunity to invite him to call on me, as you expected him back before I went away."

Marian laid her guitar aside and took her seat closer to her friend, and in her low, sweet voice said, "Do not give yourself any trouble about that; I will take him to call on you myself, and I know he will be delighted to do so."

"Oh, I am so glad you will! But perhaps he will not want to come. Oh, Marian, how happy you are in having such a brother older than yourself who is so great a scholar! I remember of hearing my father say that to graduate at Yale College one must be almost perfect; and you tell me that your brother graduated at the head of his class. How happy I would be if I had a brother older than myself, and who knows something of the ways of the world, to whom I could unburden my heart and lay all my little sorrows before him! Oh, if I even had a friend to whom I could look up to with that confidence that I could have in a brother, and ask him for counsel about so many things that present themselves to my mind in nature, and art, and literature! Then I think I would be happy."

These last words were said in that dreamy, absent-minded kind of a way, that it seemed as though she was but thinking aloud. She had never before met a gentleman with whom she had carried on any conversation at all; and now when she thought the opportunity lost (for she never dreamed of his calling on her) of meeting him again, she felt very sorry indeed.

Marian kindly said, "I think, my dear Eva, that you make yourself unhappy by your own actions. Will you be angry with me now if I speak plainly and tell you why?"

"Oh, no; how could I get angry at you, who have done so much to give me joy? And then I so long for a friend to tell me of my faults, for I know I have so many of them. Speak, my dear, sweet friend, speak; I will honor your candor!"

Marian replied in her usual quiet manner, when talking on such subjects, "What I am going to say is, that you are so distant you do not make friends with any one. All the students say you will not speak to them, and they are afraid to invite you to accompany them anywhere. They have an idea that you are very proud and will not associate with them, and that you consider yourself so much above them."



After the profound astonishment which these few words produced had died away, Eva replied, "I do not know or understand exactly what you mean. I do not think the gentlemen care for me. They speak to me occasionally when I meet them, and when they call on sister Cordelia I endeavor to entertain them, if she is absent, until she returns, and what more can I do? They bid the time of day, say something about the weather, and then, what more is there to be said? They do not talk to me as your brother did."

Marian saw the truth of her remarks. If she had been talking to her sister Cordelia, she would have told her to lead in the conversation and endeavor to draw them out; but nothing was further from her mind than to give such advice to Eva. She felt provoked when she reflected how insipid they were that they did not appreciate her, when she had a mind so rich and so fertile, and such a mild and amiable disposition.

"I never considered the fact in this light before," Marian replied; "but now, since you refer to it, I see how right you are. But I do feel provoked sometimes, when I hear them say that you are so proud and that you will not speak to them. I see now that it is their own fault, and that if they knew you as I did they would change their minds; but I think there are better times coming for you."

"I wish your words might be true, Marian; but I fear not. Oh, how dark and dreary this world does seem to me! how all my bright hopes and sweet dreams, cherished in my childhood, have faded away in the darkness that has surrounded me these many years! I do not see one ray of sunlight, one gleam of hope, that would make the future look brighter, and lift from my heart the weight of sorrow that bears me down. Oh, how different my life is now to what it was when I was a child! Then, all sunlight and joy; now, all darkness and gloom. Then, my dear father and sisters and brothers were with us; now, we four are solitary and alone in the world, almost without friends, and with poverty staring us in the face. Oh, how it has blighted my young life!"

When she ceased speaking they were both in tears, and Marian taking her arm, they went into the house. The next day she went home sad and lonely enough, and the only interesting thought in her mind was to see her mother, whom she devotedly loved. She gave her an interesting account of her

visit, and then in a day or two she settled down into her usual monotonous life. She read again some of the authors about which she had conversed with Walter, and she lived and moved again in that world which her own ideality had formed; and she did not seek to know anything about this world of ours, and whatever of grief she had was nursed up in her own heart, for she never complained to her mother of anything.

One of the crowning virtues of her character was the tender regard for the feelings of others, and she could fully realize that her mother had trouble and sorrow enough to almost break her heart.

## CHAPTER IX.

There was awe in the homage which she drew;  
Her spirit seemed as seated on a throne,  
Apart from the surrounding world, and strong  
In its own strength,—most strange in one so young.

BYRON.

ONE lovely twilight evening after Walter's return, he called at Mrs. Drayton's, at the instance of Marian, who desired him to accompany her home after spending the evening with her friend. When he arrived, he found Eva and her alone, and the former said she was delighted to see him. Some time afterwards George Langton called, and a general conversation followed. George was not usually very lively, but this evening, for some cause or other, was quite happy, and passed off to a good effect some jokes which in themselves amounted to nothing, but for the unassuming and quaint manner in which they were told.

Some one proposed a promenade along the river-side, which was willingly accepted by all; and George taking Marian, left Walter and Eva to take care of themselves.

When they reached the river, which was but a short distance, they could see the bright, full-orbed moon shedding its soft, silvery rays over the landscape. Its reflection upon the river was indeed beautiful, and everything, even to the whip-poorwill's shrill notes, combined to make a scene as lovely as

the most poetic taste would desire. It was such an evening when congenial spirits love to commune with each other, and to drink in the beauty that surrounds them.

They had been walking along the bank for some time, when Walter said, "How much this moonlight evening resembles some of those scenes described by Shakspeare in his 'Merchant of Venice!' I think there is no poet so true to nature as he; his portraits are all so real, so life-like."

Her mind seemed to have been drifting in a train of thought, and she was unconscious of all around her,—even almost of Walter himself. His words disengaged her mind, and she abruptly stopped and looked around her, and then, in a low, soft voice, said, "Yes, truly, it is beautiful! Oh, Mr. Ludwick, all nature is so beautiful! How can we make a selection? See yonder little star! It seems like struggling to gain the mastery over the moon. Oh, what familiar friends to us weary mortals the stars—the bright, smiling stars—always are! They seem to smile upon us, even if misfortune does come in some unlooked-for moment."

And as the soft rays of the moon shone in her face, he could see the animation in her eyes and the flush of enthusiasm on her cheek. Her spirit seemed so far above earthly affairs, that everything she said came, or at least seemed to come, spontaneously from the heart. Then she was so young, so fragile, so innocent, that he seemed drawn towards her by some irresistible charm. As he stood there seemingly almost transfixed, gazing wistfully into her beautiful face, emotions of admiration filled his soul. "How sublime," he thought, "and yet how innocent one human being can be!"

As they moved onward, he said, in a soft, solemn tone, "You speak of the stars as our friends; I never viewed them in that light before; but I see now how much truth is in your remarks. He is a true friend who makes us better, who does something even in our hours of prosperity that will elevate our souls and set our minds on higher and loftier purposes. When we gaze upon those far-off myriads of stars, we are amazed at the grandeur and magnificence of creation; and yet, with a feeling of our own insignificance, we are beckoned onward and upward, and we feel ourselves strengthened by the inspiration they produce. But when we come to estimate the cardinal virtues of an earthly friend, how few come within

the circle of those to whom we would impart our confidence! How very truly Tupper, in his quaint and easy style, speaks of friendship when he says, 'For though no man excludeth himself from the high capability of friendship, yet verily is the man a marvel whom truth can write a friend'! It is very true that to form a strong friendship there must be a congeniality of tastes, of sentiments, and aspirations, but it is not always so. Honor and magnanimity of soul are the essential attributes of our being to constitute a true friend. We sometimes meet with those who differ with us in many respects, and yet we can take them to our hearts in the most unbounded confidence."

They walked along in silence for some time, when Eva said, "I have but few friends, and still now, when I think of it, outside of my own relations, I do not think I have any except my dear Marian, your sister. Her I devotedly love. But what do you mean by a friend? The world generally calls him a friend who is not an enemy. This has always been so queer to me. Do explain the matter, for I cannot think that we can call an acquaintance, or a person with whom we may be merely intimate, a friend."

"It is true," Walter said in reply, "that we call him a friend who is not an enemy, but I doubt very much if that is the true import of the word. I generally make some distinction by calling him my confidential friend in whom I place greater reliance and trust than in others. I have only one such friend, and I can place unbounded confidence in him. He has been my companion for years, and I feel lonely without him."

Their attention was here directed to the aurora borealis, or northern lights, which was beautiful indeed; and after they had ceased looking at the phenomenon the conversation turned on ancient literature. Walter was surprised at the learning of one so young and unassuming. She had read *Cæsar*, and was about finishing *Virgil*. The latter, she said, she read with delight. There was such a great opportunity, she said, to gain grand expressions in language. *Virgil* embodied, she thought, all the qualities of the natural poet. Her knowledge of French was fair. Their conversation then turned on English literature, and he found her conversant with nearly all the standard authors. She had a fine, retentive mind, and seemed to have great taste in the selection of her reading matter.

There is only one other little incident that I desire to mention which transpired this lovely evening between this happy young pair. Eva, as they were walking along for some time in silence, in answer to a question of Walter's why she was so quiet, said, "I was just thinking of one thing or question, and I have a great mind to ask you about it. Perhaps it is silly, and you will no doubt say so yourself; but still, it is uppermost in my mind, and I feel as though I would not be contented until I hear your answer."

Of course Walter wanted to know what it was, and she said, "I was just wondering what you thought of me. Will you not tell me?"

Walter was surprised at the question, as indeed almost any one would be. He looked into her face, and as he saw her childish innocence, its sweetness, its candor, he felt his soul filling with admiration for her. He was about to reply, when she said, in a tone half sad, half regretful, "I see you hesitate. You think I am so silly, but I cannot give you an answer to your questioning look, why I ask you such a question, further than that I just wanted to know. They all say I am so queer, and I wished to know what you thought of me."

And, my kind reader, you may think the question a strange and singular one, too, as perhaps it was; but, oh! if you could have looked into that sweet face, and have seen nothing there but truth and innocence and grandeur of soul, and could have understood and appreciated her past life, you would not have wondered at her asking such a question. As you have partially seen, she had heretofore been living in a kind of an ideal world of her own. It was not marked with the devices and tricks and treacheries which so abound in our world. Her life, since a child, may be said to have been passed in solitude, for she had no companions at all, and what she had learned mostly of real life was from her books, her sister, and her mother. But now she had met one in this real world whose tastes and sentiments were so congenial to her own, that the first impulse that seized her young heart was to know what this kindred spirit thought of her.

Walter replied in his usual easy, elegant manner, "That is a question, Miss Drayton, that I would rather not answer; but since I can do so, and that truthfully and candidly, too, I will accede to your request. I most unhesitatingly say that you

have natural accomplishments exceedingly rare to be found in young ladies of your age; a good and retentive mind, stored with useful and valuable knowledge; a noble and generous soul, and a warm and affectionate heart."

They walked along some time in silence when she said, "I thank you so much, Mr. Ludwick, for your compliment, but are you quite sure that there is no flattery in it?"

"No, Miss Drayton, there is not," he said, in a firm and determined tone. "Flattery is beneath my dignity. If there is anything in this world that I prize more than another, it is my sense of honor; and I could not say any one was honorable who was a flatterer."

She was about going to reply, when Walter said, "Would it not be fair for me in return to ask you what you think of me?"

"Well, Mr. Ludwick, I can answer you that in fewer words than it took you to tell me. *You will be a great man.*"

He was amazed at her answer. It was not only what she said, but how she said it. We often hear words spoken which in themselves amount to but little, yet the circumstances surrounding the occasion, the tone of the voice, the expression of the face, all tend to impress them indelibly on our memory. With her mild blue eyes she looked into his face, while her own was all aglow with the enthusiasm and innocence of her soul, and her voice soft and sweet; she spoke the words in such an impressive manner that they seemed to penetrate his very soul. Time and again afterwards, when he was alone, he tried to imitate her, but as often failed, and failed hopelessly.

"I have a great mind to ask you if there is any flattery in that," he said, after they had walked on some distance in silence.

"Well," she replied, with a sweet laugh, "I should only have given you the same answer that you did yourself. I did not really think that you would condescend to flattery, but for some cause, for which I cannot now give any reason, it came in my mind, and I thought it no harm to ask you."

Here they were joined by George and Marian, and they returned home. Walter was pleased with his new friend, and as he bade her good-night he felt that there was an entire change in his whole being,—a change by which his mind was lifted up out of that saddened lonely channel in which it had been drifting for the last two years. There was a joy in his

breast which had heretofore been unknown, for he felt the divine influence of this angel being. The image or ideal that had heretofore been almost a part of his sight was fast fading away. 'Tis said that "distance lends enchantment to the view;" but the distance between him and the being whom he had met just two years ago, as now measured by his imagination, was growing so great, that the image of her was fast fading away from his sight by the sublime splendor of the real one by his side.

## CHAPTER X.

'Tis great, 'tis manly, to disdain disguise;  
It shows our spirit, or it proves our strength.

*Young's Night Thoughts.*

A NEW joy, hitherto unfelt, filled the soul of Eva Drayton, and the world no longer seemed to her dark and dreary. The landscape seemed more beautiful, the birds sang a sweeter song, and the very zephyrs that played around her in a twilight evening were laden with a sweeter balm from the roses and flowers that were so abundant at Riverbank. She had been raised, as it were, by some magic power out of that dreary, solitary life in which she had heretofore lived, and was placed in a bright Eden, which filled her soul with rapture and delight.

Her mother, observing the great change for the better in her countenance, approached the Holy Evangelist with a grateful heart, that her child was no longer the sad and lonely being that she had been heretofore. And she was pleased, although she did not say so, when, one day, Eva came flying into her room, like a bright ray of sunshine, as she exclaimed, "Oh, mamma, mamma, Mr. Ludwick is coming this evening! I do want you to see him so much. He is so true, so good, so kind, that I am sure you will like him."

Mrs. Drayton smiled, and calmly said, "You cannot tell all about him, my dear child, in so short a time. He may be true, as you say, but it takes a long time in this world to find out the true character, though your first impressions may be partially correct."

"Oh, mamma, I know I am right! I told Marian yesterday that I thought he was so much of a gentleman that I was only too glad to meet him again."

She was checked off saying anything further by the frown that passed over her mother's face. "I am surprised, my dear child," she said, "to hear you say that you were praising him to his sister. That certainly is out of place. What would your sister Cordelia say if she knew of it? Never do so again."

Poor Eva put on a very sober face as she said, "What, dear mamma, can there be wrong in my saying that? She is my dear and particular friend."

Her mother explained why it was imprudent to be thus praising him to his sister; that she might consider it very verdant in her doing so, and that there was danger in gentlemen, under such circumstances, being led to believe that ladies were in love with them.

Eva was mortified when she looked at the matter in this light. The truth of it was that she never dreamed of love, or anything of the kind. She was pleased with Mr. Ludwick, but her mind or imagination never went beyond the time when they would meet again. There was no secret purpose in her heart. She was not used to, and did not know anything about, the manœuvres and setting of caps, etc., with which young ladies of her age are very likely to become infatuated. Anything of the kind was as foreign to her innocent mind as day is to night. Never such a thought beyond her admiration for him entered her mind, and she only gave expression to her joyous and impulsive heart. She had no associations with men in the capacity of gallants, and she never dreamed of love, never considered what nor how far her affections or admiration for him went. In the first flights of joy that filled her soul she only knew that she experienced a pleasure with him heretofore unknown and unfelt, but she never paused to reflect what cause produced that pleasure. So that I do not reproach her for perhaps the uncalled-for praise she had bestowed on him to Marian; but, on the contrary, I admire the child-like innocence that it foreshadowed.

On the evening appointed Walter Ludwick called, and was presented, for the first time, to Mrs. Drayton. He was struck with her wonderful intellectual appearance. Her well-formed

but not too prominent forehead; her large, dark, piercing eyes, which seemed to look into your very soul; her face, foreshadowing the kind heart and noble mind within; her soft, musical voice, and the animation which lit up her whole countenance when engaged in any interesting subject, all combined to impress upon Walter that profound regard and consideration which made him rather an auditor than a participant in their conversation. After the usual compliments of the season were passed, Mrs. Drayton said, "Your sister Marian has told us that your intention is to commence the study of the science of law. I admire your taste in the selection of your profession, but, oh, Mr. Ludwick, do you not know how it is dishonored? There are persons who gain admittance into its temple of learning who do not deserve the name of men, for the reason that they condescend to engage in such ignoble and dishonorable transactions, which are a disgrace to true manhood."

Walter in his reply admitted the truth of her remarks, but suggested that "he thought there was no profession in the world where merit found its way to the surface as soon and as surely as in this profession."

"I admit, Mr. Ludwick, the truth of your remarks. It most assuredly is a profession which brings into use the most exalted faculties of the mind and soul. I had a son who chose this science for his profession. I opposed him entering it on account of the many temptations which I knew would be thrown in his way. I had rather he had followed in the footsteps of his father by studying for the ministry; but when I saw how determined he was in his purpose, and how thoroughly it was impressed on his mind, I acquiesced, and he commenced its study with all the enthusiasm and energy of his soul. I called him into my room one day and asked him why he wanted to be a lawyer, and I never shall forget the expression of his face and the triumphant manner in which he spoke in his reply. 'Why, mother,' he said, 'they are numerous; within the realms of this profession move in majestic grandeur fame and wealth and all that makes life desirable and pleasant. If we have the ability, it is *the* profession which is the stepping-stone to assist us in reaching the goal to which the loftiest ambition may aspire, and where you can write your name in indelible characters on the reflecting walls of fame. Wherever you turn

your eyes you will see the ambitious and aspiring youth, in this broad and free and prosperous country of ours, with one accord, crowding into its ranks, where they can have the opportunity of making themselves immortal. I see before me a bright, shining star, which beckons me onward, and I strain every nerve to reach the realms of its glory, where I can enjoy the calm delight which comes from glorious achievements.'"

She could speak no more, for tears came into her eyes as the remembrance of this scene came through her mind, for she covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly. She was a very tender-hearted lady, and had all the tenderness of a mother's heart for her dead children. She could never talk long about them without shedding tears. When she had dried her eyes and wiped her face, she continued: "After he had concluded his little speech I took him by the hand and said, 'Oh, my dear son, I will oppose no longer your adopted profession; but, oh, you deceive yourself when you strive to be great in the manner you have just portrayed. Let us be candid,' I said, 'and talk frankly to each other. Happiness is what you seek, and you will never be happy if you maintain the sentiments you have just now expressed. Fame, of which you speak so joyously, will never bring you happiness or contentment. Did you never pause to reflect that it comes too late? When you reach forth your hand to grasp the coveted prize, you will find it but a vapor which recedes and disappears in the air. Those who work and strive for fame are not aware, it seems, that years will have to come and pass away; that the flowers and roses of spring-time will ever bloom and fade, and the shadows and sunshine of their lives will come and go before they are famous, if, indeed, their fame does come to them at all. But now even say it does come to you, where is the joy that will fill your heart? Your life will be well-nigh spent; your hair will be gray, and your brow, now so fair, will be wrinkled; the bloom of youth and manhood on your cheek will be faded, and the lustre of your eye dimmed, and your body weak with the infirmities of age; and amid the darkness that gathers around your soul, you will bitterly exclaim, 'What is all this worth?' This is a question which has pierced the heart of many a great man. The pursuit of wealth is no better. It alone will never make you happy; and when you pass from this life's pilgrimage you cannot take it

with you, and as it will thus remain on earth, it may only be a bone of contention for your posterity. Where then will be the calm delight which should come from your glorious achievements?"

"He was thoughtful and sad. I saw my words made an impression on his heart, for he looked up so earnestly, as he said, 'What, then, mother, would you have me do? What should be my aim in life?'"

"I was pleased with his question, and answered, 'Look upward, disengage your mind for awhile from the things of earth; and reflect, Wherefore are you here? When you consider the grandeur and magnificence of this great and stupendous world, the wonder and awe that is stirred within you when you contemplate the sublimity of the heavens, does it not appear to you that you are placed here for some purpose,—that there is some mission which you are required to perform? If so, then strive to accomplish that mission. I know the many temptations with which you will have to contend in the practice of your profession; but, oh! always remember to keep your face turned upward. Strive for the right, as heaven gives you to see the right, and, in the language of our great master in poetry,

"Be just and fear not;  
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,  
Thy God's, and truth's. Then, if thou fallest, oh!  
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr."

"When I had ceased speaking, he threw his arms around my neck and said 'it would be his aim to live for some higher and loftier purpose than mere wealth or fame, and endeavor to fill that mission which he then felt it was his duty to perform.' And I tell you truly, Mr. Ludwick, I watched with that admiration which only a mother's love can feel, the noble and manly course he pursued in the practice of his profession. And when he was gone, a distinguished member of the bar told me that they had lost a shining star from the galaxy of their profession."

When she had ceased speaking, a profound silence reigned in their little parlor until it was broken by Mrs. Drayton, when she said, "I probably should ask your pardon, Mr. Ludwick, for this long episode of the past; but I am so pleased when I see a young man with high and lofty motives in view, and

animated by a noble ambition, that it does my poor heart good to converse with him just in the strain I have done. You have adopted a noble profession, and all my best wishes are for your success and welfare."

Walter assured her that the words she had spoken were of the deepest interest to him, and that he listened to her with great pleasure. After she had excused herself and retired from the parlor, Eva said, "I wish you to read a selection from Walter Scott's 'Lady of the Lake,' where he portrayed the scene that transpires between King James and Roderick Dhu. I admire it so much, and I should be so pleased to hear you read it."

She handed him the book, and he complied with her request. He read the selection most eloquently. As he became animated in its rehearsal, her face glowed, as his face glowed, with that enthusiasm and delight which the selection inspired. When he finished, she complimented him so nicely that he fain would have read it again to have received her compliments.

The last time he had been there they played chess, and Walter had beaten her nearly every game. Now she brought forth the chess-board and the game was renewed. She said that she must defeat him this time.

And seating themselves by the table, they commenced to play. The first game Walter won, but the last two Eva defeated him, and they quit playing. She did not seem to be overjoyed at the victory, as Walter thought he saw a great disappointment written in her face. It was true that he had not put forth his greatest effort to win the game, as he had made some very reckless moves; and still he could not tell why he had done so. He was satisfied, however, in a short time after they had finished, that she was not pleased with her victory.

As has before been stated, Eva Drayton was different from most young ladies of her age. There is a very large class of them who admire and love gentlemen because they are handsome or wealthy or say so many funny, quaint, ludicrous things that will make a pretty wax doll of a face laugh. But Eva did not admire gentlemen for any of these qualities at all. Her ideal was higher and loftier. She admired Walter because he had a great mind, which was cultivated and stored with useful and valuable knowledge; and also because he had a

kind and generous heart and soul. She felt that she could look up to and admire him; and that if she wanted advice about anything in science or literature or history, she felt that he was capable of giving her the desired information. Her idea or opinion of him was perhaps too high; but her young and enthusiastic heart was so overjoyed at meeting and entertaining such a congenial friend, that the bare idea of his being anything less than she imagined he was, checked the hitherto joyous vibrations of her soul. So that when she leaned back in her chair, as she drew a deep sigh, there was no joy filled her heart by gaining her victory. In the brief space that was allowed her for reflection these thoughts filled her mind,—that he was not the talented man she supposed him to be, as he had now been defeated in a game in which the very characteristics of a great lawyer were to be found. And she could not think of making any one a confidential friend of hers who was beneath her in intellect. And then, as if a new thought had suddenly entered her mind, she impulsively exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Ludwick, you just let me win those two games to please me. You gentlemen think that we ladies are such trifling little playthings that you can do with us as you please. Why do you not treat us as though we had some mind and a good share of common sense?"

There was a pathos and a certain sadness in her voice which made her words very impressive. Walter gazed wistfully into her face for some time, and then said, "I am very much surprised, Miss Drayton, with what you have just now said. Is it possible you think I would so condescend to win your friendship by the childish purpose of letting you win the games we have just finished? It is true, probably, that I did not play my best; but if I did not, I can give you no reason better than a natural carelessness, caused by my former victories. You must either think that I have a very low regard for you, else you have little faith in myself as a man. I cannot tell which it is."

He spoke in such a kind and impressive manner, which elicited her undivided attention. The dark shadow which, but a short time since, was in her face, passed away, and in its place there came that benign expression which a forgiving and susceptible nature inspires. She turned her blue eyes, with all their full and quiet tenderness, towards him, as she said,

"Oh, Mr. Ludwick, I do not know how to answer you! I cannot think that you would do so, but still—there is a something that tells me it might be so."

She said nothing more. They were silent for some time, until Walter spoke: "I would like to tell you one thing, Miss Drayton, yet I hesitate to mention it, through fear that you may still think, perhaps, that I am endeavoring to gain your friendship through flattery; but still, if you would like to hear it, I will tell you."

She expressed her willingness to hear him, and he said, "I admire you more now than I did previous to this conversation. If there is anything or any attribute of soul that I admire in a young lady more than another, it is a candid and truthful heart. I know then that there is no deceit there,—no deception. You have thus raised yourself in my estimation, and I admire you more and more as I see new traits in your character."

He spoke in that full, earnest, and solemn tone which could not fail to convince her of his truthfulness; and she held out her hand, delicate and trembling as it was, as she said, "I will never again charge you with flattery or deception. Live to learn, if you do not know already, that I have that full confidence in you which will not be displaced until I see some overt act which convinces me beyond the possibility of a doubt to the contrary."

Thus their reconciliation was complete, and the congenial friends were brought closer and closer together, and the cord which bound them seemed to be growing stronger and stronger. Each time they met, something new seemed to transpire which identified them more and more in each other's affections, and the hours that they passed together were hours of sweetest joy and most exquisite happiness.

## CHAPTER XL

Oh, let my friendship in thee wreath;  
 Though but a bud among the flowers,  
 Its sweetest fragrance round thee breathe;  
 'Twill serve to soothe thy weary hours.

MRS. WELLS.

THE pleasant days of summer had passed away, and autumn with its faded leaves came, and occasionally whitened the landscape with its sharp frosts, which made the air so fresh and pure. But with all its beauty,—as when by the morning sun the hills are tinged with a rich, golden hue, and the valleys are delightful with its falling leaves,—yet a melancholy steals over the soul which makes us pensive and sad, and we long for something more, to which we can give no expression.

Walter passed his leisure evenings with Eva, for he had become a frequent visitor at the Draytons', where he was welcomed with all the courtesy and kind attention which their liberal hearts could bestow. Mrs. Drayton said "that when he came into the house it seemed that he brought with him a fresh breeze and bright rays of sunlight, for the gloom and darkness that almost always surrounded them were dispersed, and all was joy and happiness." Eva, in her usual enthusiastic way, declared "that she could always tell his very ring of the bell, for he rung it so determinedly, as though it must be opened immediately."

Walter was greatly improved during these few months that he was at home. That sallow paleness heretofore in his face had now disappeared, and his former cheerfulness was returning, and he found himself growing stronger each day. These last sad scenes of his life were fast fading from his memory; and there was reason to hope that he would still be inspired with that same lofty ambition which had heretofore filled his soul.

But it is nothing strange or uncommon for people to talk and gossip in a little village like Riverbank. Many of the particular friends of Carrie Merton, as they saw the devoted attention he was giving to Eva, shook their heads and won-

dered why he would throw away such a jewel, and be so fascinated with a proud, haughty, and poverty-stricken girl like Miss Drayton. The truth of it was they had but few friends in Riverbank; probably the main reason was the fact that they spoke to none on the street except those with whom they were intimately acquainted. Being raised in and accustomed to the usages of the city, they never stopped on the street to talk with any one whom they would meet, and for this cause the rumor went forth that they were too proud for any earthly use; and that Eva Drayton was worse than all of them. They liked Cordelia better than her, probably for the reason that she, having more experience in the world, would stop and talk to them anywhere. And the Ludwicks were not by any means over-pleased with affairs as they stood, except Marian, who was delighted with the marked attention which Walter had given her friend, whom she devotedly loved, and with whom the brightest and happiest moments of her life were passed. Mrs. Ludwick was not pleased, but said nothing; and Mr. Ludwick thought she was a very fine young girl, but did not give the matter the least thought, as he was pleased with the re-appearance of the general good health of his son.

But Tom Ludwick, to whom the reader has not yet been introduced, for the reason that he was away when Walter returned home, was not well pleased with the state of matters and things in general as he found them in a short time after his return. Thomas Ludwick was a thorough man of the world. He was about the same height of Walter, but very strongly built, with large, heavy shoulders, and would weigh from one hundred and ninety to two hundred pounds. He had light hair and very heavy whiskers, and presented a very respectable appearance. Having been successful in all his business transactions, he had accumulated a fair fortune of this world's goods. He had only one motive in life, it seems,—to make money; (for if he undertook any business affair, he first calculated what it would make him in dollars and cents.) There was as much difference between him and Walter as there is between day and night. Tom would no more have thought of dreaming over the grandeur of a sunset, or the peculiar magnificence of the stars, or the beauty of nature in general, than he would have thought of taking a leap to the moon.



In all his conversations with Walter he endeavored to impress on his young mind this all-important, as he thought, principle of life. He admired his talents and thorough education, but he always did have an aversion and dislike to his passion for poetry, polite literature, and a number of other very nonsensical things, which he considered very childish. He never would have dreamed of picking up a book of poetry or any kind of a novel to read; but, on the contrary, would have considered it as the first evidence of a weak place in his mind.

One day they were out in the fields, and their conversation related to the time, and with whom, Walter would commence the study of his profession. In answer to a question which Tom asked in reference to this, Walter said, "As I have not yet settled on the *time* of resuming my studies, I have not given the matter with *whom* I will read any consideration whatever. It is my intention now not to commence the study of my profession probably for a year or more. I desire to look around me and to see something of the world before I settle down to business."

Tom was very much chagrined and provoked with these remarks, and said, in his usual straightforward and business-like manner, "I am very much dissatisfied with the turn matters have taken with you. It seems to me you have lost the ambition with which you used to be inspired. I fear the cause of this is your reading poetry and looking at the stars, and so on. (Why, if I had passed my time dreaming and building up air-castles, I never would have been worth anything. I am very much afraid that you are going to be what we business men call 'dreamers.') If I knew of a clerk in my store who would be guilty of writing a little piece of poetry, I would discharge him to-morrow. Poetry and music and all such nonsensical affairs are appropriate enough for ladies and nice young men; but it will not do to allow them to cross the threshold of a busy and active life. We want men in this world who have strong hearts and willing hands, and broad, comprehensive minds, to the end that they may take their positions, as it were, on a rock which cannot be displaced by the freaks and mutations of an ideal and dreamy life. I think now, Walter, that if you pause and reflect, you will see that you are drifting towards a very dangerous abyss, which ere you know yourself will engulf you in its bottomless depths."

He spoke in a kind and affectionate tone, for he admired his brother very much, and wanted to see him fill, as he knew he could if he but made the effort, a very important position in life. He wanted to point him out those main landmarks in any career which tend to insure success. And it is true to say that Walter accepted what he said in the spirit with which it was intended, and in reply said, "You seem to think that the great aim in life is to make money. It may be that from the experience you have had in this hard and real world that you are right, but I think quite differently. I think we have a higher mission on this earth than to make money. There is a problem in my mind which I have not yet solved, and for that reason, although it was my original intention to go from college to the pursuit of my profession, I have concluded to wait a year or so, in order that I may learn more, if I can, about myself and my own abilities before I finally conclude to commence the study of the law."

Tom could not listen to such "babble," as he called it, with any degree of patience, and he broke out in rather an impetuous tone, "All you say is nonsense, and is the outgrowth of a morbid and perverted mind. You must get such ideas out of your head. You must remember that the main object in life is to make money. Your ideas are wrong, and are only the import or expression of the ideal life which you have been leading. When you come in contact with the world, you will find that the man without money is of no account whatever. He is knocked around here and there with impunity, and, I may say, leads a very dog's life. I do not say that in general the poor man is to be despised, but I do say, that, if he has the power to make himself rich, and he does not do so out of mere sloth and neglect, he is a being that should be shunned by every industrious business man. Now mark my words," he said in a firm and determined tone: "unless you change your mind and regain your former ambition and firmness of purpose, the time will come sooner or later when you will find your life to have become a failure. There is no other alternative, for every man is the architect of his own fortune and holds his destiny in his own hands."

Walter made some few remarks in reply, and the conversation ceased. What Tom had said produced but little effect on Walter's mind, and that evening he again called on the Dray-

tons. It was now drawing near Christmas, and Eva and Walter had become particular friends. He was pleased with her more than he dared to tell. She was so different from most of the young ladies whom he had ever met. She was growing more beautiful and interesting day by day; and when in her presence he seemed to be surrounded by an atmosphere in which he would gladly linger forever. And her beauty was something more than a pretty face and a graceful form and an easy and courteous manner. It was not like a beautiful tree by the wayside, clothed with its green foliage, which attracts the attention of the weary traveler, but when he approaches it for the purpose of tasting its fruits, he finds it barren. Oh, no, Eva's fascination was something more than in a pretty face, and when you sat down to talk with her, you were entertained with something more than mere prattle about the weather; a giggle and a laugh at some gossip that has been floating in the air, as it were, for some time past. Yes, in her calm blue eyes, in her sweet, expressive face, you could see her rich, fertile mind and her noble and generous soul. Her entertainments were real, were genuine, and ennobling and edifying. Walter felt his soul lifted up, and he felt himself a purer and better man. He felt himself ennobled by the sweet influence which the true, pure, and genuine woman has over any man.

When he called this evening he saw a change in her manner towards him. He felt it in her voice, in the very touch of her hand, and in the very expression of her face scarcely before he had been seated. The conversation was slow and tiresome enough; so much so that Walter could stand it no longer, and impulsively said, "Miss Drayton, there is something wrong. Will you not tell me what it is?"

After some hesitation, she said, "It was my intention to say nothing about it. I was not aware that you knew that I was angry about anything. I would suggest that we say nothing about it."

"No, I am not satisfied with that manner of leaving it rest," he said, firmly. "If you have heard anything, or if there is anything on your mind which would tend to lower me in your estimation I ask you now to make it known to me. Of course I will not insist on your doing so, but will ask it as a favor."

After some hesitation again, she explained to him several matters not now necessary to state, and told him what she had

heard what he should have said concerning her, which had come from some of her enemies. After which, Walter convinced her that there was no truth in the report whatever.

"Since you say so, Mr. Ludwick, I believe it, and we will let the matter be a thing of the past, never more to be revived again."

"I am satisfied with your suggestion, Miss Drayton; but before we dismiss the subject from our minds, let us understand each other, let us speak as friends. I take you to be my friend, and I am free to say that I am yours. If there is anything in this world that I utterly despise more than another, it is that spirit which conceals an imagined wrong, which, perhaps, if explained, or even mentioned, would be the means of settling everything right. And I am free to say further, that it is that spirit of candor which I always knew you to possess which gave me such a high regard for you. Now, if you had let this opportunity pass by without the explanation which you have so generously and candidly given, what could I have thought of you?"

She looked up in his face with that child-like innocence, and with all her loving nature, that shone forth in her mild blue eyes, as she said, "Oh, I do not know what you would have said. Do tell me what you would have thought."

"Why, I should have said that you had fallen from that throne of honor on which my enthusiasm and admiration had placed you." And as he moved his chair closer to hers, he continued: "Now, Miss Drayton, as I said before, let us understand each other. Let us be friends—friends not in its general acceptance, but true, genuine friends—such as you spoke of that evening we passed together at the river-side. I admired your wisdom. Yes, let us be friends who will prove true to each other in adversity as well as in prosperity, and if the time should come when the world looks dark and dreary, without one ray of sunlight to disperse the gloom that surrounds us, it will only be to bind us stronger together. I believe there is such a friendship in this world of ours, for I feel it in my very soul."

"Oh, Walter, Walter, you are so good, so kind, so generous! I wish I could approach something near you!" she impulsively exclaimed. But when she had realized the fact that she had called him Walter,—a familiarity which her sister Cordelia had

often told her never to practice,—she felt as mortified and ashamed as though it had been some crime she had committed.

Walter saw the cause of her distress, and, taking her hands from her face, wiped her tears away, as he said, in his soft and tender voice, "I know it was contrary to your nature. I knew that this cruel, relentless, and unnatural formality which this cruel and fashionable world has forced upon us could not help but harass a free and noble and generous soul like yours. I have longed to call you Eva; and I have longed to hear you call me Walter. We who understood each other so well from the very first time we met, why should we be slaves to a form which is observed only among persons who, though of a long acquaintance, yet know comparatively little of each other. The only wonder to me is that we did not break this iron-bound reserve sooner."

Oh! if there were ever a time when this poor, lonely orphan girl was happy—yes, supremely happy—it was now. Never before had any gentleman spoken to her so kindly, and she felt that calm, sweet joy steal over her as she realized that she had a friend in whom she could confide. Her soul was imbued with admiration for him, and she felt that her cup of earthly happiness was almost full. She reached out her hand as she said, "Oh, Walter, I am so happy to know you are my friend! But I must tell you to remember one thing, which I have told you so often, but which you will not believe,—I have so many faults. Whenever I do anything that is not right, always remember that I did not intend to do so, and consider it one of my faults which must be overlooked."

"I ask you to do the same with me," he replied; "and if any difference ever comes between us, let either one calmly and candidly tell the other of it. And then, if there is any one in the wrong, there will be an opportunity to rectify it."

Thus their reconciliation was complete, and they parted with their souls filled with that admiration for each other made stronger by the confidence which had been exchanged between them.

## CHAPTER XII.

What my tongue dares not, that  
My heart shall say.

SHAKESPEARE.

Stay, winged thought, I would fain question thee,  
Though thy bright pinion is less palpable  
Than filmy gossamer, more swift in flight  
Than light's transmitted ray.

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

MORE than six months had passed since Walter Ludwick's return home from college, and great indeed was the change which in this time had been wrought in his physical organization. Although he had not altogether regained his former vigor and healthy appearance, yet his step was firmer and more elastic, and he launched across the fields with a buoyancy that sometimes surprised him. But, mentally, I doubt if he were changed as much for the better. As long as any young man, before he has any position, allows any affection of the heart to interfere in the least respect with his future career, then he is treading on dangerous ground. It was not; however, as Tom imagined,—that he was losing that ambition with which he used to be inspired. On the contrary, that purpose was just as strong within him as ever, but he had paused, as he truthfully told him, to reflect where, as it were, he was drifting. He was endeavoring to collect his thoughts, to know for a certainty what his future course would be. But notwithstanding all this, and strange to say, the thoughts which were now uppermost in his mind related to his affection for Eva. He called his mind to task on this point: Did he love her? What was his regard or his feelings for her? Could this be genuine love, or was it a temporary feeling that will soon pass away?

These were questions that puzzled, nay, not only puzzled, but tortured his brain day and night. He compared his feelings for her to those he had for Carrie Merton, and he found them to be different, and yet he could not draw the distinction. Then he thought of the absent one whom he had met more

than two years before, and who was still in his twilight musings the morning star of his memory. But that had become, he considered, a vision of the past, and must be banished from his mind. Yet he could mark the distinction between Eva and this strange face of the past, which haunted him still; but when he was in the presence of the former the latter was gone.

But another question, on which probably we can get a better idea from his journal which he kept about this time. On the first day of January he wrote: "I have been to see Eva again. What a charm she has over me!—so strange that I cannot tell what it is. It cannot be love, for we have pledged each other our vows of friendship to be true to each other. Is friendship love? It is an old saying that 'friendship may turn to love, but love to friendship never.' If this is friendship, which we both now agree it is, it must turn to something more before it turns to love. What will be that something more? I do not see how I could think any more of her than I do now. If she only had the accomplishment of music, she would be the ideal of my soul; but she says she likes music, and is now taking lessons, and will no doubt make an excellent musician, and then I cannot lay my finger on a fault that she has. Oh, this marriage relation! what a great mystery it is! Would that some unseen power would direct me in the way I should go! / The future is all darkness,—all mystery,—and sometimes gloom."

January 15 he writes again: "I have gained one important victory, over which I am proud,—that I will never make known my real feelings to her until long after I am admitted to the bar. I was caught once in making a hasty engagement, but I never will be again. < These hasty engagements are entirely wrong, even as wrong, almost, as hasty marriages. I believe I love her, but am I sure? I thought so once before, but how sadly I was mistaken! Now I have made up my mind to abide my time, and if the opportunity ever arrives when I want to get married, then it is time enough to talk business, in a business manner, on this matrimonial affair."

February 10 he writes: "I still have gained another victory. I have studied this matter all over, and after mature deliberation, and with a full consciousness of what I am now doing, and what I have been doing for nearly the last six

months, I am constrained to say, in as mild a form as I can, that I have been acting very foolishly—if I have not even been making a most interminable fool of myself—the whole time. What do I need now of a wife? And why should I give the subject any thought at all, unless I abandon my future career, which I have not the least thought of doing? If I were in a position to marry, then there might be some use in giving the subject some consideration; but how really simple it is now in my even thinking of the like! As Tom very appropriately remarked the other day, 'What in the world would you do with her now?' Just so. I might have answered as many others actually do after they get married, 'Starve her.' My purpose is now to still give her my attentions, and to still be her gallant, but all thoughts of love or marriage must be banished forever from my mind."

It will be seen by the foregoing the state of his mind. If it means anything, it means that he is in that uncertain state of mind which leads many a man to a hasty marriage, and—to ruin. There is no doubt but that if he were in a position to get married now he would make an engagement at once; but his future career is strong within him, and nothing, so far, could swerve his mind from it. And thus the want of an opportunity is frequently a shield to many a hasty and ill-timed action. Should he have lost sight of his career, however, he was just in that state of mind which would have made Eva his wife.

In a conversation with his friend Dr. Patterson on this same subject, Walter denied that there was any love between them; that he was their friend; and although people talked about them, yet it made no difference to him. It was enough that he admired them, and nothing else was required, on their part, to gain them his friendship.

It is much more difficult to ascertain the sentiments or feelings of Eva. She never kept a diary, and therefore there is no trace of her thoughts at this very interesting period of her young life. But if there were one virtue in her more to be admired than another, it was her rare good sense; and therefore I have no idea in the world that she ever dreamed of love. Her admiration and regard for Walter was almost boundless, and the happiest moments of her life had been passed with him. However, she knew that she was young yet,

and was not through with her education. As has been said, she was different from most young ladies whom Walter had met, and they were not a few. And there is great truth in this remark, for, under the circumstances, I do not think that there is one lady in a hundred who would not have been deeply in love, and would not have had air-castles of marriage reared in the most extravagant and gorgeous style. Yes, where is the lady in a thousand who would not have been filled with ecstasies of delight at the prospect of a union with one who possessed, as he did, all the idealities of her soul, and wherein she would change her adverse fortune for one of prosperity and happiness? I do not think there is that lady living whose heart would not have throbbed in the anticipation of such a glorious transition.

But Eva's thoughts never went beyond the moment when they had parted and the time they would meet again; and her life was thus passing away like a sweet dream, in which she would gladly linger forever.

### CHAPTER XIII.

When he spoke, what tender words he used!  
So softly, that, like flakes of feathered snow,  
They melted as they fell.

DRYDEN.

TOM LUDWICK, as has been stated, was not satisfied with the course Walter was pursuing, and had made up his mind, previous to leaving home, to make known his views to him. Tom was very much opposed to early marriages, and said they were nothing but the freaks and changes of a weak and unsettled brain. He claimed that a man should live until he was somewhere between thirty and forty before he should get married; and therefore he looked with a great deal of contempt and aversion to the time Walter was spending with this, as he thought, trifling lady. And he claimed further, that no man should ever think of getting married until he had established himself in business, and could thus live in comfortable and

respectable circumstances. This thing of marrying young and living around in rented houses was something that he could never have done, and he could not imagine how any other person could do so.

And with these ideas it is easy to imagine what he thought of the course Walter was pursuing. Years must elapse before he would be admitted to his profession, and then (for he had seen a great deal of the world, and knew the embarrassments with which a young lawyer had to contend) he knew that many years would perhaps pass away before he would ever have a practice that would clear his expenses. What business he had of looking around for a wife now was more than he could understand. If it were just to pass the time away, it would be well for him to be in better business. A male flirt was something he utterly despised.

One day they were talking as usual, and Tom, in his rough, off-handed way, said, "I expect to leave in a few days, and I would like to know what your purposes are. What do you intend to do?"

Walter could give no definite answer. He said that as yet he was undecided. He would probably commence the study of his profession, or take a tour through the West for a year, and then commence the pursuit of his profession when he would return.

This, to Tom Ludwick's way of thinking, was worse and more of it; and he broke out in one of those impetuous moods of his, when he saw anything transpire that he neither considered business-like nor manly. "What in the world do you want to go West for until you are admitted to the bar? Have you gone crazy, or what is in your mind? The idea of your traveling without having a starting-point in life is simply ridiculous and absurd. What good will it do you to be running around through the West, spending both your time and money, when you cannot possibly have any purpose in view? Now is the most important period of your life, and if you pass it away carelessly, you will find that you will be a dreamer all the days of your life."

Walter scarcely knew what reply to make to this onslaught, as he thought it, and finally said, "You may perhaps be right; but the great trouble with you is, that you think you know a great deal more than you do. In my brief experience in life,

D\*

I have come to the conclusion that until a man finds out that he knows nothing there is no hope for him. I see now how little I know, and how much I have yet to learn, and therefore, before I commence again, I want to see something of the world in which we live."

Although there were truth and great force in these remarks, yet Tom could see nothing in them save a weak and perverted mind; and his reply showed his usual impatience, as he said, "Fiddlesticks! fiddlesticks! you have lost your mind and good memory, and I have no patience with your foolishness. I always had an idea that you would make a great man, but I see that I am mistaken. Your head is all turned with your attentions to the ladies. Now, I never said anything about it, but what in the world is the use in your running down to the Widow Drayton's" (the name by which the villagers called her) "nearly every day of your life? It seems to me that a man of your mind and education would have something more to engage it than running around and spending your time with such a trifling thing as Eva Drayton. Why, she does not amount to anything, poor, weakly, little whiffler that she is,—a mere butterfly. It would not surprise me if the next gale that sweeps from the north would take her with it to her Southern home, and that would be the last you would see of her. If you are after a wife, think of getting one who will be of some use to you, and not one that you will have to keep up in a bandbox. Why, the people here say that she can't work, and worse still, that she won't work if she could. What in the name of common sense you would want with such a wax doll to carry around with you through life is something more than I can understand. You must remember, my dear sir, that in this life you must work,—work manfully, too. There must be no drawbacks voluntarily incurred; there will be enough of them without you putting forth your own effort to get them. You must remember that life is earnest, and that you will have many barriers to surmount and many difficulties to overcome; and if you tie yourself to a being who will retard rather than advance your progress, you will ere long find yourself a shipwreck on the sea of life. Away with such nonsense! Let this little butterfly bask in the sunshine alone, and you leave her and move forward with a firm and steady step in the career which you have marked out for yourself. Put away

this dreaming about the stars and this drinking in, as you call it, the beauty of a western sunset, and many other nonsensical things about which I have before cautioned you. Imbue yourself with higher aims and a loftier ambition, and then, and not till then, will you be a man."

Walter looked at him after he had delivered this harangue in the most profound astonishment. He could scarcely make out what it meant, and he arose to his feet and looked around him. His very soul was burning with indignation. He did not care what he had said about himself,—this he could pass by, thinking that it was meant at least for his own good, as no doubt it was. But what he said of Eva meant no good to her; had any other person save his own brother uttered such language, he would not have stopped to reply in words,—it would have been with blows.

It had been his intention for some time to express his views to Tom in no unmistakable terms; but neither the opportunity nor the fitting disposition had yet arrived. Now, however, the time had come, and, like King James with Roderick Dhu, the words he had just spoken nerved his heart and infused within his soul that spirit which is said to raise mortals to the skies. He did not hesitate for words, for the spirit which inspired him then was the same spirit that, in after-years, distinguished him at the bar, in defense of a beautiful young girl charged with the terrible crime of larceny, when the spectators and the whole court sat in deep amazement as he thundered forth, stumpet-tongued, the deep damnation that instigated the prosecutor to endeavor to drag innocence and virtue and honor and all that life holds dear down to a felon's cell. It was one impulse of his nature to avenge the wrongs of his friends, wherever committed; and more especially did he find his indignation aroused against his brother when he made this needless attack on his new-found and sweet friend. Having arisen from his seat on a log, he stood erect before him,—his face burning with indignation and wrath, and his eyes flashing with the animation of the soul within; and, inspired by the justice of the cause in which he spoke, he exclaimed, "*You are a brute*," in a firm, strong, and impressive tone, mingled with righteous indignation. "Yes, I repeat it,—*you are a brute*. You walk this broad earth amid all its grandeur and magnificence; you are sheltered beneath the

azure canopy of heaven, with its myriads of stars; you breathe the pure air that mystically floats around you; you bask in the bright sunlight of day, and enjoy the lovely twilight of evening, when angels are hovering near you; yes, you enjoy the most perfect health vouchsafed you by the Majesty on high, and yet your heart is as ungrateful for, and your soul as dead to, all these as the dumb animal that nips the grass upon yonder hillside. You never for one moment pause in your haste to be rich to reflect from whence all these grand and glorious blessings flow. You talk about my looking at the stars, and dreaming away my youthful days! Where have I been dreaming them-away? Where have they been passed ever since I was a boy? I answer, at the midnight lamp, extracting gems from ancient lore,—in elucidating mathematical problems, and in demonstrating the fundamental principles of science,—and some of them have been passed, as you say, dreaming over the stars and moon in twilight evenings; and I thank God that they have been passed there, for in solitude we drink deep of that inspiration which animates the soul and brightens the intellect, and ennobles great men to breathe forth 'thoughts that thrill and words that burn,' by which kings tremble on their thrones. Yes, I look upon all these sublime scenes in nature with an admiration boundless as space and endless as eternity, and I thank the Holy Evangelist that my soul is not so dead nor my mind so narrow that it cannot drink in the glory which all this splendor and magnificence inspires. You talk about that little whiffler, or butterfly, as you somewhat vulgarly express it. How dare you slander a being too good for earth? How dare you utter one reproachful word of one whose spirit is as pure and whose character is as white as the angelic robes that float around the immortal throne of heaven? She is as high above these sordid creatures here as the stars are above the earth. You say they—I suppose you mean her enemies—talk about her doing nothing,—that she is a dreamer. They dare not say so to me. They dare not utter one disparaging word of her in my presence. Why, it is posterous to think of it. They, who cannot grasp a single idea beyond a pretty hat or a handsome dress or a beautiful ribbon, talk about one who has a mind that can roam with pleasure amid the realms of literature and art and nature. Never again, upon the honor of a man, for the dignity of a

Ludwick, by all that you hold near and dear to you,—never again, by the sacred regard in which you hold your own sister and mother, utter such shameful words against one—I may say—a child in adversity, who has seen a dear father laid in his cold and icy grave, and who has been deprived by death of the companionship of six brothers and sisters, and who is now dragging out a miserable existence among a tribe in whom there is not one chord of sympathy which should soften and purify their hard and callous hearts. You speak of widow in disparaging terms! I speak of it in more holy and deferential terms. If God himself had not intended she had rights which were to be held sacred and wrongs which should be redressed, he would not have left her unprotected in this cold and cruel world. Yes, you ought to shudder and grow pale at the thought that you have not more of the milk of human kindness than to utter one harmful word of the orphan whose only sin is her poverty. O shame, where is thy blush! But I will be her protector,—not through pity or even sympathy, but for her own priceless self. She shall never want a friend while this heart throbs with a humane feeling. Yes, I repeat it,—*I shall be her protector.*"

He resumed his seat on the log from which he had arisen, and they were both silent for some time. Tom was, to say the least of it, pleased with his speech; not, however, because he was convinced that he was wrong, or that his heart was softened, but for the reason that it showed some ability, both natural and cultivated. As far as the hurting of his feelings was concerned, that was all nonsense; no such thing could be done. Throwing the stick away which he had been whittling, and rising to his feet, he said, in his usual candid manner, "Hang it, you can rattle on at a great rate, but there is no business in all you have said. I look upon everything in a business point of view, and if there is no money in it I let it drop instantly. A man don't want to marry a lady unless she is rich, or is a good cook and can work well."

"There it is again," replied Walter; "you think of nothing but the almighty dollar, and I should not be surprised if you would go crazy over it some day. Get something else into your head."

"Well, now, I am not going to say anything more to you about this matter, and you need not follow my advice unless

you desire to, but, mark my words, if you succeed in life you must have an eye to business. These moonlight notions will do well enough now to dream over, but when you come upon the great stage of active life, where each and every one must play his own part, you will find that you will have something else to do than to be the protector of an angel, as you term her. Now, remember, I speak these things for your own good,—a word to the wise is sufficient,—and, of course, you will have to take your own course."

And the two brothers turned their steps homeward in the best of humor. Each had expressed their own sentiments, and they felt comforted. Tom was in earnest in what he said, and Walter believed his intent to be good, and they were both reconciled with each other.

When they returned home they met Marian on the veranda, and they went into the parlor to have some music.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

Oh, there is need that on men's hearts should fall  
A spirit that can sympathize with all!

PHOEBE CAREY.

MRS. DRAYTON received a letter from Cordelia, stating that she would return home the following week, and when Walter called one evening, Eva told him they expected her in a few days. "I wish you to see her," she said, "for I know you will like her very much. But, now mark my words," she said, with an arch smile, as she looked up to him so innocently, "I can scarcely get in a word in conversation for she is such a great talker that she could entertain you for a whole evening and then have something more to say. But," she continued, "I do not wish you to let her excel you in talking, if she gets in one of her talking strains. She never thinks much of a gentleman if she thinks she knows more than he does, and she generally makes a test of this in conversation."

This was the substance of their conversation, and in a few

days thereafter Cordelia arrived. And the following evening Walter called by appointment with Eva. He found Cordelia to be just the kind of a lady he had imagined from the description Eva had given him. She was not so tall as her sister, but was about as slender, and very straight and gracefully built. He was surprised at the neat figure she presented. Ladies are always proud of some feature in their appearance, and this was one of Cordelia's hobbies. She had dark-brown hair, and dark-brown eyes which were very bright and expressive. Her forehead was unusually high and broad, and she possessed a fine mental temperament, which gave her a sharp, keen, and excellent mind. She was not, however, prepossessing, for previous to her departure to the city she had arisen from a sick-bed, and that bloom of youth, which so enhances a lady's beauty, had gone, and in its place there was that faded appearance which sickness and sorrow always leave behind.

But there was little formality about her, and when in her presence you felt yourself entirely at ease. She had that characteristic of openness, which freed her from anything like assumption, arrogance, or haughtiness, and what she said was expressed with that candor and straightforwardness which dismissed any embarrassment that one might feel in the presence of a fashionable young lady. So that she and Walter, from the very first, became very intimate and had some very interesting and spicy conversations. He was well pleased with her, but his sentiments concerning the two sisters may be more clearly known from a sketch in his journal which was written a fortnight after they had met.

"March 1.—I have been to see the Miss Draytons to-day, and have passed an unusually pleasant time. They are both so interesting, so pleasant, and entertain me so spontaneously, it seems without any effort whatever, that, indeed, one must be deficient in all those finer feelings and sentiments of the soul if he is not imbued with the magic influence which their purity and gentleness of spirit throw around him. But they are so different from each other,—as different as day is from night. Cordelia is all for show and splendor and pageantry, but with all a good heart. Eva, however, dear, sweet, Eva, is so quiet, so unassuming, and so gentle in her disposition. It is rarely that she gets excited about anything, and



whenever she is enthusiastic or jubilant, it is generally concerning something in literature, or science, or art. Cordelia goes in ecstasy over a grand party, where all the jewels and splendor of dress appear without limit. Eva, however, would not be fascinated with such a scene, but, on the contrary, would be more pleased with a quiet, social, congenial gathering, where literary conversation, interspersed with music and dancing, would be the delight and pleasure of all. Oh, yes, Eva is by far the purest, sweetest, and most loving girl of the two."

It will be seen by the above extract, the characteristics of the ladies whom Walter Ludwick most admired. It was not good looks or brilliancy, if that gentle, sweet, and angel-like disposition were absent. These sentiments of the mind and soul he considered paramount to anything else that either nature or art could accomplish.

Walter had a way of getting into the confidence of people that very few possessed. Eva declared one day that he could have her tell him things by merely asking them which she never would dream of telling any person else. He had such an unassuming and courteous manner of coming about it, that you would find yourself telling him something, perhaps, which you would rather had remained unspoken.

Mrs. Drayton felt this same influence steal over her when in his presence, which broke down, as it were, every barrier of reserve that might be between them. One day he called and the young ladies were out, and she came into the parlor to entertain him. She seemed thoughtful and sad, and in the course of their conversation said, "I always want you, Mr. Ludwick, to remember my children when I am gone. A strange fatality has deprived them of father, sister, and brothers, and when I am gone they will be left in the cold and dreary world alone. They do not know that I am so near the tomb,—that the tender cord which binds me here may suddenly snap, and I shall be ushered into another world. But I would not have their minds harassed by such gloomy forebodings of sorrow. Heaven knows they have endured enough already, and my heart aches when I see them dragging out this miserable existence here. This is not the kind of society, Mr. Ludwick, to which they have been used; and it is only when you come that we find a ray of sunshine and joy in our home. Oh, I

have been so pleased to notice the change for the better that has transpired since you first visited us, and we cherish your name now almost as a household word. Believe me when I tell you that you never can imagine the utter loneliness of our position here until we formed the acquaintance of your family. While I am living, it seems to me that I can always provide for them; but, oh! when I sometimes think that I may soon drop off, and leave them friendless and alone, it almost drives reason from my mind."

She could restrain herself no longer, and burst into tears. Walter was surprised and deeply affected. The sarcastic words of Tom flitted swiftly through his mind, and he was at a loss to know what to say. He never dreamed of receiving such confidence, and in his reply assured her that he would always consider it a favor to be counted as one of their friends. "And believe me," he said further, "that I have a very high and holy conception of that divine boon—friendship. Oh, when I sometimes look around me and see how few there be who are really friends, I sometimes think the word, with its proper significance, is a mockery. But I would wish to convey to your mind, Mrs. Drayton, the fact that in me and in all our family at home you have true and devoted friends who will always remember you, no matter if adversity and vicissitudes of fortune do come upon you."

On his way home he felt deeply impressed with this conversation with Mrs. Drayton. If there were one attribute of soul in Walter Ludwick more to be admired than another, it was his noble generosity and good faith. He would place himself at a great inconvenience to oblige and accommodate a true friend. Yes, he was most generous to a fault, and his heart was touched with sympathy as he reflected on the position of this family,—brought down from wealth and position to poverty, and I might say contempt; for so it seemed to them, and so it will seem to every one who has once moved in a high position but by some adverse fortune has been reduced to the most common walks of life. But Walter was as true as steel, and his warm heart prompted him to the resolution to be always true and faithful to his congenial friends.

## CHAPTER XV.

Those hearts that start at once into a blaze  
And open all their rage, like summer storms,  
At once discharged, grow cool again and calm.

*C. Johnson's Medea.*

As spring grew on apace, Walter Ludwick felt tired as he saw everything in nature around him springing up and doing something. He felt that old longing in his soul, to be something, returning; but his mind was so unsettled that he did not know whether to pursue the study of his profession or take a tour through the West. He was urged to the latter more from the fact that his health was not yet fully restored, and he thought if he should spend a summer on the plains, he would regain that sound and perfect health which he had lost, to a certain extent, through hard study.

In speaking of this purpose one evening to Eva, she dissented from it very much, and said, "Do you not see how much time you will lose? Better wait until you are admitted to the bar, and then you can travel and look around where you intend to settle down in business."

"There is great truth in your remarks, Eva," he replied; "but do you not see that I am young yet, and that the first great thing that we must look to here is our health? You see that I have not that perfect health which insures success; and if I should spend a summer on the plains and a winter on the Pacific slope, then you see I would return with renewed strength both in body and mind."

After some hesitation, she replied, "I see now how foolishly I spoke and how correct your purpose is. I am always wrong, and never get anything right. I see now," she continued, after a brief pause, "that you will come home with a greater vim, and you can pursue your studies with more zeal, and hence will make a greater progress. Oh, how I like to see a young man animated with a high and noble ambition!"

Walter was about to make some reply, when Mrs. Drayton

came into the parlor, and Eva told her of Walter's intention to leave them to travel in the West for a year or more.

She looked at him and shook her head, as she said, "That will never do, my young friend. You have no time to lose in traveling now. The profession you have adopted is a noble one, and you should not rest contented until you have been admitted into its realms."

"But, mamma," replied Eva, "you make the same mistake I did myself. You see Walter has impaired his health at school, and he needs rest, and a year in a new climate and amid new scenes will wonderfully improve him, both physically and mentally."

Mrs. Drayton looked at him and said, with a bright smile, "Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Ludwick. Give your health the first thought of your life, for there is where both my sons made the fatal mistake. Oh, my poor heart aches when I see so many young men starting out in life who give their health no consideration, and finally they go down to an untimely grave!" And, as she was leaving the parlor, she said, laughingly, "So you have my approbation to go; but remember always to keep before you a high and noble purpose in life."

One afternoon Walter called and found Eva alone. He intended to take his departure the next day, and when he told her of his purpose, she sadly said, "It all seems like a dream to me; I cannot realize that we will see you no more for a year, and perhaps not then."

She had on a black dress, and wore a beautiful white ribbon around her neck, and there was a slight flush in her face which made her truly beautiful. They were both silent for some time, and then Walter said, "I am sorry, Eva, to leave; I should like to remain and pursue my studies here this summer, which I could do for the first year, but duty tells me I must go. I know, too, that you will be lonely, but I will tell you what I am thinking about; I do not know whether it will meet with your approbation or not; I was thinking we might introduce a correspondence, and that I might interest you by describing scenes through which I would pass, for I know it will be lonely enough for you here. What do you think of it?"

She was silent, the proposition was unlooked for, and surprised her very much. However, after some reflection, she said, in a calm and thoughtful tone, "I would have to consult

mamma about it before I could give you a decided answer about it; but my own impression is, that it would be imprudent; I have never heard of any good resulting from such correspondences. And another thing, Walter, I know when you return you will be changed; you will see other ladies in your travels fairer than I am, and when you return you will not have the same regard for me then that you have now."

He was surprised and pleased with her candor and truthfulness, and, after a few moments, said, "I do not think I will change; I do not think that I will ever think any less of you than I do now."

"But, Walter, you know that time and absence always make a change one way or another. I know you will change,—I may change,—I am only speaking now of life in this *real* world of ours."

He could not help but see the truth of her remarks; young as she was, she had a natural judgment of human nature that would have done honor to a sage. "But you will be so lonely," he said, as the words of Mrs. Drayton, spoken some time before, rang in his ears. "You have no father nor brother; I want to be your friend,—I want to help you all I can and drive every care from your mind."

She looked up in his face with that peculiar expression that he did not then understand, and which he never could forget, as she said, "Yes, I often wonder why it is that we are so afflicted; I am sure I cannot understand it; mamma says she can, but, indeed, I cannot. However, you will call this evening, and then I will give you an answer."

When Walter had gone, she went to her room. She could not understand his remarks; she had never heard him talk so before,—talk, as she thought, with so much pity, it seemed, for her.

As has been stated somewhere in a preceding chapter, none of the Drayton family could endure the idea of being pitied. Either one of them would rather have starved than to have accepted anything through pity. But they loved a warm, sympathetic heart. By Walter's referring to her lonely and friendless position she inferred that he pitied her, and that he desired the correspondence because he pitied her friendless and lonely condition. How she came to this conclusion no one—not even herself—could tell.

And when evening came she was about as angry at Walter as she could be. By some process of reasoning and argument, for she could not afterwards tell how, she arrived at the conclusion that Walter had intimated as much that she wanted to correspond with him, and now when the whole conversation crossed her mind in that light, she was so indignant at her congenial friend, that had he been there then, it would have been difficult to tell what she would have said to him.

It is true to say that Walter was acting with the purest and most unselfish intentions. There is no doubt but that he would have enjoyed the correspondence, yet the motive which suggested it was all induced by his consideration for her, and his desire to do something that would contribute to her happiness. Had it been an inconvenience to himself, it would have been all the same, for he would have done anything almost in his power if it should have been a pleasure to her.

He called that evening and took her to a little social gathering in the village. Nothing was said about the correspondence until they were alone on their way home, when Walter asked her about it. She got angry immediately, and demanded, in a firm and indignant tone, why he had intimated that she wanted to correspond with him. "For, Walter," she continued, "you know I never did, and nothing was further from my mind than to ask any gentleman to correspond with me. Mamma would kill me if she knew it."

If a thunderbolt from Jove had darted from the heavens and precipitated itself beside them, he could not have been more surprised. Yes, he was amazed, he was bewildered; not so much at *what* she said, but in the *manner* in which she said it. And after this surprise and amazement had gone, it was replaced by a sharp, keen anger, and he broke forth in a loud and cutting tone, "I never said or even intimated anything of the kind, Eva Drayton, and you know it."

If he were angry before he spoke, he was thoroughly angry now. Being naturally passionate, it was only by the utmost labor that he had controlled his passions so as to keep them within bounds; and when she, for whom he had had such a high regard, thus so suddenly and wantonly, it seemed to him, misconstrued his kind intentions, and thus had so ruthlessly broken the strong friendship that existed between them, it was more than his proud spirit could endure.

As is natural in such cases, there was a reaction on Eva's part. Although she got in a passion first, yet, strange to say, she never dreamed of his becoming angry, and thought probably that he would beg her pardon and explain what he really did mean. But such humility was impossible with a man of the spirit of Walter Ludwick. He hurled back his short answer in the same tone in which she had asked the question. Seeing his storming anger she became calm, and then asked, in a kind manner, what he really did mean.

Observing her changed manner he changed himself, and then explained everything satisfactorily, to which she replied, "I am very sorry, Walter, that this thing has happened; but all I can do now is to ask your pardon."

They had returned and were in the parlor, but he had not taken his seat. Cordelia, from the few words that she had heard, knew there was a quarrel, and, with her usual good tact and skill, parted with George at the door, and went up to her room.

Walter hesitated to answer her question, but finally said, "No, I will not say I pardon you now. I cannot do so now from the heart, and I am so disgusted with deception that I will not say so unless I mean it. I will call on the morrow, on my way to the station, and will then give you my answer."

And he left her standing in the threshold; she watched him until he passed from her sight, and then closing the door, she returned to the parlor and burst into tears. Realizing now what she had done, she felt that her congenial friend was lost to her forever. She could not think that he would ever again have that unbounded confidence in her which she knew that he had heretofore possessed. Oh! that infinite torture which harasses the soul when one feels that the regard heretofore reposed in them has been lost by their own over-hasty acts. It was indeed torturing to Eva, as she was sitting there with her head bowed down, when she reflected that she had lost the dearest friend she had at Riverbank.

Cordelia entered the parlor softly and took a seat by her side. When Eva had explained all to her she was wonderfully surprised, and said, "This is very unfortunate, Eva, and nothing must be left undone which will work a complete reconciliation. We are all liable to err; but always remember, when you have a true friend, cling to him with hooks of steel. You know

how true a friend Walter has been to us, and we never should forget him. And then, too, how those who hate us here would rejoice that we have no longer the Ludwicks for our friends! Oh, Eva, Eva, it must not be!"

After a brief silence, Eva said, calmly,—for it was her nature to be calm when she saw others excited,—“I see it all just in the light you do, and it worries me, oh, so much! Of course they will all rejoice when they know that we are friends no more; and therefore the only great question now is, how to avert it. I could not blame him if he would never speak to me again, for I had no right to break the mutual understanding that existed between us. It showed that I was lacking that spirit of candor which he admires so much.”

After some reflection, Cordelia said, in a quick manner, “Do you think he will call again?”

“Yes,” Eva replied; “he will call to-morrow morning. At least he said he would, and I have never known him to break an engagement. Oh, Cordelia, you must arrange this matter, for I know you can do so. Do you not remember when we were at home, how you used to settle such little matters for your friends? Now put your wits to work and settle this one.”

“I think I can do so,” she replied. “At least, I promise you all the assistance in my power.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

Soon his heart relented  
Towards her, his life so late and sole delight,  
Now at his feet, submissive in distress,  
Creature so fair his reconciliation seeking;  
His counsel whom she had displeased, his aid;  
As one disarm'd, his anger all he lost,  
And thus, with peaceful words, upraised her soon.

MILTON.

How checkered and varied are the scenes of life! In vain we look around us to see the cause why certain events should come to pass. In that social life which exists in this great land of ours, and in which every person plays his or her own part,

not as a matter of business, nor as a part of their vocation, but in that capacity of friendship, or, I might say, sympathy for each other, how frequently it happens that our best intentions are misconstrued, and the favors which we have and would still confer are not appreciated in the least respect! *O Human Nature!* how often art thou in fault, and look upon the dark side of every picture!

When we view the conduct of Eva Drayton in relation to her wanton and ruthless onslaught on Walter Ludwick, we are constrained to say, "*O Frailty, thy name is woman.*" After all the kind attentions he had given her, and the perfect and complete understanding they had between them; how they had agreed, when there was a misunderstanding, that it should be mutually settled by a calm and deliberate statement of the facts just as they occurred; then, to think that she would fly up in such a passion, and in such a manner breathe forth her angry words to her friend,—and I might add, benefactor, for he had brought her out of that melancholy state in which she had long been dreaming,—was as much unlooked for as it was unladylike and unkind. It was no wonder that he became angry instantly, though he had cultivated this passion to a very great extent. But it is human nature, when we see our best intentions misconstrued, and the favors which we would confer thrown to the winds, to experience that first reaction which finds expression in deep and angry words. Although Walter was not to blame for anything he had said or done, yet even if he had actually done wrong, or if her impressions had been wholly correct, the least she could have done—the least any lady under the circumstances could have done—would have been to ask for an explanation in that amiable and candid manner which we all admire so much in a young lady, and for which he had so frequently complimented her.

He viewed it in this light, and the more he thought about it the more angry he became. It was his generosity and gratitude that were stung, and he experienced that sense of pain which comes from a good deed or an honest intent misconstrued or unappreciated. If his intention had been to have gratified himself he could easily have overlooked it; but when he considered that his whole purpose had been to invent some plan by which he would not leave her solitary and alone, and then to find it all unappreciated, it was something more than his proud

spirit could endure. When he had bidden them all good-by at home, and had called at the Draytons', it was with the firm determination of bidding them farewell forever.

When he rang the bell, Cordelia came to the door, and, as usual, welcomed him cordially into the parlor. Her manner was cheerful, but one could easily trace in her features without the sadness of the heart within. As she reached out her hand she said, "I am glad, Walter, to know that you have come back again to our house previous to your departure."

He thanked her, and seated himself in an arm-chair. It was a beautiful, warm morning, and the birds were singing, and everything seemed so bright and cheerful. He was looking out at the window, when Cordelia said, in her usual candid and earnest manner, "I see, Walter, that you are still angry. Eva has told me of your quarrel, and I think that she did very wrong and acted very hastily; but she further said that she considered your explanation very satisfactory, and sincerely asked your pardon for what she had done. I cannot see how you can refuse her request. She is very young, you know, and we all have our faults and come far short of doing as we ought to do. I know she is very sorry, and feels very much pained at her conduct, which would seem to show a want of that consideration and regard which your true merit so fully deserves. Now, have you so fully made up your mind that there is no chance for a reconciliation?"

Her manner, earnest and candid, affected him very much; but still he was firm in his determination, and answered in his usual candid and pointed way, "I have studied the matter over fully, and I think there is none. We had better part now, and forever."

Cordelia drew a deep sigh and wrung her hands, as she asked, "And why have you made such a firm resolution? Upon what do you base it?"

"I do not know as I can fully express my sentiments on this matter so that you can fully understand me," he replied. "As you say, we have all our faults. I know I have mine, and perhaps among my greatest faults is the one of being too strong in my likes and dislikes. If I am a friend of any one, it is too often the case that I would be willing to make any reasonable sacrifice to aid him, as a part of that genuine and reciprocal friendship. I always looked upon Eva as my confi-

dential friend, and was always true to her as such. You cannot understand this friendship as it existed between us. If we had been but common friends I would perhaps have never given her harsh words a second thought; but when they came from the one for whom I had such a warm friendship, which I always thought was reciprocated, they fell almost like a thunderbolt on my ears, and I could scarcely realize the fact that it was not a dream. I may accept her apology, and grant her pardon in that sense in which the society in fashionable life grants it, but I cannot be the friend to her that I have been heretofore. I can do this, and when we do meet, if ever again, to meet as common friends; for it seems to me now that the almost unbounded confidence which I reposed in her has fled, never again to return, and we can never be the friends in the future that we have been in the past."

Cordelia felt, as he ceased speaking, that it was a difficult task to effect their complete reconciliation. Her keen, apprehensive mind grasped the cause by which, at that time, Walter's friendship was lost. Kind and generous as he was, in his enthusiasm and ideality he had enthroned Eva on a higher sphere of life than mortals usually attain here on earth, and now, of her own rash act, she had fallen from that exalted position, to which she probably might never again ascend. Now was the only time, as she thought, to disabuse his mind of this ideal notion, and to lead him to give the matter one sober and earnest thought, to the end that he might view her in a more earthly light, and to estimate her by the criterion of human nature alone. And as these thoughts rushed like lightning through her mind, she also felt that if there were a reconciliation at all it could only be effected through her at that very time, and she spoke accordingly as she felt. Knowing his disposition so well, she selected her words with that care so as to touch the better angels of his nature, in order that he might see that true, genuine spirit of forgiveness which our Divine Saviour taught when on earth.

"I regret," she said, calmly, and in a solemn and impressive manner, "the decision to which you have arrived, yet I must say that I admire the spirit of candor by which you have explained to me the cause through which you have arrived at this decision. But will you pardon me if I say that you do a great wrong in pursuing the course you do? How far short we all

come of reaching that criterion of perfection which is in our power to achieve, if we only put forth the effort to attain it? Do you not know that we all have our faults? I have mine, you have yours, and Eva has hers; and when we come to estimate ourselves at our best, we are nothing but poor, erring mortals. I appreciate your feelings in this matter, and I know that Eva has, in some manner, fallen from that exalted position on which your enthusiasm had enthroned her; and, although it may have been too high, and you were too ideal and ethereal in estimating her worth of soul and mind, yet what is the charge you bring against her compared with her many virtues,—and virtues, too, which you admire more than any other gentleman I ever knew? Your grievance may be mountain high in your own estimation, but, my dear sir, when you come to fully estimate it with the many faults in human nature, it really amounts to nothing. Think of the many happy hours you have passed together,—your mystic twilight evenings, when you sat together in sweet companionship, drinking in the tranquil beauty of the stars and all the lovely scenes of nature,—think of the books you have read together, and your mutual admiration for them; in fact, think how congenial you have been, and then ask yourself the solemn question, whether this bond of union in friendship's sweetest tie is to be broken for such a trivial matter as this which has now risen between you."

As she ceased speaking, a few stray tears rolled down her cheeks; but Walter did not notice them, for he was gazing intently into the dying embers of the fire, that had been kindled in the morning to clear away the dampness from the room. In her dexterous and skillful manner she had touched a chord of his memory, and he was now beginning to see the matter in its true light; and while he was thinking, Eva entered the parlor with a soft and light step; and as she was coming towards him, Cordelia excused herself and left the room. As Eva seated herself she said, in her calm, sweet way, "I see, Walter, by your looks, without asking you, that you are determined not to be friends again."

Walter resumed his look in the fire as he said, in a low and solemn tone, "I am just thinking the matter over again since I came here this morning. I think it so strange, when I reflect how confidential we had been, and after the resolutions we had made, that you would so rashly disregard them. I

never, under any circumstances, could ever have thought of approaching you about anything in such an angry manner; and then to think that you have done so with me is something I cannot understand."

After a short silence, Eva said, "I am sorry, very sorry, Walter, that this unfortunate affair has occurred. We cannot, however, blot out the past, but only can atone for it in the future. I would willingly do the former if I could, and I shall endeavor to do the latter. But I have often told you that I have so many faults, and you never would believe it. Mamma says so, and Cordelia says so too; and, from the dilemma in which I am now placed, I think I am right in thinking so myself. However, I have now said and done all I can do; and if we part bad friends, I think the fault will rest with you. I have done all I can to close the breach; the rest remains for you. It will be torturing to me, I know, and I shall not be happy again for a long time, perhaps; and the people here will rejoice over it very much. Then we have so few friends here that it seems so dreadful to lose the best ones we have; for I know that dear Marian will not come here any more when you are so angry with us. But we will have to endure it, along with our many other misfortunes in life."

Her manner was so unassuming and so candid and earnest that Walter would have been a brute had he not been affected by it. She and Cordelia both had touched the better angel of his nature; and he held out his hand as he said, "Eva, I see I have been too exacting; I should have forgiven you long ago. Let us be the same friends in the future that we have been in the past."

The bright expression that came over her face and the sweet smile that played around her lips as she took the proffered hand impressed itself indelibly on his memory. "Are you sure now," she said, "that you are not angry,—that there is not the least bit of it left?"

"Yes," he replied, "I am quite sure of it; I should not have held out so long. Your candor and truthfulness have restored you to the same place in my affections."

"Oh, I am so glad that it is so! I will now be happy again, for it seemed to me so dreadful that we should part bad friends."

And, with a light and buoyant step, she ran to Cordelia's

room and told her that they were friends again; and then they both returned to the parlor, and all were happy over their reconciliation.

A month more passed away; and as Walter one day stepped into a book-store in the Garden City of the West, he saw a most beautiful copy of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard;" and, thinking it a nice present for Eva, he purchased it, and with the same inclosed the following note:—

"MY DEAR FRIEND EVA,—As the silent shades of night are deepening around me, I cannot resist the temptation of writing a few lines as I mail you the copy of this beautiful poem, which I know you will admire so much. I present you this as a token of my high regard and esteem for you. I have often since reproached myself for remaining angry so long at you for that little hasty act, which really amounted to nothing when compared to the many illustrious qualities of mind and soul which adorn and exalt you to the height of woman's greatness. But let me assure you now that I admire you more than ever, and that you may always remember me as your true, faithful, and congenial friend.

"WALTER LUDWICK."

Eva was pleased and delighted when she received the letter. She replied the next day in a very elegantly written note, of which the following is an extract: "Oh, how shall I thank you for your gift? I could not have pleased myself half so well. You seem to know what I admire better than I do myself. I shall always treasure it up as a sacred gift from you."

And thus their reconciliation was complete, and they were both happy. But, oh! it would have been better that they had never been reconciled,—better, far better, that they had remained enemies! Oh, this strange and checkered life of ours,—what a mystery it is! Though they met again and passed some of the happiest and most exquisite hours together which mortals are heir to, yet it would have been better, I say, far better, for both of them had they never met again.

## CHAPTER XVII.

What a world were this,—  
How unendurable its weight, if they  
Whom death hath sundered did not meet again!

SOUTHEY.

BEAUTIFUL spring with its musical birds and summer with its roses and wild flowers passed away, and the mild and melancholy days of autumn came on apace. The streets in Riverbank and the surrounding hills and valleys were strewn with fallen leaves; and the landscape wore that sombre and impressive appearance which makes the soul so pensive and sad, and to long for something more,—a something we cannot express.

Eva Drayton had gone to the city to stay with her uncle, where she could attend school for a year, or until the close of the school-year, which was in the following June. Being so glad to go, she nearly shouted with joy when her mother told her there was no more doubt, but that she should certainly go the first of September.

Oh, she was so happy! She hoped that when she would return the next summer, her improvement would be so great that Walter would scarcely know her. So the day at last came, and her trunk was packed and she was gone,—gone for a year as Walter had gone. And while we leave her happily situated with her studies in an apartment, almost as a palace, we will return to a sad, sad scene at Riverbank.

Poor Carrie Merton, whom we have not seen for over a year, is surely approaching that "land from whose bourne no traveler returns." All summer she was very delicate indeed, but when the melancholy and dreary days of autumn came, with its cold and frosty mornings and chilling evenings, it was too much for her delicate constitution, and she had to remain in-doors all the time. And now this was not all. During the latter days of October Mr. Merton had to carry her up and down stairs every day, for she no longer had the strength to go up and down herself. Her mother wanted to bring her bed down-stairs into the parlor, so that she would not be harassed by

having to be carried up and down stairs; but she said it would be too much trouble for them to be having a bed in the parlor, and that they might want to use it. Poor child! she did not think that it was more trouble the other way, and she did not see the tears streaming down her mother's face when she thought that the parlor would be of but little use to them when she was gone. But it so harassed poor Carrie whenever she did see them weep, that the doctor had forbidden any of them to show any signs of grief in her presence.

Oh, she was so patient, so good, so submissive! Carrie always was a true Christian, and now when this great grief and illness had come upon her, she approached the Divine Evangelist with greater fervor, and asked Him to make her heart pure, so that she might swell the chorus of the redeemed. Her affliction and her want of any pleasure on earth had taught her to look upon things heavenly with a more earnest zeal, and to lean on that Divine Saviour who died that we might live. In her communions with Him she received His blessing in giving her that strength and fortitude of soul, which made her feel that her affliction here but worked together to make her place all her hopes and her cares on Him who is able to bear them.

But she was now so weak that she could no longer be carried up and down stairs. Mr. Merton said to her playfully one day, that she had now deprived him of that pleasure.

"But," he said, brightening up, "when spring comes you will be strong again, and can run up and down stairs yourself, and we will take our walks in the fields and over the meadows as we used to do in days gone by."

But poor Carrie shook her head and said, "No, dear papa, you deceive yourself; I never will be strong again; I will never more hear the birds sing their sweet songs, and I shall never see the violets bloom in the garden."

He felt that there was so much truth in what she said, and her voice seemed so like an angel's, that he could not suppress the tears from rolling down his cheeks as he said, "Oh, my dear child, do not talk so! How can we give you up? You must not leave us. What will your mamma do? Oh, it will break her heart!"

"Do not weep, dear papa, do not weep. We will all meet some time again in that higher and better land where there



are no partings,—where there is no sorrow. Oh, it makes me feel so sorry,—dear papa,—do not weep, be cheerful!"

This is the way she would talk to all of them. She told them she would not be well again, and when her mother would burst out in tears, she would say, in her soft, angel-like voice, "Oh, mamma, try to think that this parting here is only for a short time!—try to think that we will meet again in that holier and fairer land, where joy and gladness reigns supreme, and where sorrow never comes. Oh, mamma, we will be so happy then!"

These kind and affectionate words only filled the hearts of her sorrowing parents with a deeper anguish, and it was indeed a sad and sorry sight to see that aged couple, with their gray hairs, weep like a child. Oh, the sorrow for the dead, how deep, how intense!

She had been wishing for a long time to see Marian Ludwick, who had been absent two months on a visit to her friends, and did not expect to return until Christmas. But her mother wrote her that Carrie was very sick and was not expected to live, and that she wished to see her so very much before she died.

This hastened her return, and Mrs. Ludwick told Mrs. Merton that she would soon be home.

One day Carrie felt very sad and suffered a great deal, and said, as she was raised up in her bed in a sitting posture for the first time in the day, "When did you say, mamma, that Marian would be home? I long to see her; tell me that she will be here soon, for I have but a short time to live."

Her mother burst into tears, and said that they expected her home at noon the next day. "But, dear child," she continued, "do not talk of leaving us. You must not go; we cannot give you up."

Carrie shook her head and pointed upwards, and said, softly, "We will meet again,—do not weep so,—do not weep."

She was tired now, and had to be laid down in the bed again; and her mother sat down by her side.

At noon the next day Marian arrived. Mrs. Merton had told Mr. Ludwick to drive her right to their house, as Carrie could hear the train whistle, and the time would seem so long before she would see her if she would go home first. And as soon as the train whistled, Carrie asked if she were coming,

and when they told her that was the train; she softly said that every minute seemed an hour until she would see her dear friend again.

Marian and Carrie had always been great friends until the disengagement between the latter and Walter, which to a certain extent terminated their former companionship. But they still loved each other as much, though Marian did not visit her as frequently, from the fact that she thought it might still bring to her memory scenes of the past, which she thought it best for Carrie to entirely forget.

But now, when she was shown into her chamber, where every one was looking so sad, and with tears in their eyes, her warm and sympathetic heart was touched, and she burst into a passionate fit of tears as she leaned over the death-bed and kissed the dry, bloodless lips of her dying friend. "Oh, Carrie, Carrie!" she moaned, "why did you not tell me long ago that you were so sick, for I would have come home immediately?"

The tears rolled down Carrie's cheeks, and she tremblingly said, "Oh, I am so glad you came! I thought you would not come. I wanted to speak to you alone. You know I always confided in you. Did I ever once doubt you, Marian?"

"No, no, dear Carrie," Marian said, through her blinding tears. "I know you always had full confidence in me, and I shall never forget you. Anything that you tell me I shall always consider a sacred trust from one whom I dearly loved."

They were alone now in the room. All was quiet within; but it was storming and blowing without. The winds were sighing a mournful requiem through the tall willows that grew profusely around the house; and flakes of snow were dashing forcibly against the windows. These tempestuous elements without, in contrast with the quiet and deathly scene within, made it a sad and solemn one indeed.

"Marian," Carrie faintly said, "draw your chair closer to me; I want to talk to you, and I want to ask you a question or two. You will pardon me, won't you?"

Marian drew her chair closer and said, "I am the same true friend of yours that I always was, and everything you tell me will be sacred to your memory, and therefore I will cheerfully answer every question you may ask me."

"I knew you would, for I never doubted you. I wish to know when you have heard from Walter. Where is he now?"

"I cannot really tell you," she replied. "Strange to say, we have only had a few letters from him since he went away; and the last one we received was written when he was on the plains, and then he expected in a few days to cross the mountains. And I may add, too, that in that letter he inquired about you and wished to know if you were better."

Carrie was silent, and she turned her face away, while tears came to her eyes. When she had wiped them away and was composed again, she said, "Do you think he will ever marry Miss Drayton?"

Of course Marian was surprised at her question; but it was asked in such an unassuming way, and there was so much earnestness in her manner, that she thought of nothing else than to answer it candidly.

"Indeed, now, my dear Carrie, you ask me a question that I cannot answer any better than yourself, for I never heard him say. I only know that for the last two or three years he has been very restless and discontented. I will, however, give you my opinion, which is based on no expression from him, but only on my knowledge of him. I know him so well that I can generally tell his future nearly as well as he can himself. In answer to your question, then, I would say that it is my opinion that he does not and never will love her. Eva, as you know, is a very sweet girl; but she is not the kind of a wife he desires. She has not that fine taste for music that he so admires in a young lady. I never saw any one so passionately fond of music as he is, and I have often heard him speak of how most exquisitely you played."

"Now let me ask you another question: Did he ever say why he broke our engagement? He never told me, and when I questioned him he said he could scarcely give any satisfactory reason."

"That is just what he told me," Marian replied. "And he said to me further, after the first time he met you when he had returned home from college, that he could not lay his finger on a fault that you had; that he was changed, and he could not tell how or why. I never heard him speak but in the highest terms of you. He seems to have some kind of an ideal in his mind, and is never fully pleased with any one he meets. I firmly believe that he regards you as much as he does an young lady of his acquaintance."

After a silence, Carrie said, "I always admired him for one thing more than anything else, and that was his truth and candor. He never deceived me, and when he told me that he loved me, I believe he meant it; but, as you say, he has changed, and, oh! I would like so much to know the real cause of this change! However, I am satisfied when you tell me it was no fault of mine. But, dear Marian, when he returns I will be no more here on earth. Tell him, though, that I still loved him,—that I could not live here and be separated from him,—that all my bright, girlish hopes were centred in him, and that when we were engaged I was the happiest girl living, but that when he said he no longer loved me, my day-star set, and I have not had an hour's peace or pleasure since. Oh, tell him if I could only have forgotten him,—if I could only have forced my mind and heart on something else, then I might have lived. But you can never know the agony one suffers when the very cords of the heart, it seems, have been snapped, and a darkness and gloom like death pervades the soul. You can never know the sorrow, until you experience the same, of having all your hopes of the future suddenly blighted at some unlooked-for moment, when, perhaps, you anticipated the most exquisite joy. I never shall forget the time I opened his letter canceling our engagement, with such throbbings of joy; and then, when I had read the first few lines, how it fell from my fingers, and I almost fainted to the floor."

Here she burst into tears, and they both wept bitterly; and then, when she had become calm again, she continued: "But tell him when he comes home that I loved him still unto the day of my death; and that when I go to heaven, I will still pray for him. Tell him to think of me when the flowers are blooming, for he knows that I always loved them so well; and tell him also that if he finds any one that will love him so dearly as I did and still do, never to forsake her, but always to treat her kindly."

She was very much exhausted, and fell into a sweet sleep. Marian stayed with her until the next day. Carrie always inquired for her when she would wake; and therefore she did not go home. She lingered until the next night, when, at near the silent midnight hour, she passed away easily, silently, to that upper and better land where sorrow never comes, and where we never have any heart-achings and disappointments.

Oh, what a grief-stricken family it was! She was the only daughter, and the pride and joy of the whole household. Four brothers were at home, and joined in their grief. A large funeral attended her corpse to its last resting-place, and, as all her friends came and looked at her as she lay there in her coffin, they universally shook their heads as they softly said, "What a tender flower has been withered in its bloom!" And thus the last remains of the once bright-eyed, laughing, happy Carrie Merton were laid in the cold and silent tomb to await the sound of the great trumpet calling us to appear and face the great Majesty on high.

## BOOK II.

## CHAPTER I.

"We leave  
Our home in youth,—no matter to what end,  
Study, or strife, or pleasure, or what not,  
And coming back in few short years, we find  
All as we left it outside: the old elms,  
The house, the grass, gates, and latchet's self-same click;  
But, lift that latchet,—all is changed as doom."  
BAILBY'S *Festus*.

WHEN Dewitt Lu-Guere left college he returned immediately to his lovely home on the Hudson. The flowers were in full bloom, the birds were singing sweetly, and everything around him looked so beautiful that his soul was filled with the same pleasure he experienced in his boyhood days. The large elms around the house waved as majestically as ever, the summer-house looked as cool and inviting, and the old mansion itself looked as familiar and comfortable as the day he packed his trunk and went away to college. But when he entered the house, just as the gorgeous sun had hid himself behind the western hills, he found all darkness and gloom. His little sister was suddenly stricken down with that terrible epidemic, the scarlet fever, and was not expected to live. Two eminent physicians were in attendance, and when Dewitt, frantically almost,—for he dearly loved his little sister,—asked them if she would get well, they both shook their heads and said slowly that it was an extremely doubtful case. He knew by their very looks, and the piercing cries of his mother, that her end was nigh, and he turned and went to his room and wept like a child. These were the only children they had, and this little girl was the idol of the whole household, and especially of Dewitt, who loved her with all the devotion of a brother's love. He had not been apprised of her illness previous to his leaving college, from the fact that they expected him home al-

most every moment; and now, as he realized that death would soon claim her for his own, it chilled the very blood in his veins, and everything around him seemed mysteriously changed.

But the ways of Him who rules the world are not our ways, and dark and mysterious to us though they may be, yet we cannot change them, and the true and humble Christian cannot fail to exclaim, "Even so, Father, for it seemeth good in thy sight." Only a week passed away after Dewitt's return, and at the end of that time her spirit took its flight to that celestial land beyond the shores of time. It seemed that he could not give her up, for he lingered at her grave until his mother almost forced him away, and then he returned home with trembling steps and a sad and lonely heart.

Long after her death he was unhappy and discontented. Not having yet chosen a profession, he did not now give the subject any consideration whatever. The summer passed away without any perceptible change, and in the fall he went on a visit to his uncle's, in Boston, where he intended to remain all winter. His uncle, who was the proprietor of a large wholesale dry-goods establishment, and therefore a great business man, endeavored to impress upon his mind the great importance of a young man having an aim in life. "Now is the time," he said, "that you ought to decide on a profession or go into business, for you have no time to lose. If you want to start in business," he continued, "I will take you in as a partner, and we can run matters to suit ourselves." This kind advice and great inducement, however, made no impression on his mind; and the only reply he made was, that he agreed with him as far as having an aim in life was concerned, but that he saw no profession or business that suited his taste at the present time.

In the following spring he returned home, with still no purpose of life in view. For awhile he assisted his father in the store, and, becoming tired of such a monotonous business, he would go down to New York and remain a month with his cousins. In this way passed another summer, and in the fall he again visited Boston. He only remained, however, about a month; and when he came back he purchased the histories of Greece and Rome and some modern histories, and some of the standard works in literature, with the firm determination of spending the winter in reading. He applied himself dili-

gently enough, and with a great deal of pleasure, too. He was particularly delighted with the ancient histories, and when he had completed them he commenced the more modern ones, and then finished up on English literature. Having read both late and early, during the whole winter, he obtained a great amount of useful and valuable knowledge; but when spring came again, he began to look around him for something new to engage his restless and discontented mind.

In the early part of spring his mother received a letter from her sister in Ohio, stating that her husband and she were going to New York in the latter part of the month, and that they would visit them previous to their return home. She showed Dewitt the letter, and he was delighted to hear of the visit of his uncle and aunt, about whom he had heard so much but had never seen.

Strange as it may seem, yet true it is, that Mrs. Lu-Guere had not seen her sister Mary for nearly twenty-five years. This estrangement was the result of Mary's marriage to a young man whom their mother considered far beneath them in social position. She was a lady who looked upon wealth as the true basis of respectability, and, therefore, could not for a moment countenance the marriage of one of her daughters to a poor man. Such a thing she considered ridiculous in the extreme, and was very much astonished when she heard of their engagement. Her father, on the contrary, found no objections to the young man, for the reason that he had the appearance of energy, had a fine education, and had chosen the best profession in the world, and, therefore, gave his consent to the marriage. But his wife as persistently as ever refused her assent, and told her expressly that if she would persist in marrying him, that she would renounce her forever. Mary asked her time and again why she refused her consent, and her only reason was "that Edwin Alpen was beneath her in social position, and not a suitable son-in-law."

This greatly offended her, for she loved Mr. Alpen with all the affection of her heart, and to hear him thus denounced, simply because he was poor, was something more than her magnanimous soul could endure. So she never mentioned the subject again, but proceeded at once to complete all her arrangements for their marriage, which transpired at the hotel, as her mother would not allow it at her own house. Both

being indignant at this insult, they went West the next day, and never returned to visit the old homestead. Mr. Alpen being naturally ambitious and very attentive to business, soon arose to the height of his profession, besides amassing a very fair fortune by means of his practice and speculations in land. He was elected judge of the court in which he practiced, by a large majority, and now, as he was about to visit the scenes of his childhood, he could look back with pleasure to a busy and active life. Dewitt had often heard of his great success, and as often longed to see him, but the opportunity never seemed to present itself until the present.

Of course they would meet with but few of their old friends, and there would be but little pleasure in their visit. A quarter of a century seems almost an age to be separated from one's birthplace, and it was with sorrow that they noted the many sad changes that time, in his ruthless march, had wrought. But there is nothing more of the least importance connected with this visit, except that Mrs. Alpen was very much pleased with her nephew, Dewitt, and, therefore, extended him a very cordial invitation to visit them at his earliest opportunity. As nothing she could have said would have pleased him more, he joyfully accepted her invitation; and in the following month he packed his trunk and turned his face for the beautiful city of Claremont, on the lovely banks of the Ohio.

## CHAPTER II.

Sir, you are very welcome to our house;  
It must appear in other ways than words:  
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy.

SHAKESPEARE.

THERE is a time in spring—in the latter part of the lovely month of May—when the flowers commence to bloom and the birds are singing their morning and evening carols so sweetly, that we feel as though we were imbued with a new life,—that the heretofore dormant elements of our nature were aroused, and that there was instilled in our minds a higher and nobler

purpose in life. This was so with Dewitt Lu-Guere, as he was seated in the car on his way to Claremont. His past life seemed to come more vividly before his mind by reason of a question Mrs. Alpen had asked him in regard to what profession he intended to study, and his meaningless reply, "that he did not know." He seemed now to perceive what a useless life he had been leading; and it kind of occurred to him that he would like to commence some profession in order to get into an active and busy life, instead of the vain and worthless one that had marked his career since he left college.

These were his thoughts when he arrived at Claremont, but he had not formed any resolution to that effect, and as he approached the elegant mansion of Judge Alpen they were entirely out of his mind. He was fascinated with the real beauty of his uncle's residence when he was on the veranda; and before he rang the bell, he took a look around him at the flowers, the shrubbery, the soft, green grass, and beautiful gravel-walks, and his soul was filled with admiration and delight. But, if he were pleased with the outward appearance, he was more pleased when the servant showed him into a richly-furnished drawing-room. As he took his seat in a large, violet-velvet covered arm-chair, and glanced around at the rich furniture and costly pictures, and gilt-finished books on the marble-top tables, he felt that he was in some mansion almost approaching a palace. Dewitt was always pleased with fine and elegant surroundings; and as he was sitting there amid these gorgeous scenes, he experienced that calm satisfaction which made the time very short until the servant returned, and said, "her mistress would join him in a few moments."

Mrs. Alpen told him to telegraph them what day he would arrive, and as he had not done so, they, of course, were not expecting him. So the reader can, therefore, imagine her surprise and delight when she entered the drawing-room and saw her nephew sitting there with all the complacency imaginable. "Why in the world," she exclaimed, "did you not write or telegraph us that you were coming, and I would have sent the barouche to the depot for you?"

Mrs. Alpen was a true woman, with a highly-cultivated mind and heart,—devoid of all snobbishness,—full of the milk of human kindness,—and more ready to give than to receive favors, and one who sought to do those little kindnesses

which do so much to endear those with whom she may be associated. She was very domestic in her habits, not overfond of display, dressed well without ostentation, and was a very kind friend, a good wife, and a most sterling mother. She gave Dewitt that warm and affectionate welcome which made him feel quite at home. In her candid and sincere manner, she said, after they had talked for some time, "Now, you see our house, and I will show you the library, and you can see the flowers and shrubbery and the beautiful lawn from the veranda. Now, I wish you to try and make yourself feel at home, and let us at once, and without any ceremony, renew, or rather form, that friendship which has been so long delayed between us."

Dewitt was surprised and delighted with the warm reception thus accorded to him, and said, "Indeed, my dear aunt, I cannot find words to express to you my thanks for your kind and affectionate and friendly words. I can say that I am only too glad to have made that acquaintance, and thus formed a friendship which, as you say, should never have been estranged."

"I am so glad you came," Mrs. Alpen replied. "Mr. Alpen was wondering the other day whether you would really come, and my daughter Blanche, I know, will be so glad to see you. She has been so quiet and dreary-like ever since she came from school, that I would like to see her as gay and lively as she used to be."

But little more was said until Judge Alpen came in, and he gave him a warm and affectionate shake of the hand, and welcomed him to his home in that happy and courteous manner so natural to him. Judge Alpen was a man of about forty-eight years of age, with hair and beard slightly gray, rather tall and heavily built, and with a strong, muscular frame. He had a large, prominent forehead, brown eyes, and a face which at once convinced you of the eminent mind and generous soul within. He was a ripe scholar, and his range of knowledge embraced the history and jurisprudence of the nations from which our laws and customs are derived, as well as their literature and sciences. The political history and economy of our own country he had read with infinite delight, and as for a thorough knowledge of our laws, there was no lawyer in all Claremont who could be called his superior. When he gave

an opinion on a legal question it carried conviction, and no man ever thought of commencing a lawsuit if he counseled him to the contrary. He had made money rapidly in his profession, and had invested it in real estate which advanced in value, and when he went on the bench he was considered as wealthy a man as there was in Claremont. His term expired at the next term of court, and they endeavored to have him submit his name as a candidate for re-election, but he declined, saying "that he wished to retire to private life, in order that he might attend to his private business."

Mrs. Alpen had excused herself when the judge entered, and now, having returned with her daughter, she said, in her own natural and interesting manner, "This is your cousin Blanche, Mr. Lu-Guere, who has been on tip-toe to see you ever since I told her you had promised to visit us, and I know you will be pleased with each other." Blanche, after a graceful bow, extended her hand, as she said, in a soft, sweet, and musical voice, "I welcome my cousin to Claremont with that heartfelt joy which words cannot express."

Dewitt was now experiencing that exquisite pleasure which comes from appreciation. He was pleased, yes, delighted, with the cordial greeting extended him by his uncle and aunt; but it is true to say that when he heard the soft, sweet voice of his cousin, and felt the warm and affectionate grasp of her hand and looked into her lovely face, he was filled with supreme admiration and delight.

Blanche Alpen was one of those young ladies about whom we read, but rarely find. She was a brunette, with features of almost Grecian straightness, with a wealth of dark, wavy hair, which hung profusely around her neck and shoulders; her forehead was of that moderate size which renders the face beautifully proportioned and gives it a very intellectual appearance; her cheek was of that exquisite roundness and softness peculiar to women of southern climes; her eyes were dark,—very dark, and sometimes piercing,—but shining with that lambent light, and yearning that soft, languid beauty, which seemed to be the index of the lofty and generous soul within; her chin was round and beautifully formed, and there was a sweet and fascinating smile that played around her lips, and a flush and classical expression in her face, which threw around her a magnetism, as it were, which at once riveted your at-

tention, and you felt yourself irresistibly drawn towards her with raptures of admiration and delight.

At least Dewitt Lu-Guere felt this strange influence this first evening that he met his Western cousin. Then we must not forget her graceful figure, of medium height, straight, and slender; and a neatness and simplicity in her dress that almost any gentleman admires. Indeed, one will more frequently hear the expression, "What a beautiful figure!" than "What a pretty face!"

These were Blanche Alpen's natural accomplishments, unsullied by paint or powder, or any of these fashionable cosmetics which so injure a beautiful complexion, as well as being disgusting to gentlemen of culture who look upon woman as a higher order of being than a mere wax doll. But added to these natural accomplishments, as Dewitt observed this first evening that he passed with them, were a thoroughly educated mind and a kind and loving disposition. Her conversational faculties were excellent, and she seemed, and did really possess, original ideas, exceedingly rare to be found in a young lady of her age. When engaged in any subject in which she was interested, her face glowed with enthusiasm, and her eyes—always full of that soft, tranquil beauty—seemed to look into your very soul with all the loving kindness of her nature.

Being an excellent pianist, she played some of her favorite instrumental selections and sang some of her sweetest songs. It was an evening fraught with the sweetest pleasures to Dewitt; and rarely, if ever, had everything around him transpired in such exquisite harmony with his own feelings. He seemed to be entertained so spontaneously and so completely, that for the first time since he left college he felt happy and contented in the society of any of his relations.

But there was a something of sadness in her face which had not been transparent until later in the evening, when Dewitt, engaged in conversation with the judge, casually observed her gazing intently into the fire, in which she seemed to see the reflection of some bygone scene, that was still impressed vividly on her memory. Occasionally she would turn her face towards them, when the judge would make some amusing remark in the course of their conversation; but then she would resume the same attitude, and would soon be apparently lost in a deep reverie.

But when the judge had excused himself for the purpose of writing a letter, and they were alone, Dewitt drew his chair nearer to her, and they were soon engaged in conversation. Then it was that this melancholy appearance, as it first seemed to him, vanished; and as she looked towards him in answer to a question, her face—a something of paleness in it before—was now radiant, and her eyes were full of that same lustre which he had noticed when he first met her. He could not account for this sudden transition; and, as he sat there engaged mechanically in the conversation (I say mechanically, because he was more engaged in studying her face than he was in the subject they were discussing), he felt that she was something more than ordinary, and that there were mind and soul, pure and white as an angel's, enshrined within that beautiful casket.

### CHAPTER III.

Oh! only those  
Whose souls have felt this one idolatry,  
Can tell how precious is the slightest thing  
Affection gives and hallows,—a dead flower  
Will long be kept remembrancer of looks  
That made each leaf a treasure.

MISS LONDON.

A FORTNIGHT had passed away, and Dewitt Lu-Guere could not realize that he had been at Claremont so long. "Indeed, aunt," he said, one day, "it cannot be possible that I have been here two weeks; it only seems a day or two." His aunt replied "that it was just two weeks since he came, and that she was so glad to know that he was enjoying himself so well."

And true enough it was, Dewitt for the first time since he left college experienced that first real pleasure which comes from a life of leisure. He found his fair cousin a most enjoyable companion. Though she would sometimes be sad and melancholy, yet after a few moments' conversation she would be all sunlight and joy again, and they would either go to the parlor and have some music, or play a game of chess, or read,

or take a walk in the evening twilight,—just as their fancy dictated. Thus passed their happy hours away.

One day she was away, and Dewitt was sitting in the parlor alone reading, when Mrs. Alpen entered and took a seat near him, as she said, "I am so glad you visited us, for I think my daughter Blanche is more cheerful than she has been for a long time. I never could account for the change that has come over her since about the commencement of her last year at the seminary. When she returned home in vacation, I noticed, perhaps as you have noticed, her dreamy moods, in which she would sit in twilight evenings until the dark shades of night would thicken around her. I asked her one time the cause of this, but she gave me no answer, other than that it was just a way of hers. But, since you came, I think I see a change,—a change perhaps for the better,—and I only hope it is so, for indeed, my dear Dewitt, a kinder-hearted and more whole-souled girl never lived than she."

"I believe you truly," Dewitt said, "for I have never met a lady with whom, upon such a short acquaintance, I have been so well pleased as with my new-found cousin. She is so queenly in her manner, and so kind in her disposition, that I have rarely, if ever, met her equal."

"But," Mrs. Alpen resumed, "there is something else I can tell you, that will probably throw some light upon the cause of my daughter's reticence and strange, dreamy moods. There is a gentleman here—a Mr. Charles Spencer—who has been her gallant for quite a number of years,—in fact, I might say, since they were children together. He is a gentleman in every respect, and I know he loves her devotedly, but I do not think she cares anything for him. Whether he has proposed to her or not I am unable to say; but if he should, or if he has already done so, I feel convinced that she would, without any hesitation, tell him that she has no love for him, and that she only admires him as a friend. What effect this may have upon her I cannot tell; I merely mention the fact to you for your consideration. But perhaps I should not be telling you these domestic affairs, as they cannot in any manner be interesting; yet you know she is my only child, and that mothers always desire to talk more about their children than anything else when they can find listening ears."

Dewitt thanked her very much for the confidence she had

reposed in him, and assured her that he would endeavor to ascertain the cause of her seeming sorrow.

After she had left the room, Dewitt began to study the matter over; and, although he knew that she was one of those deep ladies who are hard to understand, yet he flattered himself that he could solve this mystery. How far he will be successful time alone will have to tell.

This same evening Charles Spencer called. When Blanche entered the drawing-room, he expressed his regrets at not having called on her cousin sooner, but owing to his necessary absence from the city, it was impossible for him to do so.

In reply to these remarks, Blanche said that she had not known until lately that he was away, and, therefore, was greatly surprised that he did not call on her cousin.

Charles Spencer was a tall, well-built man, about twenty-four years of age, with a fair complexion, light hair, gray eyes, and a heavy moustache. He had an ordinary mind, with a fair education, and good business habits, and to these may be added a kind, amiable disposition, a pleasing address, and fine moral sensibilities. His affections were strong indeed,—perhaps paramount to any other attribute of his soul. He loved the society of the opposite sex devotedly, yet he was no flirt, and as long as he found one upon whom he imagined he could bestow his affections, he was perfectly happy and contented. For some cause or another,—no one could tell why,—he took a fancy to Blanche Alpen when they were children, and in her centred all the affections of his soul. He grew to manhood loving her, and now there was no lady in all Claremont whom he loved a hundredth part as much as he did her,—his gallantry was bestowed upon her alone, and every little remembrance of the past was cherished by him with much care. There was never a time in their childish glee that she had given him a flower or some other little memento but what he stored it away as a sacred memory of the past.

The most singular thing connected with this love-affair was the fact that there was but little in common between them. Mr. Spencer was a man of the world, and was considered very handsome and gay, and cared nothing for music or literature, or in fact any of the fine arts, while Blanche was passionately fond of all of them. It was true that she was beautiful, yet her real beauty was not apparent to those who did not see in



her face the index of the noble and priceless soul within. There were other ladies who far excelled her in the brilliancy of the ball-room, and who could have loved him with all the power of their soul, and, therefore, would have made him a good wife; but from all these he turned away, and lavished his affections on one who did not appreciate him.

But Charles Spencer was one of the first business men of the city. Making money was one of his special objects in life, and for which alone he lived. Yet he was not miserly. The pleasure he derived from it seemed to be in its pursuit, for there was no more liberal man in the city than he. His father had given him his large wholesale dry-goods establishment, through which he had acquired in his own right near one hundred thousand dollars, and the one-half of his father's large estate would be added to this at no very distant day. He was estimated as the richest young man in all Claremont.

When Dewitt made his appearance on this evening, Mr. Spencer extended him a very cordial reception. "I welcome you, Mr. Lu-Guere, to Claremont, and hope sincerely that your visit may be fraught with the greatest pleasure. Anything I can do to make your visit pleasant shall be cheerfully granted."

Dewitt thanked him, and said that he had anticipated a pleasant time, and so far had not been disappointed. The conversation then became general, and local matters were discussed at considerable length; and then it turned on affairs in the East, where Mr. Spencer had been a short time before Dewitt's arrival. Blanche was unusually loquacious this evening, and enjoyed the conversation exceedingly. Taking everything into consideration, they passed a very pleasant time.

As Mr. Spencer was taking his leave, he invited Dewitt to call the next day at his store, and they would make arrangement for a drive in the evening, for which he thanked him, and the door was closed and they returned. Some time after they had sat down, Dewitt observed a sad expression steal over Blanche's face, and he indirectly studied its features as, mechanically, he was turning over the leaves of her album, occasionally asking her the name of certain pictures. The remarks of his aunt came into his mind, and they seemed to suggest to him the importance of questioning her at that very time about her sometimes melancholy disposition.

As he laid the album aside and drew his chair nearer to hers,

he said, in a kind of a confidential way, "Do you know, my fair cousin, what I have been thinking about since I came here?"

She was sitting in an arm-chair, with her cheek resting on the palm of her hand,—a favorite position of hers,—when he spoke; and a few moments after he had ceased, she raised her large, dark, lustrous eyes and looked full upon him, as she said, softly, "No, my dear cousin, I cannot tell, neither can I imagine what you have been thinking about. Your thoughts may be lofty, and far beyond my comprehension. However, I should be glad to know them, if you have no objection to their revelation."

He looked at her some time in silence, and then said, "My thoughts are indeed lofty, but not beyond your comprehension. Will you be surprised when I tell you they are about your own priceless self?"

She looked up in that surprised manner which was so clearly written in her face; and then, in a few moments, there came a slight blush over it, and she leaned back in her chair as she said, "Yes, I am surprised; I cannot imagine what they can be. What have I done that I should have been in your mind?"

After a brief silence, Dewitt said, "I believe, if I read your character aright, that you admire candor as much, if not more, than any other attribute of the human soul, and I will tell you at once without any hesitation. I have noticed you so frequently when alone, dreaming, as it were, over some by-gone scene; and then, when you were spoken to, you would start up, it seems, as though you were awakening from a profound sleep. Will you not tell me what it is that thus seems to burden your mind? You know I am your cousin, and anything you tell me shall be strictly confidential."

After a profound silence for a few moments, in which she seemed to be deeply thinking, she raised her eyes and looked tenderly towards him, as she softly said, "I was not aware that I was absent-minded, but now, since you recall the fact to my mind, I believe I am. But the cause of it I cannot tell. Indeed, I doubt very much if there be any real cause. It may just be a habit contracted in other days, and I should have broken myself of it. I had no idea I was observed."

Then after another silence, in which she seemed to think that Dewitt was offended with her answer, she said, in a more

conciliatory tone, "However, my dear cousin, to be as candid and truthful as you have been yourself, I might say that probably my seeming melancholy at times may be attributed to a little episode which transpired in my once happy school days, but which I have told no one,—not even my mother,—because I think it would sound so silly in any one's ears save my own. I have thought it, therefore, best to tell no one, though the event,—ideal as it now is,—seems to be indelibly impressed on the tablets of my memory."

Dewitt looked at her in silence for awhile, and then said that he thought she might tell him the real cause; but before he was through speaking, she gently laid her hand on his arm and said, softly, "Now, my dear cousin, perhaps I have told you too much now,—more than I should have done,—but the only request I have now to make of you is—that you never mention it to me again. Let my reticence and its cause be an interdicted subject between us, and never, if you want to please me, refer to it again."

When she ceased speaking she was standing by his side, and he saw that she was in earnest. He extended his hand as a token of his compliance with her request, and she took it in both of hers, pressed it fervently, and then bidding him good-night, glided noiselessly from the room.

Dewitt sat himself down by the light and commenced thinking. He could not understand her, further than that she was deeper and harder to read than he first anticipated; that she was something more than the young ladies with whom he had heretofore associated.

At the hour of midnight, when standing beside her own secretary, she touched a hidden spring, which instantly revealed a secret drawer, out of which she took a small, faded bouquet and pressed it to her lips; and as she leaned her brow on the palm of her hand, her mind seemed to wander back to other days, while a tear gently came to her eye and rolled slowly down her cheek. In this position she sat for some time, and then, as she was replacing the faded bouquet, she scarcely more than whispered, "He's gone forever," and the secret drawer passed from human vision.



At the hour of midnight, when standing beside her own secretary, she touched a hidden spring, which instantly revealed a secret drawer, out of which she took a small, faded bouquet and pressed it to her lips.

## CHAPTER IV.

Meantime the song went round, and dance and sport,  
Wisdom and friendly talk, successive stole  
Their hours away.

THOMSON'S *Seasons*.

THE large parlors of Judge Alpen were thrown open, and every room in the house was brilliantly lighted. The lawn outside was beautifully decorated with Chinese lanterns, and everything in and around the mansion was the picture of splendor and supreme joys. The parlor and library and corridors and halls and verandas were thronged with beautiful and gorgeously dressed young ladies, and the very air was perfumed with the fragrance of the flowers and bouquets that were strewn all around them. Sweet strains of exquisite music floated on the balmy zephyrs that kindly visited them, and everything in the nature of earthly enjoyment was contributed to the harmony and brilliancy of the scene.

It was, indeed, a social gathering which rarely, if ever, the *élite* of Claremont had enjoyed. It is true that they had frequently large parties given by the fair ones of the city; but they were nothing in brilliancy as compared with this one. Strange to say, Blanche Alpen had never yet given a party, and the anxious ones sometimes wondered why she did not give them a real good time of enjoyment. It was slightly rumored that she would give a large party when she would graduate, but they looked, and looked, and looked in vain. The cause, probably, of her not giving any such parties as were customary in Claremont was, that she had no particular object in doing so. She had not set her cap, as they call it, for any gentleman in particular, and, therefore, she had not the motives for such parties that so fill the minds of other young ladies. However, now that her cousin from the East had visited them, she was anxious to have him introduced into their society; and, therefore, she had a motive in giving a party which, in brilliancy and a general good, lively, social time, was second to none ever given in the city.

The news had gone abroad that Miss Alpen's New England cousin was visiting her, and of course everybody was on tip-toe to see him; and there was none at the soirée more anxious than Miss Fannie Murdoch. Blanche had given Dewitt an introduction to a great many of the ladies, and when there was an opportunity to dance he requested the honor of the assistance of Miss Murdoch, which was very graciously and courteously granted.

Miss Fannie Murdoch, as far as beauty was concerned, was, without a doubt, the belle of the occasion. She was as near a picture as any real being could approach. Her forehead was not very large, but it was as fair as the driven snow; her face was a rich, gorgeous color, with cheeks slightly tinged, and a mouth—the sweetest and prettiest that ever any mortal man on this green earth looked upon. Her dark auburn hair hung in ringlets around her brow, and then became long and wavy with curls around her neck and shoulders; and in her dark-blue eyes there was a bewitching beauty that held almost any one in speechless admiration by her side. Her teeth were even and well-shaped, and almost as fair as ivory, and around her lips there played a fascinating smile that filled the hearts of her many admirers with delight. She was something above the medium height, but straight and slender, and presented a most beautiful appearance in the dance. She wore a rich lavender satin very tastefully made; and in her hair there were entwined several snow-white flowers, which were in exquisite harmony with the white ribbon around her neck, tied in a neat little bow on her bosom, where it was affixed by a costly diamond pin. Around her waist there was a white silken sash, which hung down gracefully by her side; and around her neck, on her wrists and on her fingers, there sparkled beautiful diamonds and bright jewels which approached almost to magnificence, when we consider the immaculate beauty of the person upon whom they were lavished.

I am more minute in the portrait of this young lady from the fact that her beauty stood out alone, and was paramount to that of any other lady of the occasion. Yes, it may truthfully be said that her bewildering beauty was the theme of every tongue in Claremont.

As Dewitt Lu-Guere was standing by her side waiting for the music to commence, he thought in his inmost soul that she

was the most divinely beautiful of anything he had ever seen on the top of this green earth. She moved through the dance like a fairy; and every touch of her hand and every glance at her face seemed to thrill his very soul with rapturous delight. And when he had escorted her to a seat and had thanked her kindly for the pleasure she had afforded him in the dance, he felt a peculiar feeling in his heart which he had never experienced before.

Strange, however, the revolution that will so suddenly take place in the human heart! Notwithstanding the height to which his admiration for Miss Murdoch had reached, yet, later in the evening, when they were promenading, he was shocked to learn what a shallow and barren mind she possessed. That face, as he had looked upon it before, was not unassociated with a mind and soul in a corresponding degree of excellence and glory; now, however, when he saw this divine attribute fade away, the bewildering beauty that she had heretofore inspired vanished, and he saw nothing but the giddy belle of the ball-room. He endeavored to engage her in conversation, but he soon saw how fruitless was the task. She had a fair English education and a smattering of French; but as for literature, she knew comparatively nothing. In answer to a question of Dewitt's in literature, she said, "I never read any novels; indeed, I never had any taste for them. Do you like to read novels?" she innocently enough inquired. "I think they are so tedious!" she commenced, without giving him any time to reply; "I would rather spend my time in traveling and in going to parties and visiting."

Dewitt scarcely knew what to say in answer to this singular statement. He did not care to insult the girl by saying that she ought to cultivate a taste for literature; and yet he did not wish the opportunity to pass without letting her know that he did not appreciate her ideas. And in reply said, "I am sorry that I cannot agree with you, or rather that you do not agree with me. I have always been an admirer of literature; and I only too much regret that I have read so little in comparison with the great field I see spread out before me, and in which I would gladly linger with delight."

She looked him full in the face innocently enough, and as though it were all right, and that there was nothing disparaging at all in her dislikes for science or literature or anything

of the kind. She did not say anything in reply, and as they were calling for a couple to fill up a set for a dance, he invited her to assist him, which was cordially done, and they were soon whirling away in its exquisite mazes.

The next lady to whom he was introduced was Miss Lizzie Marlan. She was a blonde, and presented a fair appearance in society. Her education was fair, but her main ideas of life were in going to parties and in having a good time in general. Dewitt could not succeed in introducing a conversation during their promenade, though he tried ever so much. She could talk about the brilliancy of the occasion, about the weather, and what a fine day they had, and what a pleasant evening they were having,—something which every person knew. But when the time for dancing came she was a most desirable partner, and passed through the different changes with amazing gracefulness.

Ophelia Brandon was a lady of about the same cast as Lizzie Marlan. Her education was about the same, but she had an appreciation of literature which the other lacked. In the course of their conversation she said, "I cannot admire Shakespeare by reading him myself; I enjoy his plays on the stage very much, and I am also delighted to hear any one read from him, but I soon tire when I commence the perusal of his plays myself. I admire poetry some, but never read it myself. I made my brother promise to read Shakespeare to me last winter, but he did not do so, and I told him the other day that he ought to be ashamed to say that he had never read Shakespeare through to his sister. But he does not seem to look at matters in the same light I do."

Dewitt was wonderfully surprised at this novel state of affairs. The idea of a sister importuning her brother to read to her was something he had never heard of before. He had heard of sisters reading to their brothers when the latter would return home tired and weary of the day's labor, but he was surprised to hear of this relation being reversed.

He was introduced to Milton Marlan, the brother of Miss Marlan, and also Benton Rushwood, a clerk in a dry-goods store, and a gallant of Ophelia Brandon. A short time after this Blanche came to him to say that she would now introduce him to the most famous lawyer in the city,—August Belmont. Dewitt expressed his willingness to see him, and in a few moments they found him sitting in the library.

His greeting was very cordial. "I am delighted, Mr. LuGuere," he said, "to have formed your acquaintance. I bid you welcome to Claremont."

Dewitt thanked him, and seated himself on the lounge where Mr. Belmont had been reclining, and they entered into a conversation. Dewitt was greatly impressed with the striking features of the man before him. He was tall, with a strong, well-built, muscular frame, with black, piercing eyes, black, heavy hair and whiskers, and of rather a dark complexion. His forehead was high and prominent,—an index of the powerful mind within,—and his Roman nose displayed his strength and firmness of character. His eyes were very large, yet, by reason of his prominent forehead and long, heavy eyebrows, they appeared small, and when he looked at you it seemed as though he was looking into your very soul. Having a strong mental temperament, he was thus endowed with a strong, deep, comprehensive mind,—just such a mind as is necessary to insure the eminent success of the lawyer.

Being naturally a good judge of human nature, his first impressions were very strong, and almost always correct. In fact, he made human nature so much of a study that he had become accustomed to read the character and to estimate the ability of men when he first met them. He did not depart from this practice in the case of Dewitt, for he eyed him closely, and, from the bright expression which appeared in his face as they progressed in the conversation, one could easily observe that his first impressions of the young man were good.

In the course of the conversation Mr. Belmont said, "Your cousin informs me that you are a graduate of Yale. I have heard it said that one must be a thorough scholar before he can graduate at that college."

Dewitt replied with that inherent pride and delight which exist in every student's heart for the old Alma Mater, as he said, "Yes, one must, as you say, be thoroughly educated in all departments of the college before he will be entitled to a diploma. To my mind it is the finest college on the continent. I graduated there two years ago."

"There is no doubt," replied Mr. Belmont, "but that it is a most thorough institution." And then, after a pause, he asked, "Have you chosen a profession yet?"

"I have not," he replied, slightly coloring at the repetition

of the same old question that had been bothering him for the last two years. When he had first engaged in the conversation he felt an uneasy foreboding that he would ask him this very question, and he discovered now that he had not been mistaken. Seeing that Mr. Belmont was very much surprised, he continued his answer with an explanation which no one had ever yet received. "I have been thinking, Mr. Belmont, for some time—even before, and since I graduated—about choosing a profession; but so far I have not succeeded in making a decision. I find in my brief experience that there are more failures in life resulting from not selecting or choosing a proper vocation than in all other causes put together. I have seen so many men plodding away at a profession or some other business for which they were entirely unsuited, and consequently failed,—yes, failed most miserably,—while if they had but chosen some other profession, or should have gone into some other business, they would have succeeded most admirably, that it is my effort to avoid this fatal mistake, if I can do so.

The frown that had come over Mr. Belmont's face passed away as Dewitt ceased speaking; and he replied in rather an enthusiastic manner, "You certainly speak with that good judgment and sound common sense which would do honor to one far beyond your years. This is a subject which we cannot give a too thoughtful consideration. There is nothing like a man starting right in life, for certainly the general rule is that a bad beginning makes a bad ending. I believe firmly that every one is suited for some particular profession or vocation, which they can discover if they only make an effort. To some comes almost intuitively the part in life which they are to perform. Indeed, I cannot tell when I did not want to be a lawyer. When quite a boy I would go into the justices' courts and listen to them trying causes. But there is no doubt that it is a difficult task for some young men to make up their minds for what they are suited; and before they rush into a profession or business without some positive assurance that they will succeed, they should ponder profoundly the terrible remorse of a fruitless or misspent life. It is best for them to take their time, and to give, as you are giving, the subject earnest consideration; and never to 'let up,' as we say in our practice of the law, until they have succeeded in determining that profession or business which will insure them success."

"I am glad," Dewitt replied, "to have your approval, as my cousin informs me that you have been a very successful man in your profession. There is another phase in life about which I would like to speak with you,—the great importance of having a true and correct estimate of one's own ability. It seems to me that there are many failures resulting from either not knowing our abilities, or, which is more generally the case, of overestimating them."

Mr. Belmont looked at him a few moments in silence, and then slowly said, "You now refer to a very important subject. Truly has Pope said, 'The proper study of mankind is man;' yet we are forced to admit that sometimes men rush headlong into projects without fully comprehending their own powers of mind, and succeed; and at other times, if you have ever observed, they reach a higher position than they otherwise would have done. However, the safest and wisest plan is to have a proper estimation of one's own ability, and then success is sure. Yet I have known instances where persons achieved great results by being forced into positions where they were compelled either to sink or swim, and thus, from the bare necessity of the case, gained achievements of which they never dreamed before."

About the time he ceased speaking Blanche approached them with the request that they fill up a quadrille in which they lacked two couples. Mr. Belmont complied by finding himself a partner, and she introduced Dewitt to Nancy Spriggins, with whom he took his place in the dance. Nancy was the daughter of a respectable mechanic, and, by some means, for no one could tell how, gained admittance into the best society in Claremont. She was of light complexion, with sharp, keen, gray eyes, and with a nose rather short and slightly turned up, not enough, however, to spoil her looks. She had beautiful white teeth, of which she was very proud, no doubt, for she kept them clean and white. Her hair was rather a light brown, and she had a twitching kind of a way with her, which indicated that she always wanted to be "on the go," as she called it.

After the dance was over, Dewitt offered his arm, and they had a promenade. It was not a difficult matter for him to introduce a conversation with her,—she led the way herself by asking him when he came, and how long he intended to stay,

and how he liked Claremont, and how he enjoyed the party, and what he thought of this one's dress, and that one, and a hundred other questions, almost without expecting any answers. Dewitt looked at her in the greatest curiosity as they were promenading along the hall and through the parlors, and then they took a seat. Nancy, after only being asked the name of a couple who had just passed them, gave a full history of quite a number of ladies and gentlemen whom he did not, and never cared to, know. While they were thus talking, Harry Wasson came up and, excusing himself to Dewitt, requested Nancy to assist him in the next dance, with which she complied, and, bowing low to Dewitt, took her leave.

Harry Wasson was the son of a widow lady, and supported himself and mother as clerk in Mr. Spencer's store. He was in one sense a very respectable man; but two of his main faults were his getting slightly intoxicated and his overweening obsequiousness for the rich. He had no particular desire to be rich himself, for he was extravagant both in dress and in many other respects, and thus lived up to his salary, and sometimes at the end of the year came out in debt. However, he liked to fawn on the rich, and to oblige them, in order to be admitted into their society. He was a young man of medium height, slender built, with dark hair, a beautiful moustache, and with bright, sparkling, dark, laughing eyes. He was just such a gentleman with whom ninety-nine ladies in one hundred would fall in love, and marry, perhaps, if he had only possessed more money or had been in better circumstances; and, no doubt, there are a great many who would allow this objection to be swept away by his winning ways and fascinating smiles and lively and nonsensical jokes. There are so many ladies who admire such gentlemen, that they have no difficulty in getting them for partners on almost any occasion.

And thus the evening wore away. Blanche and her mother, possessing the intuitive attributes of the true ladies, were solicitous in their efforts to make every one comfortable and happy. If they saw a lady sitting alone and seemingly neglected, one of them brought a group near her, and she was invited to take part in whatever was to engage their attention. If they observed that a lady enjoyed dancing, but was not fortunate in having a partner, they took care that she was not

left as a wall-flower the whole evening. If a gentleman were almost a stranger, or was not acquainted with all the ladies, they introduced him, and told their gentlemen friends to give them their attention. They could not help but enjoy themselves with such kind and courteous hostesses, who knew their business so well.

When the night was far spent, the guests began to retire. They all complimented Blanche on the success of her party, and how well they had enjoyed themselves. As Mr. Belmont was taking his leave he said to Mr. Lu-Guere, "I shall be very much pleased to have you call at my office when you may desire. I live quite a retired life, except so far as my business calls me away; therefore you will almost always find me in my office, at any time you may desire to call."

Dewitt thanked him, and said that he should embrace the first opportunity of accepting his cordial invitation.

## CHAPTER V.

One fatal remembrance, one sorrow which throws  
Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes;  
To which life nothing darker or brighter can bring,  
For which joy has no balm, and affection no sting.  
MOORE.

THE main topic of conversation for near a fortnight afterwards was the party at Judge Alpen's. Every one, without a single exception, was delighted with it. Charles Spencer said it was magnificent. Fannie Murdoch was free to say that it excelled anything of the kind she had ever seen; and Mr. Belmont said it was the only party he had ever really enjoyed. In fact, every one admitted that it was a most transcendent success.

Dewitt, toward the latter part of the week, called on Mr. Belmont at his office. The latter was delighted to see him, and an interesting conversation ensued. They were mutually pleased with each other, yet neither could probably have given any reason for this reciprocal admiration. Dewitt admired

the wonderful intellect and extensive knowledge of the lawyer, and the latter seemed to be impressed by the open countenance and undoubted ability of the graduate, and thus their acquaintance was being crystallized into a pure and sincere friendship.

One evening Dewitt called again. Mr. Belmont seemed thoughtful and sad; and, after motioning him to a seat, resumed his correspondence. This being completed, he handed Dewitt a cigar and a match, and then, lighting his own, resumed his seat, and elevated his feet on the table in lawyer-fashion. In this position he sat and smoked in silence for some time; and then, taking his cigar in his hand, and blowing the clouds of smoke that surrounded him away, he complacently said, "My friend Dewitt, do you know what I have been thinking about before and since you came here this evening?"

"Well," Dewitt replied, with a laugh, "that certainly is a question impossible for me to answer. Your thoughts may have been boundless and far beyond my comprehension. I know nothing about the science of the law."

Mr. Belmont looked at him a few moments in silence, and then said, "I did not mean in a business point of view; but no matter what they were, of course you could not be expected to tell them. However, I have no doubt you will be surprised when I say that I was wondering to-day whether you were in love, or had any intention of getting married."

Dewitt could not help but laugh outright at the novelty of such thoughts entering into his mind, and, after he was fully composed, said that he had never yet been so fortunate or unfortunate, he did not know which, as to fall in love; and that at the present time nothing was further from his thoughts than matrimony.

A long silence followed, which was broken by Dewitt, as he said, "I never inquired whether you were single or married; but I supposed the former, inasmuch as I saw or heard nothing of your wife at my uncle's soiree. Whether you ever loved would be a question impossible for me to answer."

Augustus Belmont looked towards him, and in his face there was a sad expression which Dewitt could never erase from his mind. After puffing vigorously at his cigar for several moments, he said calmly, pathetically, "Yes, you are partially

right. I am not married, although I ought to have been long ago. But as to having loved, there is the turning-point of my life. There is a power in the human soul which o'erleaps every other element of our being, and makes us either birds or devils, if we do not strive against the influence of the latter. Yes, Mr. Lu-Guere, in the language of the German poet, 'I have lived and loved.'"

He resumed his cigar in silence, for Dewitt made no reply. He could not comprehend the mood he was in, and there being such a strong expression in his face, he was perplexed, and felt very uncomfortable and unhappy.

Mr. Belmont puffed away at his cigar, which was now almost exhausted, for he was a rapid smoker; then, throwing it away, and having lighted another, he looked on the mantel-piece as he said, "I see it is not late yet, and therefore I have a great mind to tell you a little episode in my life. Somehow or another you have worked your way into my confidence, and I feel as though I were talking to an old confidential friend. I think I can trust you with something which in one sense is a secret, and in another it is not."

Dewitt looked at him for a few moments in the most profound astonishment, and then said, "If there is one element in my being of which I speak with more pride than another, it is that sense of honor which holds sacred the secret or confidence of a friend. I do not ask you to reveal to me any secret that you may have, but I can truthfully say to you that any confidence you may repose in me shall never be abused by my revealing it or taking any advantage of the same whatever. I consider my word of honor as sacred and binding as my oath."

"I never once doubted you," he replied, fervently; "I told you before that I had great confidence in you from the first; and it would take a great deal to displace it, even considering our short acquaintance. But to begin without any ceremony the episode of my life which I purposed telling you, I will say that I am entirely disgusted with nearly all of womankind,—that is, I should say, young ladies. Your cousin Blanche is the only one here whom I admire; and she is so kind, so conciliatory, and so amiable in her disposition that, in fact, no one could help loving her. But I hope you may never see the time when you will be so disgusted with them generally, and



find so little pleasure in their company, as I do now. I am different, though, from you. I once loved—yes, loved with all the power of my soul—a lady—an angel almost—who is far away from here now. Her name was Ina Clayton. I still have her picture here, and will some time show it to you. She was one of the sweetest girls you ever saw, with light auburn hair, mild, light-blue eyes, and a face radiant with intelligence and music. She was a most excellent performer on the piano; and, as I am passionately fond of music, she would sit for hours and play for me without seeming to be the least bit wearied. Yes, loving her with all the passion and ardor of my soul, I told her the story of my love, and it was reciprocated.

“Oh, how happy we then were in each other’s love! It seems to me now such a sweet dream of the past that I never can forget it. She was so sweet and amiable that no one could have helped but love her. For instance, I am careless about my dress, and never take much care how I arrange my cravat; if she would see that anything was out of place, she would be sure to arrange it. Often when we would go out of an evening she would tie my cravat or arrange it to suit herself, for then it suited me. Many a time, too, she has combed my hair, after we were engaged, for it did not look well, she said, the way I combed it myself. One time I remember so distinctly that when I came from the barber’s with my hair cut and combed, almost, I thought, to within an inch of my life, and I supposed she would be so pleased, she looked at me for a few moments, and then said that the barber had not good taste, and therefore did not know how to dress my hair so as to make me look handsome. She got a comb and dressed it over again, and then made me promise ever afterwards to let her cut my hair herself, as the barber did not dress it properly. Of course I complied with her wishes, and ever after that she trimmed and dressed my hair to suit her own fancy, for then it suited me. And then of a cold winter evening, when I would take my leave, she would assist me on with my great-coat, warm my furs and overshoes, and numerous other little things would she do that were trifling enough in themselves, but, somehow or another, they went right to my heart, and made me think she was something more than human. These little incidents may seem very trivial to you, Dewitt, but I only know that

they worked her right into my affections, so that I thought she was the dearest creature on earth.”

Here he was interrupted by Dewitt, who said, “You speak of an attribute in ladies that I admire very much. These little kindnesses are always appreciated by myself, for they tend to show what a good, kind heart the lady has, and how solicitous she is for your welfare. I prize woman more for her affections than any thing else.”

“That is the light in which I viewed her little kindnesses, but I thought perhaps that this was only a hobby of my own, and that no other one thought the same. So everything went on as happy and merrily as a marriage bell, and our wedding-day was set. In the mean time I was admitted to the bar, and was getting into a very fine practice for one so young; and I thought of changing the wedding-day to an earlier date. But in an evil hour a change—a revolution—I cannot tell what else it was—came upon me. Another lady crossed my path-way,—a Miss Fannie Murdoch. Perhaps you saw her at Miss Alpen’s party.”

Dewitt started, but nodded his head, and Mr. Belmont continued: “But, beautiful now as she is, she was far more beautiful then. She did not paint nor powder then, for she was the fairest creature that ever the sun shone on. The first time I saw her was at a grand soirée, after she returned from school; and I sat down in an unobserved place and looked at her in speechless amazement. I do not know how long I sat there admiring her, but I do know that, when I went home that evening with Ina, I was a changed man,—changed in my affections for Ina as completely as anything could be changed. I embraced the first opportunity, and gained an introduction to her. She had some other admirers, but they all flew the track when I started in, and, three months after I had first met her, we were engaged. You start, and very justly ask what became of Ina. Ah! this is the saddest and most heart-rending feature of the tragedy. I often think there must have been a soft place about my head somewhere” (here he felt over his head, as if to find it), “as men with good minds generally have. I do not know as I have a very extraordinary mind, but I know what I have done and can do, and therefore I may say that I have a strong and excellent mind, but I must admit that there is a weak place in it somewhere. It was a long time before Ina

knew the cause of my estrangement. At one time, when I was with her, she threw her arms around my neck and implored me to tell her the cause of my absence and neglect, and my desire to have the wedding-day postponed. This was before I was engaged to Fannie, and, of course, could not tell her the cause. I did not see her again for a month, and in the mean time she had found out that I loved Fannie, and wrote me to come and see her. I paid no attention to her letter, and soon after another came, in which she said, 'I appeal to you, upon the honor of a man—by the sacred memories of the past—by the solemn vows you have made to me before high heaven—to come and see me only this one time; it is all I ask.'

"Of course these thrilling cries found no response in my heart, so completely had my enchantress bound me to her. I cast the letter away, as not worthy of a reply. Still another letter came, in which she said, 'My dream of happiness is faded forever; all my bright hopes lie crushed at your feet, and the future is one dismal blank, without one little ray of sunshine to cheer my darkened pathway. If there is a chord in your heart that is not yet callous to all human sympathy, I beg of you to come to me this evening. For the last time I make this request.' I made up my mind to go, and also to tell her the truth, with a request that our engagement might be canceled. I did so, and told her candidly that I loved Fannie, and asked her to cancel the engagement. She made no answer to my request, but broke out impulsively, 'Oh, no! you don't love Fannie, for she does not love you as I do; she is only flirting with you, for she is my enemy, and desires to do all she can to torment me.' Of course I paid no attention to these wild ravings, and when I left her that evening—the last time I ever saw her—she was reclining on the sofa weeping bitterly. Soon after, she was prostrated with the brain fever, and it was for months that she lay betwixt life and death. I am told that in all her wild ravings she was still calling for me, and saying that she still loved me. After an interval of six months she got strong again, and, with the true woman's will, endeavored to blot out all recollection of this great grief of the past. When she had become perfectly strong, the whole family moved to San Francisco, California. I heard, about a year ago, that she was married to an editor of one of the daily papers of that city. She had beauty and education and culture enough to adorn any

home, no matter where it was. But after she had gone away, I felt easier, and lavished all my attentions on Fannie, whom I thought the sweetest and best creature on earth. I dressed for her; I bought me a valuable diamond pin, because she thought it so becoming; I wore the finest broadcloth, pinched my feet with tight boots; wore the finest silk hat I could get; and, in fact, dressed within an inch of my life, and made a fool of myself in every respect, and all for her. This continued for near a year after Ina moved away. We had our wedding-day set several times, but, for some cause or another, she would have it postponed. I thought nothing of this, because I considered that she was without a fault, and could do no wrong. But I noticed her out, several times, riding with gentlemen whom I did not very much admire; for you know I could have smote the man right in the face for even daring to go with her when she was engaged to me. It went through my soul like fire. I suggested to her, however, that I did not like the idea of so many gentlemen going with her, and, to my amazement, she became greatly indignant over it. She wanted to know by what authority I undertook to dictate to her in such a lordly manner. Her usually bewitching eyes fairly bounced out of their sockets. I saw then that she had a wonderful temper, for I remembered that this was the first time I ever contradicted her, or interposed any objection to her wishes. It seemed that she could not get over her indignation, and she stamped her little foot angrily as she said, 'I want you to understand here, Mr. Belmont, once for all, that I will not allow you, nor any other man, to be my master. I claim to have some will of my own, and if you do not like my conduct, why, you will have to better it if you can. I claim the right to act for myself, and to have other gallants when I desire them.'

"I mildly suggested that we were engaged to be married, and that I had some right to dictate, and that she ought to regard my wishes. This only enraged her the more, and she spoke out in a fiercer passion than ever, and said, 'Fiddlesticks! we are not married yet, and if things go this way, we never will be. I wish you to understand now,' she said, firmly, 'that you are not to be my master. I will not put up with it now, and I never can in the future. So let me hear no more of these objections about my going with other gentle-

men.' I think then that this soft place in my head" (feeling it again) "became hard, for I told her, right then and there, that our engagement must be canceled, and that henceforth we would be strangers. I was thoroughly angry now. I demanded my ring, and handed her one of hers that I had been wearing. It occurred to my mind, though, that she would relent, and say some sweet words that would please me, for although I was in solid earnest, I did not dream that she would consent to break the engagement. But to my surprise and indignation, she calmly enough took my ring off her finger and handed it to me, returned some other little presents I had made her, and said that if I desired to cancel our engagement, she had no objections. I was amazed and almost dumfounded, but I recovered and got very angry, and cursed her right then and there, and told her that she was a fiend in human shape, and not fit to live in a civilized land. I told her that my curse should be upon her. She said nothing in reply except that she would show me the door, and desired that I should keep my wind to cool my broth. I took my departure, shaking the dust off my feet as a testimony against her; and from that day to this we have never spoken. I have heard since that she only engaged herself to me in order to spite Ina Clayton, whom she did not like. I do not know how this was, and I never made any inquiries about it. Time passed away, and it has now become a thing of the past in the eyes of the people; but it is a bitter, burning plague to me, and I suppose ever will be. I have no peace at all, and my life is one dismal blank. If Ina suffered intensely when I deserted her, I have suffered tenfold more since, for my grief is remorse, when I consider the jewel I threw away for such a heartless wretch as she. Ah! what bitter pangs pierced my heart when I consider now what I am, and then reflect what I might have been! It is true I have money, and all of this world's goods that I could desire, but what signifies it all when I am compelled to share it alone, and when the being I truly loved is now beyond my reach forever? I still have her picture and a lock of her hair, which in my sad and lonely moments I take out and admire with all the adoration of former days. 'As I look at her calm, sweet face, she seems to chide me for the great wrongs I inflicted on her; but still I kiss it and lay it carefully away, and then go out into the world again,

a sad and solitary man. But she will ever be enshrined in my memory, and I think I could die contentedly if I could clasp her in my arms and implore her pardon, and tell her how I have suffered. I know her kind heart would forgive me. There is no happiness in this world for me now. I am living a cold, dreary, callous life. There is nothing here to make me joy. The fatal remembrance of this sad scene throws its bleak shadow over my pathway, and my joys and woes seem all the same. This life can bring nothing darker or brighter to me, and in this manner I pass the dreary hours away."

He ceased, and they both were silent. Dewitt was very much affected with the rehearsal of the sad, sad tale, and he felt a tear find its way from his eyes and roll quietly down his cheeks. He felt touched when he saw this strong, stalwart man, who had a will, it seemed, like iron, weep. Yes, August Belmont could look at death in all its forms unmoved, and could turn a deaf ear to the strongest appeals of suffering humanity; but, as he now touched the story of his lost love, the tender chords of his heart vibrated, and he wept like a child. Oh! there is a tender chord in the heart of the most cruel man, which, when touched, as surely it sometimes may be, will bring him back to himself again, and restore the predominance of the better angels of his nature.

After a long silence, Dewitt arose to go, but Mr. Belmont said, "Do not go. Come and sit down; I have something more to say to you."

Dewitt came back and sat down, quite willing to hear it all.

"I have intrusted my feelings in this affair in confidence to you," he said, in a low, calm voice. "Now I am going to intrust you with a secret. I am bound to frustrate this fiend. In the first place, there is a friend of mine waiting on her now, and I am inclined to think that he loves her. I at least very well know what her intentions are. She knows that he is a friend of mine, and she thinks to lead him on until finally he proposes to her, and then she will cast him away as she has done many others before. I know her so well that I have not the least doubt of her intentions."

"But why do you not tell him?" suggested Dewitt.

"Tell him! What is the use talking to any one who is in love? If the whole world had sworn to me that she would

have proven false, I would have laughed them to scorn. I am positive that there is not the least particle of use in saying anything to him, or I would do so. Now, in the second place, I want—revenge. Yes, you look surprised, but I emphatically say, I want revenge, and will have it.

"Now, I will tell you what I want you to do, if you agree to it. I want you to commence a flirtation with her, and win her affections; keep it up for about a year, and then cast her away, as she has done many another, telling her that you care nothing for her. This will be the sweetest revenge on earth, and it will also save this young man from ruin. Now, will you accede to this proposition?"

Dewitt shook his head in silence, and then, after some reflection, said, "No, Mr. Belmont, I cannot do so. That would certainly be very unmanly. I never could consent to be a party to wreak revenge on an innocent girl who has done me no wrong. As for this friend, put him on his guard, and then, if he runs on rashly, let him suffer for it. But I will enter into no such a conspiracy without a just cause, and no man could have a just cause for such an extraordinary proceeding as this. I could never do such a thing."

After some reflection, Mr. Belmont said, "I do not ask you to decide to-night; I only wish you to think the matter over, and then I will argue the question with you at some future day. There is nothing like deliberation in all things as well as this one."

And so the matter dropped and the two recent friends parted.

## CHAPTER VI.

Ah! that deceit should steal such gentle shapes,  
And with a virtuous vision, hide deep vice.

SHAKESPEARE.

Oh, what a tangled web we weave  
When first we practice to deceive!

SCOTT.

FANNIE MURDOCH had no sooner met, and was introduced to Dewitt Lu-Guere, than, like all flirts of her kind, she made the remark that she was going "to go for him." I suppose she meant by this that she intended to inaugurate a flirtation with him, for she had great confidence in her own powers of captivating gentlemen. One day when Nancy Spriggins—her particular friend—visited her, she made known her plans for the coming conquest.

Nancy Spriggins, who delighted to fawn on the rich, and was solicitous to do them little favors, was exceedingly attentive to Fannie, and considered that every word she said was as true as the gospel. Fannie thus made her a kind of a messenger, in which position Nancy considered herself highly honored.

Having finished telling Nancy how she intended to captivate Mr. Lu-Guere, she concluded by giving her reasons why she would be successful. "You know, Nancy," she said, "that I can do it, for you are aware of the many conquests I have already made. There, for instance, was Dr. Lawrence St. Clair,—a most exemplary young man, and very wealthy, too, who got on his knees and earnestly begged of me to accept his love and restore the heart I had taken from him. I bade him go away and forget me, and I believe to this day he loves me as much as ever. And you remember Lorenzo Scofield, a gentleman of birth and culture; I flirted with him for six months, and after he had passionately declared his love, I told him likewise to go away and leave me, for I cared nothing for him. So it was with Marmion Benedict, the rich and accomplished merchant. He almost became wild with grief when I told him that I had no love for him; and likewise with Augustus Belmont, the rising lawyer in the city,"—she spoke these words in a lower

tone than the others, as if fearful that other ears might hear them,—“you know, Nancy, how I flirted with him for over a year, and succeeded in breaking off the engagement between him and Ina Clayton, against whom I had a grudge, not necessary now to mention. When I was tired of him, I told him one evening to take his hat and go, as I did not care to have his attentions any longer. And there are many others I might mention, Nancy, whom I treated in the same way, but what is the use? You know my power is complete. You have seen the flirtations I have carried on with Harry Wasson and Theodore Thompson. The latter I expected to kneel to me this week, or at furthest this month; but I may have to discard him at once if I undertake this great flirtation with Miss Alpen's New England cousin. You see there will be more honor and glory in that. You see none of them can resist my charms. These pretty little hands, my bewitching and fascinating smiles, and these pretty dimples on my cheeks, and my bright, laughing blue eyes which Mr. Belmont used to go in ecstasies over, are more than the strongest and most self-willed man can stand.”

Nancy all this time was listening and looking with open ears and eyes and mouth. There was not a word escaped Fannie's lips but she devoured with miserly care. And when she had ceased speaking, and had leaned back on her large arm-chair with her hands folded across her breast, Nancy exclaimed, “Oh, my dear Fannie, you cannot help but succeed. If I had your charms—those soft, tender blue eyes, those angel-like cheeks, that almost heavenly smile, that sweet, ringing voice, and those sweet, rosy lips—I would never rest contented until I had the whole world at my feet.”

This pleased Fannie very much, and she raised up in her chair again, as she said, “Now, my dear Nancy, draw your chair up nearer to me, for I want you to help me inaugurate this great campaign. You see I bear Miss Alpen a little grudge for even trying to vie with me in beauty. The poor girl ought to have better sense; but you see some people never look at matters in their proper light. You see it is no use in a brunette trying even to compete with a blonde in beauty, for you yourself, Nancy, know that it is all nonsense. Now, she never did me any harm in the world, and has always treated me very kindly, and with a great deal of consideration; but it seems to

me that I would just like to teach her a lesson, and show her how I can get away with this great Eastern cousin, who now seems to be the rage in Claremont. Oh, I would give almost anything just for the pleasure of adding Mr. Lu-Guere to my long list of conquests! Oh, it would be charming indeed!”

“Oh, my gracious!” exclaimed Nancy, “it would be the grandest conquest that has ever been achieved in the world. And I know you can't help but succeed. I have often told you, and I tell you now, that there is no living man who can resist your charms. I have heard Harry Wasson and Theodore Thompson say a dozen of times that you were the sweetest and most bewitching and fascinating being they had ever seen.”

And Fannie resumed: “Now, my dear Nancy, I called on Miss Blanche yesterday, and met with a very cordial reception. I found her cousin very pleasant indeed. I called in company with Ophelia Brandon, and Mr. Lu-Guere gave me all his attention, while Ophelia and Blanche were looking at some pictures and playing some duets on the piano. I have no doubt I made a good impression, for I talked to him just as sweetly as I could. When I took my leave I very gracefully and courteously invited him to call on me, which he said he would do at his first opportunity. Now, what I want you to do”—and she laid her finger softly on Nancy's arm—“is to call on Miss Alpen, and find out, if you can, what impression I did make on her cousin. Now, there is not a soul in Claremont to whom I could intrust this mission save yourself, and I know you will succeed, for I have never met a lady with the shrewdness and ingenuity that you have. Anything that you can't accomplish by your subtle devices and acute actions, no person in the wide world can.”

This pleased Nancy again, and, with a great deal of enthusiasm, she said, “I am on very intimate terms with Miss Alpen, and I know I can elicit from her the desired information. And let me assure you now that all I can do will be done, and that no more faithful being to you lives than Nancy Spriggins. I will scarcely sleep until I have devised some plan to get all the information I can.”

Fannie expressed her satisfaction that she would accomplish all that was necessary to be done, after which Nancy took her departure.

When she returned home she found her mother hard at work in the kitchen, preparing supper; and she enthusiastically exclaimed, "Oh, mother, hurry up the supper; I was over at Fannie Murdoch's, and had such a nice time! Fannie is such a dear, sweet girl, and she thinks, oh, so much of me!"

The sweat was rolling down her mother's face, but she sat down, and said she was glad to hear that she was on such intimate terms with such a fine lady. "Always keep your head up," she said, "and go in the best of society. I have endeavored to raise you up as a lady, and I do not want you to have to slave and work as I have done. Try and catch some rich man, for I know you are pretty enough to do so."

And this was generally the way this poor, deluded mother would talk to her daughter, and had raised her up with the idea that if she could only get some rich man, she would never have to work at all. As a natural consequence, she could no more go into the kitchen and cook a meal than she could fly. But the fond mother prepared their scanty meal, with which Nancy was not pleased, because she had no sweet-cake, and therefore scolded very much about it. And still the fond mother said, "Don't take it so hard, dear child; you will fare better some day, I am sure."

Thus passed their domestic life away. Not long after supper Harry Wasson came, and she went to their little parlor. That evening, in company with him, she went to call on Miss Alpen.

## CHAPTER VII.

### Curse the tongue

Whence slanderous rumor, like the adder's drop,  
Distills her venom, withering friendship's faith,  
Turning love's favor.

HILLHOUSE.

ONE of the greatest enemies to society—that which makes us to a certain extent lose faith in mankind generally, and is to a great extent the source of all our ills and unhappiness in social life—is the seemingly innocent habit of gossiping. No sooner does any one make a remark about some one until it is

repeated from lip to lip and ear to ear until a whole community is in one uproar of contention. Every time a story is told something new is added to it, and when it comes back to its author he scarcely knows it. Oh, if there is a dark, blighting curse that should rest on any one, it is the slanderer, for he is a slanderer who at any time utters, directly or indirectly, anything that is not the truth. How happy all would be if every one would settle down and mind his or her own business, and let every other person alone! What an Eden here on earth we would have!

But it is as impossible for some people to mind their own business and to keep their tongues off their neighbors as it is for water to run upwards. Nancy Spriggins was just such a lady as we see every day around us. Being always on the run, she was always getting some person into trouble; and, never being happy only when she had some news to tell, she narrated it with all the enthusiasm of her soul.

When she and Harry Wasson were on their way to Judge Alpen's, they met Mr. Spencer, and he requested Harry to come to the store immediately if possible, as they had received several orders which must be filled that night. So, accompanying Nancy to the gate, he excused himself and said that he would call for her as soon as he would be at leisure.

When she rang the bell, Blanche answered it in person, and greeted her very kindly. After being seated in the parlor, Nancy said, "I beg your pardon for not making my party-call sooner; but I have been so busy that I could not possibly get time, as our girl left last week, and I have to assist in the duties of the household. I must say, however, Miss Alpen, that you had a most enjoyable gathering. I never enjoyed myself so much in my life; and I believe all were so well pleased that they thought it was the finest party they had ever been at."

Blanche expressed herself as being very happy that all had enjoyed themselves, but that she did not think it the finest party there ever had been in the city, as it had not been made for that purpose.

But Nancy still persisted in having her way, and exclaimed, "Oh, I have no doubt it was the finest in the city! Fannie Murdoch says so, and you know when she gives her opinion about anything it is most generally correct. She told me yesterday

that she had never been at a more brilliant party in her life. But how was your cousin pleased with our society?"

Blanche replied that he had expressed himself as being very well pleased with it.

"Oh, of course he could not help but be," Nancy replied.

Blanche excused herself, and said that she would call her cousin, who was in the library reading. Nancy thought that she must now make one desperate effort to find out what his opinion was of Fannie, and then she would rest contented.

When Blanche returned, she said that Mr. Lu-Guere would be in presently, as he was finishing a chapter in "David Copperfield." "I suppose you have read that novel?"

"Well, no," Nancy replied, slowly. "I don't think I have. Who is the author of it? Perhaps I can tell when I hear that."

Blanche gave her the desired information, and she replied that she had heard of him, but never had read any of his works.

Soon after this, Dewitt entered, and bowed very courteously to Miss Spriggins, as he said, "You will pardon my delay in not coming immediately, but I was just finishing a chapter in a book which my cousin here is very anxious that I should read. I am here now, however, and am ready for anything that may be proposed."

"Yes," Blanche said in reply, "I was surprised to learn that he had never read 'David Copperfield'; and I told him that he must do so immediately. He has now commenced, I believe, with the determination of reading him."

"Oh, yes, since I remember now, Miss Blanche, I have heard of Charles Dickens being the author of 'David Copperfield,'" Nancy exclaimed, and then continued: "I believe he lives in Boston, and is going to write another book some of these days."

Blanche could not refrain from blushing. She looked to Dewitt to relieve them from their embarrassment, but was surprised to see him busy wiping his moustache with his pocket-handkerchief in order to conceal his amusement. Finally he came to the rescue, and said, "My cousin thinks she is a great reader, Miss Spriggins, and is always teasing me about how little I have read. But I venture the assertion that I have read more than she has. Now, cousin, I will make this proposition, which I know Miss Spriggins here will say is fair enough: I will name over quite a number of authors, and see if either

of you have read them, and then you can both name over a number to me, and I will tell you whether I have read them."

Dewitt felt in very good spirits this evening, and, being full of his mischief, was determined now to find out what this intelligent young lady did know. The idea of her thinking Charles Dickens lived in Boston was too good a joke to be lost or forgotten immediately without having something more. So he named over Byron, Burns, Scott, Shakspeare, Dickens, Bulwer, and a number of others, which Blanche said she had read, but Nancy was in very great doubt whether she had read any of them or not.

It was now their time, and Blanche named over several of the standard authors, part of which he had read, and the others he had not. Nancy named over her authors as follows: "I suppose you have read the 'Queen of the Sea,' 'The Hunter's Wife,' and 'Alice Wild,' 'The Raftsmen's Daughter,' 'Wild Jack, or the Indian Scout'?" and many others of the same class did she name.

Dewitt dropped his head, and said that he had not. Being now encouraged by her victory, she continued: "I suppose, of course, that you have read 'A Life upon the Plains,' 'The Dismal Swamps,' 'The Red-man's Revenge,' 'The Terrible Day in the Swamps';" and several others of the same kind did she name, at which Blanche, noticing Dewitt's terrible efforts to keep from laughing right in her face, laughed right out herself, and exclaimed, "Now, Cousin Dewitt, you must acknowledge that you have been utterly defeated and routed, without the least chance of a retreat. We therefore demand an unconditional surrender at once."

Dewitt, surprised indeed at her wonderful scope of knowledge, said that he would "throw up the sponge" and acknowledge his defeat.

This pleased Nancy very much, and her eyes sparkled like diamonds. But still she felt greatly chagrined that she had not read the other authors about which they had been talking, as it seemed to her then that they were more popular than the ones she had been reading.

In a short time Blanche excused herself, and Dewitt and this "Queen of the Sea" were left alone. Nancy, having an eye to business, embraced the first opportunity of accomplishing her mission; and, in the course of their conversation, said, "I

suppose you have met our reigning belle, Miss Fannie Murdoch; what do you think of *her* for a beauty?"

Dewitt was wonderfully surprised, and scarcely knew how to answer a question so personal and so unlooked for, but finally said, "I cannot refrain from saying that she is very beautiful, and, although I have only a mere acquaintance with her, I have no doubt but she is an exceedingly fine young lady."

Nancy was now fully satisfied; and soon after, Harry Wason called, and they took their departure. Her soul was filled so full that she could scarcely wait until she would get home to tell her mother what she had heard, and to speculate how much Fannie would be pleased with the information she had obtained.

"But, mother," she said, in a low voice, after she had told the whole affair, "do not tell any living soul, for that would be terrible, if any one knew it."

She had been meditating over their conversation at Miss Alpen's, and then all at once looked up excitedly, and said, "Mother, why can't I talk as well as Blanche Alpen can? She can talk on almost any subject. I am completely disgusted with my education. You ought to have taught me better. I am mad at you, and every one else, for my not knowing any more than I do."

"Well, my dear child," the fond mother said, "you know I am no 'sculler,' and cannot understand the ways of the knowledge in the world; but I gave you all the opportunity we could, and I don't see but that you ought to know as much as any of 'em."

Nancy muttered something back, and then went to her room. The next day she again visited Fannie, and narrated the whole of their conversation, and what Dewitt had said about her.

Fannie kissed her affectionately, and said that she was the best girl in the world, and, in regard to the conversation on literature, said, "I think you did right. There is some amusement in the authors you named, but what pleasure can any one derive in reading such dry works as Shakspeare, and some others that nobody admires? For my part, Nancy, I read what, and when, I please, and it's nobody's business if I do not read the books that these sentimental beings do."

Nancy agreed with her, and said, "Now, dear Fannie, you

see what Mr. Lu-Guere has said about you, and I know he means it; so your way is clear for a most brilliant conquest. From what I heard Miss Blanche say, I know he will call on you soon; and then look your prettiest, and put on your most fascinating smiles, and you cannot fail." And so, with these remarks, she said that she must go, as there were some other calls that she desired to make.

Fannie thanked her very much for the information she had given her, and then she went on her way rejoicing.

The first place she stopped was at Lizzie Marlan's. The latter was glad to see her, as she knew that she would have some news to tell; and so she gave her a very cordial reception, as she said, "My dear Nancy, where have you been so long? I have not seen you this long time. Can you tell me anything that is going on? I have been nowhere since the party at Judge Alpen's."

Nancy expressed her surprise that she had not made her party call, and then said, "I was there yesterday evening, and spent a middling pleasant time; but the most Miss Blanche and her cousin could talk about was books, and they had not read as much as they thought for; and when I named over some of the authors I had read, they knew nothing about them."

"Well," Lizzie replied, "I hate books; I am tired of hearing people talk about books, books, books. You will hear nothing at Judge Alpen's but books, books, books, from morning till night. What pleasure any one can take in reading in such dry prosy books I can't tell. For my part, I don't read them, and I told Mr. Lu-Guere as much when I first met him. I think it so foolish to be poring over books, except some of those easy novels that afford me so much pleasure."

Nancy, of course, agreed with her, and then named over the books she had read which met with Lu-Guere's approbation. After these two intelligent ladies had thus intelligently conversed for some time, Nancy arose to go; but Lizzie kindly reminded her that she had not told her yet any of the news of the day. This caused her to think some, and then she said, "I have one secret that I have a great mind to tell you. Do you think you can keep a secret?"

"Oh, of course I can. Come and sit down and tell me what it is; I promise you my honor not to reveal it."



At this Nancy resumed her seat, and said, "Why, you must never breathe it for the life of you. Fannie Murdoch is going to set her cap for Mr. Lu-Guere, and is going to captivate him; and then, when he has declared his love for her, she is going to cast him off, like she did her other gallants. Now let us watch the performance, and see what it amounts to. I think she will succeed, and will bring him to her feet. You know she never failed yet."

"That is very true," Lizzie said, and then, after a short silence, continued: "But won't it be a pleasure, as you say, for us to watch the whole affair and see how it progresses! Now, I want you keep me posted, and let me know when anything new turns up, and I will do as much some time for you."

Nancy promised her that she would do so; but she did not notice the dark shade that came over her face when she told her the secret. In a short time she took her departure, and Lizzie went to her mother's room and told the whole conversation.

"And do you think she will succeed?" her mother inquiringly asked.

"I am determined she shall not if I can help it. I am going to tell Miss Blanche of her intention, and then I know she will not succeed."

"I think you would act very imprudently in that," Mrs. Marlan said, as she took off her spectacles and laid them down, and looked her daughter full in the face. "You certainly should not condescend to do anything of the kind."

"But, dear mother, you do not know how the matter stands. I love Mr. Lu-Guere myself; and, as I am about the prettiest lady here, except Fannie, you see if I can succeed in preventing an attraction for her, I will have a most excellent chance to get him myself. Now, what do you think of my plan?"

"That will do better. I did not know you loved him. But is he rich? Are you sure of that?"

"Of course he is rich! He comes from New England, and is a graduate from Yale College, and it cannot be otherwise but that he is very rich."

"Then, if that is the case, I bid you God-speed. Remember, I have endeavored to raise you up as a lady, without having to work, and I do not want you to be marrying a poor man."

"You can bet your life I never will. I never intend to be a slave for any man, and if he cannot keep me without having to work, I will have nothing to do with him."

Here the old lady put on her spectacles again, and resumed her embroidery, as she said, "I see you understand matters properly, and I will let you have your own way."

Lizzie went to her own room, arranged her toilet, and went straight to Judge Alpen's, with the intention of telling Blanche all about the proposed conspiracy. On her way she thought she would call on Ophelia Brandon to accompany her. She did so, and on their way to the judge's she told Ophelia all about the flirtation. But we can scarcely imagine her surprise to learn that Nancy Spriggins had been there and told her the same thing, and had also enjoined profound secrecy. This was a way of Nancy's, for if she told the most trifling thing in the world, she always enjoined it to be kept a profound secret.

When they arrived at their destination, they found Blanche at home and alone, and they had a very pleasant conversation. As they arose to go, Lizzie indirectly and carelessly said, "By the way, Miss Blanche, did you hear the news?"

"No," was the reply.

"Why, I thought you would have heard it." And thereupon she told her how Fannie Murdoch had made her boast that she was going to win the affections of Mr. Lu-Guere, and before he would know where he was she would have him on his knees before her.

Blanche laughed outright, and said it was news to her indeed. Then she carelessly inquired if they thought the report were true.

"I have no doubt of it at all," both of them said. "You know, Miss Blanche, that is just such a remark as she would make. It is just like her. Besides, the same person told both of us, and she got it from Miss Fannie herself."

"That seems very credible indeed," Blanche remarked. "I will have to tease my cousin about it. He boasts to me that he has never yet been captivated, and I will now have something about which to tease him."

Having accomplished their mission, the visitors took their departure.

That evening Dewitt and Blanche were sitting alone on the

piazza, when the latter said, "I thought your heart was proof against all the batteries of love. You told me the other day that you could never love any one."

"I say the same still," he replied. "Why do you doubt it?"

She then told him what she had heard, at which Dewitt was very much surprised, and said, "That brings to my mind something about which I was going to ask you, but never had the opportunity."

He then narrated the substance of the conversation that occurred between him and Mr. Belmont, at which she was very much surprised; also told her of the request he had made, at which she was still more surprised. "I thought," she said, "his mind was far above anything of the kind."

"But, you see," continued Dewitt, "that she has made a wreck of his life, and he never can be happy again. I do not, of course, commend him in this course, and rather censure him for it; but, if you can assure me of one fact, I can then decide whether I will accede to his request or not. I wish to know whether you think there is any truth in this rumor, or has some one just started it?"

"I have no doubt at all but that it is true. It is just like Miss Fannie Murdoch. She can never keep quiet, and is always saying things that she ought not to say. But my advice and wishes would be, never to say anything about it, and let the matter just drop where it is. Such shallow remarks always find their way to an ignominious grave."

Dewitt was silent for some time, and then said, "You are sure, then, that she has made such a remark; and that she is a regular flirt?"

"I cannot say about her being a regular flirt, as you call it, but I have not the least doubt but that she has made this remark."

"Then my mind is made up. I will teach her a lesson that she never can forget. I have never flirted any in my time, but now I will try my hand, and see how it goes. A male flirt, as you one time said, is something to be despised, but still I cannot see that they are any worse than a female flirt. The manner she used Mr. Belmont exhausts all my sympathy for her, and if she can win my affections I am quite willing to give her the chance."

Blanche remonstrated, and told him that she had no objections to his gallanting her, but that she thought it very undignified to do so under such an arrangement. "Remember," she said, "that she is but an innocent girl, with no brother, and an only sister, and her father and mother; and you are a man, as also is Mr. Belmont, who can overcome difficulties in which others would sink in despair. Then, remember it is not a Christian act. Heaven never smiles on any such proceedings here, and the longest day you live you will regret it."

There was no use in her talking to him now, for his mind was made up, and what he undertook he never relinquished until success or defeat stared him in the face; and bidding his cousin good-evening, he started, on the spur of the moment, to Mr. Belmont's office, where he had not been since the interview recorded in a previous chapter.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Revenge, th' attribute of gods; they stamped it  
With their great image on our natures.

*Orway's Venice Preserved.*

Ay, think upon the cause,—

Forget it not; when you lie down to rest,  
Let it be black among your dreams, and when  
The morn returns, so let it stand between  
The sun and you, as an ill-omened cloud  
Upon a summer day of festival.

*Byron.*

HAVING arrived at Mr. Belmont's office, Dewitt found him busily engaged with books and legal papers and letters on the table before him. As he entered, the lawyer arose quickly and grasped him passionately by the hand, as he said, "I am so glad you came this evening, for I go away to-morrow on business, and may not return for several days. I was anxious to learn the conclusion to which you had arrived in relation to the proposition I presented to you the last time we met."

Mr. Belmont watched with no little solicitude the expression

of his auditor's face, and waited with nervous anxiety for his answer. Presently Dewitt said, "I have considered your proposition carefully, and have concluded to accept——"

He was prevented from finishing the sentence by Mr. Belmont's springing to his feet and grasping him by the hand, as he impulsively exclaimed, "Bravo! bravo! I knew you would do it!—I felt in my very soul that my time for revenge had come, for I was positive that in you were imbued that magnetism and brilliancy which insures success. You are the noblest being on earth, and I never shall forget you. And I say further that if I ever do forget you, may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!"

Mr. Belmont having resumed his seat, Dewitt continued: "Yes, I was going to say that I accepted your proposition, and that I would win the affections of this fair young lady if it were in my power to do so; and that, having accomplished this, I would then cast her away, as you say she has done with many a devoted lover in the past. But, my friend, since I now for the first time consider the solemnity of this seemingly amusing enterprise—when I reflect upon the awful crime of blighting the affections of the immortal soul—I tremble, and say to you now that it is not yet too late to recant. Would it not be better for both of us to do so? Even should I succeed in winning her affections for the purpose you desire, and you are thus avenged, what consolation will it afford you? Do you not know that the ever-living God hath said that revenge is His? Why should puny man then seek to invade a province reserved by his omnipotent Creator? Come, now, and tell me that we will drop the matter forever."

"No, by Heaven, no!" he impulsively and angrily said; "you have given me your honor, and every man's honor should be as binding as his oath. Revenge—yes, revenge—is what I want, though it should drag her down to the grave! Why, just think of it,—think of the wreck she has made of my life,—and then, believest thou that I will not seek revenge? Yes, by the heavens that bend above us, I will have it! Let the sin, if any, rest upon my head; I will bear it. But do you think you commit sin in doing so? No, sir, you do not. The gods themselves will shower benedictions upon your head, and will call you blessed. You will thus save a young and brilliant youth from a life of torment, for as sure as the sun shines

she will lead him on until he is desperately in love, and then will cast him away as a waif upon the sea. No, my dear friend, a golden opportunity is now presented to you for doing a noble work; and will you stay the hand that bids you succeed? I know full well the terrible crime of blighting the affections of the immortal soul, and it is as much to prevent this as anything else that I now implore you to raise the hand that will stay this blighting curse, which, as with a besom of destruction, sweeps every godlike attribute from the human heart. She has no affections to blight; a warm, affectionate nature is as foreign to her callous soul as day is from night. Stand firm by the resolution you have so nobly made, and you will never regret it."

Mr. Belmont was a born orator; every word he uttered appeared to spring spontaneously from his heart. His dark, piercing eyes, as they looked out from under his large, heavy eyebrows, seemed to penetrate the very soul of his auditor, for silence unbroken brooded over them long after he had ceased speaking.

Seemingly to be awakening from a dream, Dewitt arose and took several paces across the floor, as he said, "Every man's word, as you say, should be as good as his oath; but even an oath, rashly and erroneously taken, should be recalled. The only motive, however, that induces me to stand firm by this resolution is the fact of her endeavoring to win the affections of this young man for a base and ignominious purpose. Do you really think that she is only trifling with him? and do you think that he loves her?"

"I have not the least doubt of it. He loves her devotedly, but I don't think he has yet proposed. But you need not hesitate; I will stand between you and every danger. Think upon the cause that moves you to action. Let it be in your mind by day and in your dreams by night; and with my latest breath I will bless you. Revenge—yes, revenge—is sweet, and I will have it."

Dewitt saw there was no use in hesitating any longer, so he told him that he would commence operations the next day.

No man on top of the earth could have been more delighted than was Mr. Belmont. He grasped him by the hand again and said he would remember him the longest day he lived.

"But," said Dewitt, "what is the best course for me to pur-

sue? You have been there, and you know all about their domestic relations. Give me a few points."

"I will cheerfully do that," he replied. "I think you told me you had an uncle in Boston; nothing will please her so well as to know that you have rich relations, as well as being rich yourself. And if you can bring it in some time that it is your intention to settle in business in Boston, your victory is won. That will almost set her crazy at once. Then tell her of your relations in New York; this will bewilder her. In the course of your conversation, flatter her when you see a good opportunity. Do this, however; after you have acquainted her of your position in society and of your relations in New England. Both she and her mother go in ecstasies over any one whom they think of noble birth and great fortune. Mention in some manner of your great-grandfather being in the Revolution; and then, ever after that, it does not matter what you say,—she will consider it all gospel. Praise her beautiful eyes sometimes, and then her hands and ivory teeth and rosy lips, and she will think you are 'a little god.'"

With these instructions, Dewitt took his departure, with the best wishes of his friend. He returned home, and the next morning he sent a delicately written note to Miss Murdoch, stating that he would call on the following evening. In the afternoon, Mr. Murdoch's servant approached Judge Alpen's mansion, and delivered to the usherer a beautifully written note, which stated that she would be at home, and would only be too delighted to see him.

And accordingly, on the designated evening, he gave his toilet an extra touch, and, stepping into his uncle's barouche, was driven rapidly away to the Murdoch mansion.

Fannie presented a most gorgeous appearance as she came sweeping into the parlor like a princess. Extending her delicate little hand, sparkling with jeweled rings, she gave her visitor a cordial welcome, and took her seat near him. All the silks and satins and flounces and ribbons imaginable tastefully adorned her person; and she was really as beautiful as anything earthly could be. And to the man who cannot help but bow to the shrine of beauty alone, she would no doubt appear so divinely lovely, that he could not resist the temptation of kneeling down and worshiping her. There seemed to be a magnetism thrown mystically around her on this evening which

even Dewitt Lu-Guere could not resist; and even *he* bowed at the shrine of her beauty, and felt electrified with her entertainment.

Only intending to make a very fashionable call, he instructed the servant to remain at the gate with the barouche until he would return. The conversation consisted chiefly on local affairs, and about the weather, and what a nice spring they were having, and about the party at his uncle's, and how they enjoyed it; and a great amount of other small talk that one hears almost every time he calls on a fashionable young lady.

When Dewitt arose to go, Fannie inquired how long he intended to remain; to which he replied, "I am very uncertain as to the length of time I will remain in Claremont. It is two years since I graduated at Yale, but I have not yet decided on a profession or any business pursuit. My uncle in Boston, with whom I passed the last year almost, desires me very much to go there and take an interest with him in his business. The temptation is very great for me to do so, and I may conclude, when I return home, to accept it."

"Oh, is it possible you have relations in Boston?" she exclaimed. "I was there one time with father, and I think it is the most elegant place on earth. I am sure you would like it very much."

"I know," replied Dewitt, in a very dignified manner, "I should enjoy it very much. But whether I go there or to an uncle's on my mother's side in New York, is not at all certain. It is my intention, however, to settle down in one of these two cities some time, for a person might as well be out of the world as out of them. I believe, though, that I should prefer to live in Boston."

"Oh, how right you are!" she exclaimed. "I think it would just be perfectly elegant. The first men of our country I am told live there."

"Yes, that is very true, Miss Murdoch. But, pardon me, I have been keeping you too long. I have found it such a pleasant and interesting evening with you, that the time passes quickly away, and I should not have prolonged my call to this time."

"Oh, the time has been very short to me," she softly said. "You have entertained me, instead of my entertaining you. But now, Mr. Lu-Guere, I hope you will not forget to call again

while you are in the city. Remember that it will always be my delight to entertain you."

He bowed her good-night, and was gone. She watched him until he got into his barouche, and then closing the door, she rushed to her mother's room, and exclaimed, "Oh, mother, mother, he is the finest gentleman I ever saw in my life!"

"Do tell me all," the doting mother said, as she laid down her spectacles and leaned back on her arm-chair, and looked affectionately into her daughter's face.

## CHAPTER IX.

Disgust conceal'd  
Is oftentimes proof of wisdom, when the fault  
Is obstinate, and cure beyond our reach.  
COWPER.

"OH, yes, dear mother, I will tell you all, for he is just perfectly elegant. I never met a gentleman in all my life who combines so many accomplishments as he does. And the best of all is I know I must have made a good impression on him, for he said he was perfectly delighted with me, and begged my pardon for his protracted call. I was dressed most gorgeously, and I know he must have been fascinated with me, for I noticed him looking at my pretty little hands and beautiful face. Oh, I know he must have admired me! But did you see the beautiful little note he sent me? Here it is, mother; read it aloud."

And Mrs. Murdoch read as follows:

"CLAREMONT, Sept. 17, —

"MISS FANNIE MURDOCH,—I shall anticipate the pleasure of accepting your kind invitation extended to me by calling on you to-morrow evening, should my doing so meet with your approbation.

Respectfully,

DEWITT LU-GUERE."

"That certainly," said her mother, as she handed it back,

"is a very elegantly-written note. It portrays the characteristics of the true gentleman. But did you learn anything about his position in society, and whether he is wealthy or not? You know these are great considerations which must not be overlooked."

"Why, certainly, mother," she replied. "You do not suppose for a moment that I would be so stupid as not to find out exactly his social position? He told me himself that he has an uncle in Boston, who desires him to go there and go into business with him; and that he remained in Boston nearly the last year, and how well he liked it. But the best of all, mother, is that he is going to settle down there and live. This he told me, and of course I do not think he would tell a story about it. So you see he must be well connected, and is of high birth, and what more do I want? I know he is rich, or he would never think of living in Boston. And then another thing that convinces me that he is very aristocratic: when he called, Mr. Alpen's servant brought him in the barouche, and waited at the gate until he made his call; and then, when he bade me good-night, I watched him until he had taken his seat, and in the moonlight I saw him wave me good-night. So there is well-bred aristocracy for you."

And this is the way she rattled on; and her mother heard her with infinite delight. There was only one other person in the room, and she heard the whole affair with silent disgust. She had been reading, and ever and anon she would turn from it to express her disgust, but as often concealed it. But when they continued so long, it was more than her sensible spirit could endure, and she calmly said, "I am surprised, mother, at you and Fannie both, for being so silly as to speculate upon the prospects of a marriage with a gentleman who has only for the first time called, and who may never call again. Fannie, you cannot tell at all what he thinks of you. He may be just flirting with you, as you yourself have done with other gentlemen."

Fannie looked wistfully at her mother, and said, "Just listen, dear mother, at her abuse. You had better send her to her room; I cannot stand such impudence."

Her mother looked out from over her spectacles, and said, "Grace, I wonder at you to talk so to your elder sister. You know that she has seen more of the world, and knows a great

more than you do. Now, never let me hear you talk so to her again."

Grace resumed her book, and made no reply to her remarks. It was a rule of her life never to say anything back to her mother, and she strictly adhered to it. Grace Murdoch was a young lady of about seventeen summers. She possessed what but few ladies of her age do,—good, sound common sense. She was of medium height, slender built, with dark-brown hair and brown eyes, a fair, full forehead, and with very even features in the face. She was not to say beautiful, yet there was an intelligence in her face which interested almost every one with whom she was acquainted. But there seemed to be a chilling atmosphere around her, which can probably be accounted for in several respects, but mainly by the manner in which she was raised. There was nothing scarcely congenial to her about their home. As has been observed, she was entirely different from her mother and sister; and thus her affections, which probably were naturally weak, instead of being fostered and developed by a kind and loving mother and elder sister, were blunted and, to a certain extent, blighted by the cruel and unnatural treatment which she received from them. Being so utterly disgusted with her mother's and Fannie's most unmitigated foolery, as she sometimes, in her infinite contempt, expressed it, her whole life was thus rendered unhappy and uncomfortable. Always complaining and saying that she never did anything right, and that she would never make a lady, they never for one moment paused to reflect on her happiness, or that she had feelings and desires which they were bound to respect and, if possible, gratify. Loathing the vain, profitless, and aimless life they were all leading, she would frequently go into the kitchen and work, to pass away the time. In this manner she had learned to be a most admirable cook, and had also learned everything connected with the science and economy of the culinary department. She had a very excellent mind, well cultivated, and also a fine musical taste; in fact, she lived on literature and music, when she was not engaged in any of the domestic duties (which latter duties were always voluntarily incurred, as their mother never asked them to do a solitary thing connected with her household affairs). She thus had the accomplishments to have made a very flower in society, if she could have made the advent thereto with any degree of

pleasure. But it was impossible for her to do so, as her mother, wanting to give her more congenial daughter the foreground, always kept her back, and snubbed her on every occasion she could in which Grace disobeyed her. The elder sister always has the advantage among such codfish aristocratic and unnatural mothers.

Thus Grace Murdoch was raised and grew into maidenhood. Is it any wonder that she seemed cold-hearted, and as though there were a chilling atmosphere around her? Never being loved by even her mother and sister, how could she love any one else? hence, how could her affections—the most priceless attribute of the human soul—become developed and strong?

But the only person that kept alive her blunted and partially blighted affections was her father, whom she dearly loved. William Murdoch was a great business man, was in affluent circumstances, and a thorough-bred gentleman. Looking upon life as real, and in which every one must play his own part, he had given his only son a thorough education. He then took him in as a partner in his store, which position he very satisfactorily filled until he was stricken down with the fever, and died, several years before the time of which I write. Thinking that his wife knew more about a lady's education than he did, and always leading a busy and active life, he left the education of his daughters to her, and gave the subject no consideration. How the wife and mother has performed these responsible duties of the marriage relation, the reader has partially seen.

But, after his son's death, Mr. Murdoch was always a sad and discontented man, and therefore did not take the pleasure in his business that he had heretofore done. He had, to a certain extent, lost the energy that had heretofore inspired him. One evening he seemed sadder than usual, and asked Fannie to play and sing some for him on the piano. She approached it lazily and whiningly enough, and played some of the old pieces she had learned by rote at boarding-school. He then requested her to sing some, but she made some excuses, and said that Grace could sing better than she. "Well, then, Grace, let me hear you," he said. She took her seat and sang some of her sweetest melodies, and played some of her finest instrumental pieces. After she had played quite awhile, her father said, "Why, Fannie, how does it

come that Grace plays so much better than you do? Why, I am astonished! You have had greater opportunities than she had, and you ought to play better."

But Fannie had nothing to say in reply, except some trifling excuse. Her father said that it was astonishing that she had not improved her opportunities.

One day a friend called on them, and they were all sitting in the parlor. In some manner the culinary department was introduced, and Grace said that she could just cook as good a meal as any person. At these horrible remarks the sensitive and over-delicate Fannie almost fainted. She became pale in the face, and in a few moments arose and left the room. When the stranger had gone, she told her mother all about this vulgar affair, as she called it. This dignified personage looked out from above her glasses, and said, in a sharp, cutting tone, "Grace, what in the world will I do with you? Why will you persist in parading your vulgar accomplishments in public, and thus wound the delicate feelings of your sister? How often must we both tell you that the true lady never thinks of going into the kitchen to work? It is only vulgar people who do go there; and as we have plenty of servants to do all our work, I tell you now, if you will still persist in associating yourself with them, you must not speak of it in public. Now, I absolutely forbid you to do so again, and will here authorize Fannie to order you from the room, and you must not disobey her. I never could imagine why you had such low and vulgar ideas, and I have therefore given up all hope of your ever overcoming them. Now, I say firmly and positively, that you must be more circumspect in your demeanor in the future, and not thus wound the fine sensibilities of your sister. How nice it would be if you had the same ideas that we have, and could come out in public as the true lady you ought to come! But, I declare to goodness! I will not allow you to appear in society until you change your manner of action. I long for the day when you will lay your erroneous and vulgar notions aside, and become the true and perfect lady."

This is the kind of a life Grace Murdoch led. Oftentimes her soul burned with indignation and disgust, but she always managed to conceal it, and never said a cross word back to her mother. But how long could such a life last without danger-

ous and disastrous results? There is such a thing as nurturing the affections of the girl so that they will be as strong as steel when she grows into maidenhood. Likewise, there is such a thing as blunting and blighting them, so that we see the cold and callous nature, as is so apparent in the appearance of Grace Murdoch. The home-life should be one of enjoyment, of love, and of exquisite pleasure,—it should be felt to be such by the little ones who are growing up into manhood and womanhood. Is there any such a life for Grace Murdoch? Oh, no, no! Sad indeed is the solitary and weary life she leads. There is none upon whom she could lavish her affections save her father, and him she seldom sees. And thus she passes the dreary days away—unloved, and loving none. Disgusted from morning till night with vanity all around her, she sees nothing in life to enjoy—save her books, her music, her journal, in which she records her heart-longings and sorrows.

Oh, will there not some time be a fearful reckoning for such mothers? Will not a retribution, with all the terrors of the damned, some time, like an avalanche, rush itself upon them? Methinks I see the time, not far distant, when this proud mother will be bowed down with remorse, and heart-rendingly lament the day that she had ever been born.

## CHAPTER X.

Pain would I speak the thoughts I bear thee,  
But they do choke and flutter in my throat,  
And make me like a child.

JOANNA BAILLIE'S *Ethwald*.

Dost thou deem  
It such an easy task from the fond breast  
To root affection out?

SOUTHEY.

CHARLES SPENCER was more devoted in his attentions to Blanche Alpen after, than before, Dewitt Lu-Guere came. As has been briefly mentioned in a previous chapter, he loved her with all the affections of his soul. In fact, he lived for her,—dressed in his finest broadcloth,—wore the costliest diamond pin in the city,—sporting the most sparkling jewelry,—pinched his toes with tight boots,—and all through the delusive phantom of winning her priceless love. She was in his waking dreams by day and in his slumbers by night, and he almost bowed at the shrine of her idolatry and worshiped her; and if there were one wish in his heart of hearts which he desired to be gratified more than another, it was the wish to see her happy, and to be instrumental in affording her pleasure; and if there were one hope sweeter and brighter than all the rest,—one moment to which he could look forward with a rapturous soul,—it was the day that he could call this priceless being by the sacred name of—wife. Yes, it is true to say that mortal man could not love a woman more than he loved her, and she seemed to be as essential to his existence as the very bread for which he prayed.

But poor Mr. Spencer was mistaken in his estimation of the impulses and characteristics of the lady he loved. He did not know that she merely gave a passing glance to, and sometimes never noticed at all, his jewelry and fine clothes. Such accomplishments as these never entered her mind, for she never dreamed of estimating the merit of a gentleman by his dress or outward appearance. It was the inner man she admired. Here all the affections and pathos of her soul found its ideal.

Her heart was too pure, and her affections too sacred, to be won by the external appearance of any man. No, no; to find her ideal, she turned to the inner temple—to the immortal mind and soul, which grows brighter and purer as time rolls along—to find the beau ideal of her girlish dreams.

He had called on her frequently of late to tell her the story of his love; but he always found her cousin or some one else there, and he was deprived of the opportunity. But one evening he came when Dewitt Lu-Guere had called on Fannie Murdoch, and thus found Blanche alone,—an opportunity for which he had often prayed.

Mr. Spencer was a sharp and shrewd business man, and could always with fluency express his ideas on any subject brought before him. But when he found himself in the presence of the one he so fondly loved, and about to ask her the question that was almost life or death to him, he found his tongue almost paralyzed, and he could scarcely say a word. Finally forcing himself to begin, he said, "My dear Blanche—I—I have had—something—on my mind for a long—time—"

Here he broke down, and could say no more. The words he wanted to say burst but too plainly on Blanche's mind; and she felt a sharp, cutting pain pierce her heart, while a cold shudder ran all over her, and she felt a gloomy foreboding of the ordeal through which she was about to pass.

If there were one virtue in Blanche Alpen more to be admired than another, it was her profound regard for the feelings of others, no matter whom they might be. So far from being a flirt, and taking a pleasure in blighting the affections of any man, the thought of telling him no, when she knew probably that her doing so would almost crush the fondest hopes of his life, filled her heart with unbounded grief and sorrow.

As has before been said, she had been expecting, and dreaded, this for a long time; but she could see no way of avoiding it. Long and sincere had been his attentions to her, and it was only a few years since that she seemed to realize the position in which she was placed. Many a time she had the words on her lips to tell him that his attentions to her, in the capacity of a gallant, had better be discontinued; but as often she failed, and thus matters had been permitted to run until the present time.

Being convinced of what he wanted to say, and anxious



that the interview would end, she said, "I apprehend, Charles, what you want to say; perhaps as well as you do yourself; but certainly you know your old friend well enough to candidly express your mind to her without any hesitation. You know you have always done so in the past, and why do you hesitate now?"

These kind words freed his tongue and his troubled soul, and he said calmly, yet warmly, "I see, my dear Blanche, that you have a foreshadowing of what I wish to say, and therefore I may as well tell you in a few words. Yes, there is no use in concealing the fact that I have loved you all my life,—even since the time we were children together, I have looked forward hopefully to the time when you will be my wife."

He leaned back in his chair and gazed on her in silence. She was looking vacantly, it seemed, into space, with her head reclining on her hand, supported by her elbow, on the arm of her chair,—her favorite position. She seemed involved in deep thought, as if hesitating what to say.

Charles quickly moved his chair nearer to her, and lightly laid his hand on her arm, as he said, "And now, dear Blanche, the only burden resting on my mind is, to know if you love me in return, and if you will be my wife."

The touch and the words aroused her, and she leaned back on her chair, as she said, "Charles, what have I said or done to induce you to think that I loved you?"

Her words and question and manner surprised, nay, stunned, him. The tone of voice was solemn, and the expression of her face seemed to show that the utterance of the words pained her. He studied for a few moments, and then said, "I do not remember of you ever uttering a word which would indicate that you loved me, but,"—and his voice became low and solemn,—"you know that I have been your gallant and your companion all our lives. Is that not, in one sense, evidence that you loved me?"

The words were truthful and to the point, and they seemed so to her, for she leaned back in her chair and covered her face with her hands. Yes, with those few words her mind like lightning flashed back to the past, and she in that brief space of time saw how inconsiderately and indiscreetly she had acted. She loved him as her friend, and enjoyed his companionship, but had never dreamed of his ever loving her. She saw now

how mistaken she had been, and the thought of it pained her. She was loth to crush the anxious and throbbing heart now by her side,—to blight the fond and glowing hopes that he had been cherishing for years,—yes, she was loth to say the word that would drive this true and honorable man out into a world that would then seem to him a dark and dreary waste,—loth to cast a bleak shadow on his heretofore prosperous and happy life.

In the brief space that was allowed her to think she endeavored to place herself in his place; and then asked the awful question, what she would do if the only being she loved with all the power of her soul would turn false and cast her away. Oh, the thought was torturing, and she got up from her chair and paced the room until she was calm again. Mr. Spencer watched her all the time in silence, with a throbbing and aching heart. He could not understand it at all, for he never dreamed but that she loved him.

Having resumed her seat in silence for some time, she raised her beautiful dark eyes and looked towards him with all the sweetness and compassion of her kind and loving nature, as she said, "I had thought at first of postponing my answer to your question until some future time, but, upon further reflection, I cannot see where the consistency of such a course would be. You have frequently told me that you admired my truthfulness and candor more than anything else, and, though I have these attributes of character in no higher degree than many other persons have, yet I know there are ladies who, in matters of this kind, will suppress the truth, and for a time endeavor to deceive. But I cannot do this: I think it would be sin, besides doing a great wrong to yourself. Now, let me speak plainly, and do not misunderstand me. It is true enough, as you say, that in all these long years of the past you have been my gallant on many happy occasions; but I never looked upon you in any other light than as a dear friend, for whom I have always had the most profound consideration and regard. So that I am compelled to say now, in justice to myself as well as to you, that I do not now, and never did, love you as a true and faithful wife ought to love her husband. I never could consent—"

Here she was checked off saying anything more by the blank, utter despair that was written so vividly on his face.

Soon his head dropped on his breast, and he covered his face with his hands and sat there in silence. It was near the midnight hour, and all was calm and still as the grave, save the throbbings of their own hearts.

Presently he raised his head and exclaimed, in a low and agonizing tone, "Oh, Blanche, Blanche! this is more than I can stand! It snaps the very life-strings of my heart, and almost causes the blood to freeze in my veins!"

Blanche looked at him, while her heart ached with the most intense sorrow and pain. Hers was a soul that could feel for others' woes; and, on the impulse of the moment, she almost wished that she had sacrificed her own happiness and told him that she loved him. Her grief was the more intense when she felt that she had been something to blame herself in thus permitting him to pay his attentions to her so long. But, "Too late,—too late!" inaudibly escaped her lips, and she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

When she had become calm, Charles looked up and said, with tearful eyes, and in a low, sad, husky voice, "Blanche, tell me, is there no hope? Can you not speak one word that will give me hope? Can you not say that you love no one else better, and therefore bid me be hopeful and abide my time until you will learn to love me? Oh! only say there is hope,—yes, hope, even if I should die in despair!"

Blanche replied, low and soft and sweet, "No, Charles, there is no hope. Do not deceive yourself with this delusive phantom, that will in the end drag you down to deeper and darker despair. I might in one sense bid you hope, for there is none here of whom I think any more than I do of you yourself. But I still look forward to the time of seeing and meeting the one whom I could devotedly love. I could not consistently marry where I did not love to that degree of which I am loved. Therefore dismiss all thoughts of my doing so from your mind. But even if I never meet that being who exists in my imagination,—the beau ideal of my sweetest dreams,—if in the course of years I should realize that I have been following a delusive phantom that ultimately fades away into mid-air,—then, even then, Charles, I could only give you my hand,—my heart would ever remain to be given to him who is the personification of all that my soul longs for, and with whom I could live in sweet companionship in this hard and real world, as I have

heretofore done in the green fields and in the garden lands of the ideal world. When I leave my father's house,—when I leave my life-long protector, and thus sunder all the associations of my happy home,—it must be for him whom I devotedly love,—yes, love with all the adoration and power of my whole soul. Oh, no, no, my dear friend; I could not bid you hope. Live and learn that 'human love is not the growth of human will.' Know ye now that I can never learn to love thee. I am convinced now that I did wrong in thus allowing myself to be thus enshrined in your affections, but I can only ask you now to forgive and forget me. Let this scene be a scene of the past, never more to be revived again."

When she ceased speaking she sank back into her chair and folded her arms across her breast, and then looked vacantly at his shadow, which was cast on the wall by the light of the lamp. A long silence ensued.

Presently Charles, straightening himself up, said, "I see there is no hope. You have spoken your mind. I perceive the calm deliberation that forestalls the thought even of any desire to persuade you otherwise. Yes, your purpose is fixed and irrevocable. I go out into the world to-night alone,—dark and dreary as it now is,—but still no darker than the midnight darkness that envelops my soul. And oh, Blanche! you have spoken so kindly and candidly, that you only induce me to love you the more, and make me feel that I would give my very soul for you. But, oh, do not ask me to forget you! As well might you ask me to forget my existence,—to forget that I have a soul,—yes, you might as well even ask me to forget that I have a God to meet. Why, just think of it; you have been my companion all my life long, and even in my boyish dreams, and in my manhood's more sober hours, I have fancied you as being my life-partner in this sometimes dreary world. But now you see the scene is changed,—the guiding star of my life has set,—and I go out into the world with blighted hopes, and with despair written in my face, so that I will no more be animated with that energy which has heretofore marked my happy and prosperous life."

Silence, like a dim spectre of the past, brooded over them again. Blanche looked towards the clock; and, seeing how late it was, arose to her feet. Charles was watching her movements attentively, and said, "Stay, Blanche; I have one request to

make, and then I have done. You have told me that there is no one here of whom you think more than you do of myself. Now, my request is that you allow me to pay my attentions to you until such time as you see some one whom you can love as you say you ought to. Then I will cease my attentions to you from that very moment, without a murmur."

She sat down with that sense of surprise which amounts to amazement. She put her hand to her forehead, as she always did when in deep thought, and was silent. Then, rising again to her feet, she said, "There seems to be nothing wrong in your request, but is it not inexpedient? Would it not be well for us to stop now, since we have all our lives acted so indiscreetly? Let us stop now, and in time this will all pass away, and you will forget me. You will soon find other ladies who will love you truly, and with whom you will be far happier than you ever could have been with me."

"Oh, Blanche! Blanche! you seem, in one sense, to know so little about the affections of the human heart, else you would not talk so!" Charles exclaimed, impassionately. "Do you think it such an easy task for me to root out and forget a life-long affection? Oh, you know not what you say! How can I cease all at once to be your companion? Give me time. Do not cast me into the world alone, for there is no being on earth I can ever love as I do you. How can I go into society without being your gallant, as usual? When you are married, probably you will go away from here, and then it will not be so hard for us to endure our separation. But, while you are here and unengaged, how *can* I endure the thought of other gentlemen taking my place, when I know that you do not regard them any more than you do myself?"

She sat down again to study the matter over. Something seemed to tell her not to grant it,—to say *no* at once and be done with it; but when she asked for the reason, no answer could be given. "What harm would there be in it?" she said to herself. "And he says it would be a pleasure to him." Such thoughts as these crowded into and puzzled her mind.

Being sometimes impulsive, and generally quick of resolution, and actually worn out, both in body and mind, by the tortures and trying scenes through which she had passed during the whole evening, she, without further reflection, said, "I can see nothing wrong in your request, yet a something, I cannot tell

what, seems to urge me to refuse it. But, as my best judgment can give no reason for doing so, I have concluded to grant it on one condition."

"What is the condition?" he asked, eagerly.

"That you never mention the subject of this evening to me again,—never, while you live."

"I promise, upon the honor of a man."

"Then your request is granted," she replied, and rose to her feet. Charles, thanking her, bade her good-night and took his departure, with the faint hope that in time she would yet learn to love him.

And thus it was that she gave the fatal promise which was the beginning of so much sorrow to herself. Oh, Blanche! Blanche! priceless and glorious and sensible as thou art, in this one rash act and impulsive moment thou hast granted a request which thou wilt never cease to regret.

Oh, how blind we are to the future! We move down the stream of life, not knowing the fearful abyss towards which we are drifting.

Alas, poor Blanche! the promise thou hast now made is but the beginning of a dark and harassing life; and as sure as the sun shines on a clear noon-day, the time will come when thou wilt bitterly—oh, so bitterly!—regret it.

## CHAPTER XI.

'Tis not the fairest form that holds  
The mildest, purest soul within;  
'Tis not the richest plant that folds  
The sweetest breath of fragrance in.

DAWES.

Self-love could never yet look on truth  
But with bleared beams; slick flattery and she  
Are twin-born sisters, and so mix their eyes;  
And if you sever one, the other dies.

BEN JONSON.

DEWITT LU-GUERE has become a frequent visitor at the Murdoch mansion. Many are the evenings he spends there, and, seemingly, very pleasant ones they are. Fannie always appears in her finest attire, and with her most fascinating smiles. It is true that he sometimes becomes tired of her nonsensical talk, but then she looks so sweetly, and pays him such pretty little compliments, that he cannot help but overlook these defects in her character. He has come to think that there is no one perfect.

The clear, bright, sunny month of June has come, and the roses are in full bloom; the flowers on the hillsides are giving forth in abundance their fragrance, and the air is soft and balmy, and resonant with the songs of sweet birds. It is such a time that one delights to be in the woods, to wander along the moody banks of some gushing stream, and to listen to its music as it patters over the rocks on its steady way to the great ocean of waters.

Dewitt and Fannie have been out riding on horseback, and they enjoy it very much. One evening when he called, he told her that they were going to have an excursion to the Haunted Falls,—a very beautiful ravine about four miles distant,—and asked her if she would desire to go with him; to which she replied, "Oh, Mr. Lu-Guere, I shall be so delighted to accompany you! I know the excursion will be perfectly elegant. I wish all of our gentlemen had the energy and perseverance you have, and we would not be so quiet here in Claremont."

Dewitt, thanking her, said that he would call early in the morning. "You shall find me ready then," she said, "and at all other times you may desire a partner for such delightful excursions."

Their flirtation was the great topic of conversation in Claremont, and people generally took sides concerning it. Nancy Spriggins and her clique said that Dewitt was dead in love with her; and Lizzie Marlan and some others said that he was flirting with her; and this is about the way they left it. There are always those who can invent and circulate quite a variety of stories concerning an imagined love-affair; and therefore some said that they would be married soon, and others, who seemed to be in a position to know, said that he would propose and that she would jilt him as usual. And then there were still some others who were of the opinion that he would go East and never return again, and thus leave her a broken-hearted girl. Rumor was indeed busy, and had all she could do on this occasion.

The next morning being soft and balmy, the excursionists assembled at the place appointed in the evening quite early. Dewitt Lu-Guere had the finest black horses there were in the city, and also had them the gayestly equipped. Fannie was delighted when she saw them, and said that she had told her mother that she knew he would have the gayest span of horses for the occasion that he could procure. Mr. Belmont escorted Blanche, as Charles Spencer had gone East, and would not return until the last of the week. And then there were Harry Wasson and Nancy Spriggins, Theodore Thompson and Lizzie Marlan, Benton Rushwood and Ophelia Brandon, and quite a number of their set, not necessary to mention. The excursion was a very select one, and if they did not enjoy themselves, it was their own fault.

Mr. Belmont seemed in better spirits than ever before. After they had reached the Falls, and the servants had taken their horses, Blanche and he took a stroll along the brook-side. She noticed how lively and gay he was,—a mood in which he was very seldom found,—which called forth the remark, "I am surprised, Mr. Belmont, to see you so gay and lively. What can be the cause of it?"

He looked up at her in very great surprise, as he said, "I really cannot tell why I am so. Do you think I am more lively

than usual? If it be so, I can only account for it by having the pleasure of being your escort."

Blanche smiled as she carelessly said, "But is there no other cause?"

Here they both involuntarily, it seemed, looked towards Dewitt and Fannie, who were walking along on the other side of the brook. They looked in silence for a few moments, and then Mr. Belmont said, "Yes, there is another cause, and seeing now that you know it, I need not therefore repeat it. The only wish of my heart these many years is now about to be realized. Yes, I would almost give," he said, through his clinched teeth, "ten years of my life to see her prostrated. You may think it low and perhaps mean, Miss Alpen, in a strong man like me to pursue thus with revenge a weak and frail female; but, believe me, I cannot help it. It may be sin to do so, but yet it seems natural to think of revenge, for it seems ingrafted in our natures. She has ruined my happiness forever, and what is there not wretched enough to wish on her? Yes, it is too true,—I pant for revenge."

Blanche looked at him in the utmost surprise, which she did not endeavor to conceal. Taking a rustic seat near him, she said, "Yes, I am surprised—I am amazed—to find such a disposition in the man whom I always admired so much. Pardon me, Mr. Belmont, when I say that I think you should endeavor to rise to the dignity of a true man, and to cast aside those low and groveling devices, which are intended to revenge your imagined personal injuries. Believe me, that you will always be disappointed, and will never receive any consolation or joy from the revenge you seek. You, who are so eloquent in the cause of truth and justice, and endeavor, I am told, to point your clients in the right path of duty; you who are so gifted with mind and wealth and all that heart could wish; are you not surprised yourself, when you consider that you are pursuing a delusive phantom,—striving to accomplish a something from which you would advise your best friend to desist, to abandon, if he wished to be a man?" And then she continued, in a low, soft, musical voice: "Consider that, as you say, you sin both against heaven and against yourself. You say your life is a wreck. Oh, no, believe me, it is not. If it is so, you have made it so yourself. Turn your eyes to the Cross. There you will find a balm for every wound. Approach

with clean hands and a pure heart the Holy Evangelist, and He will wash all your sins and cares and troubles away. Oh, Mr. Belmont, my dear friend, look to Calvary. You have a great work there! Look on the brazen serpent and be healed!"

When she ceased he kindly took her hand and drew it through his arm, and they walked up to where their dinner was set, only making the remark as they went along, "Miss Alpen, you are the true Christian lady who would be a safe guide to follow, and who has inspiration and magnetism enough to direct and lead the strong mind of a strong man into higher walks and to nobler ends of life. Oh, the true woman's mission is a glorious—a godlike—one! You should be very proud of it."

They reached the place where the dinner was spread out on the green, soft grass. After it was ready, they sat down and did it ample justice. All the rich delicacies that could tempt the appetite were there, and if any one could not relish the good things, it was because they were sick, or because they were determined not to be satisfied with anything.

After it was over, Dewitt and Fannie strolled along the brook and came to this same seat, where Blanche and Belmont had been sitting. Fannie said she was tired, and invited him to sit down, and as he did so he said, "What a beautiful retreat you have here, Miss Murdoch! How did it get the name of The Haunted Falls?"

Fannie replied that she had heard her father say that a peddler had been killed here one time, and that a year or so afterwards some one, in riding by here at midnight, saw a man walking in white clothes down yonder by the bridge, and when he went down to see him he was not there. Thinking it was a ghost, he became frightened and galloped to the city at the top of his speed. The affair was published in the papers, and ever after that this place has been called "The Haunted Falls."

And thus they talked on from one thing to another, when Dewitt, looking at her hand, exclaimed, as he took it in both of his, "What a pretty little hand! and what a beautiful diamond ring!"

And he measured her hand on his, and the latter was nearly twice as large. As he was still looking at it admiringly, he

exclaimed again, "Without doubt, that is the prettiest little hand I ever saw in all my life!"

Here she drew her hand away, and laughingly exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Lu-Guere, you are just like all other gentlemen! You like to flatter us ladies. Now, I know you are trying to flatter me, and indeed I will not allow it."

Dewitt drew his hands away and looked at her with a very deep frown, as he said, "Why, Miss Murdoch, I am very much surprised! You are the first lady in a long time who has charged me with flattery. I thought you could distinguish between flattery and a compliment. Truly, Miss Murdoch, I would have you to understand now that it is far beneath my dignity to flatter any lady, much less one whom I have given so much attention as I have you. Come," he said, rising, "let us join the excursion-party."

"No, no!" she exclaimed, as she caught him by the arm. "Come and sit down again, and tell me truly if you are angry. You did not really think I was in earnest, did you?"

Dewitt sat down in a kind of pouting manner, and said he was not certain, but that he took it for granted that she meant what she said. "I am very sensitive on that point," he said, "for, when I compliment a lady, I desire her to accept it in the spirit in which it was intended. But, do you say that you did not mean it?"

"Of course I do," she impulsively said. "How could I mean to say that you were flattering me? Other gentlemen have said the same, but I did not care whether they meant it or not, for I did not admire them as much as I do you."

"Now," Dewitt laughingly said, "I will charge you with flattering me. You do not admire me as much as you say you do."

Here she laughingly took hold of both ends of his moustache, and said that she would not let go until he would take that back, and say that he had forgiven her.

Of course he would not say he had forgiven her until he had taken a long look at those lovely eyes, and that sweet face that was smiling so lovingly upon him. Then he told her that she was forgiven, and taking her arm in his they walked on until they came to a green, grassy mound, where they again sat down.

As he was sitting there, looking into her face, he said, "I

am not surprised that gentlemen fall in love with you. Those sweet soft blue eyes are calculated to win any man's affection who walks the earth. They, indeed, are beautiful; let me see if I can get them out."

And here he feignedly tried to pluck them out, which amused her very much, and she laughingly said, "If you had them out, perhaps you would not admire them so much as where they are."

"Truly," Dewitt said, "the man would be a fiend who would ever think that you ought to work, as I have heard some men say about the lady they would marry,—that they wanted her to be a good worker."

"My gracious!" she exclaimed, as she brought her little fist down on the grass. "It is dreadful to think of young ladies having to work! Indeed, I think it is quite degrading, and I would die first before I would do it!"

"I think you are just right," Dewitt mockingly said, with a great deal of gravity. "I think the true lady is the one who can entertain her friends, and can sit in the parlor, dressed all the time, and is not engaged in reading those hard novels that you cannot understand."

"Oh, you have just my ideas exactly!" she exclaimed. "I told mamma that I knew your ideas were high and elevating, and I told my sister Grace, who, I am sorry to say, is all in for work and music and reading all those hard novels, that it was not fashionable, and that no person but those who were below the fashion read them. Now I will tell her that you said the same, and I think she will change her mind."

Dewitt felt sorry that he had spoken so rashly, for perhaps his words might be used in turning one true lady from the right course, for, what he had seen of Grace, he considered her a true lady, and a jewel rarely to be found.

As it was growing late, they joined the party, who were getting ready to return, and they were soon on their steeds, "homeward bound."

## CHAPTER XII.

The fields did laugh, the flowers did freshly spring,  
 The trees did bud, and early blossoms bore;  
 And all the choir of birds did sweetly sing,  
 And told that garden's pleasures in their caroling.

SPENCER.

TIMES were passing merrily in Claremont. The evenings were soft and balmy, and every one seemed to be enjoying all the pleasures there are in life. The lovely days of June were drawing to a close, and still Dewitt thought nothing of taking his departure for home. The time to him seemed to pass so pleasantly away by his meeting with such a kind reception from every one, that he never allowed himself to think when he would return. The resolution that he had partially made when he came to the city was never thought of again, and his life was passing happily away.

Lizzie Marlan was greatly disappointed by reason of not gaining the attention of Dewitt Lu-Guere. "It was strange," she said one day to her mother, "how some gentlemen will be infatuated with ladies who are as nonsensical as Fannie Murdoch. She considered it was no encouragement for a lady to be educated or a Christian, for they gave such matters no consideration, and were fascinated by the lady who had a pretty face and sweet smiles."

To hear her talk in this way, one would suppose that she was a highly-refined and educated young lady herself; and yet she is the same one who had the interesting conversation with Nancy Spriggins on literature. Some ladies are never satisfied with themselves nor any person else. If she had been a sensible girl, she would have educated herself and have stored her mind with useful knowledge, instead of looking after beaux and going to parties. Hundreds and thousands of such young ladies have no other object in life than to pick out a husband. If they are successful in this, then they have reached the goal to which their ambition aspires.

Theodore Thompson, after being dismissed by Fannie Mur-

doch, did not take it so dreadfully to heart as was imagined by Mr. Belmont, for he immediately commenced gallanting Lizzie Marlan. In fact, he was so devoted in his attentions to her that she quite forgot her disappointment in not receiving Dewitt's attention. It was thought by many that it would make a match. Theodore was a fine-looking man; but, being only a clerk, he had no means of support save his salary. Being extravagant in dress, and desirous of moving in the very first circles of society, it took nearly every dollar he made to maintain him; and thus, at the end of the year, he had nothing left. Alas! how foolish and vain a young man is to be a slave to a passion that will take the very last cent he can make in order to keep pace with its requirements! Oh, if such young men would only endeavor to rise to the dignity and grandeur of true manhood!

It was also talked in social circles what *kind* of a match this would make. Lizzie was fair to look upon; but she was a very delicate little lady, and always declared she would never marry a poor man, because she would then have to do her own work. She always said that her mind was made up not to do any work until she was compelled to do it; and that that would never be as long as she had her father's house to live in. Should they be married, of course Theodore will have to keep a girl; and how much they will have left of his salary almost any one can tell.

Blanche had not told Dewitt anything about her arrangements with Charles Spencer. She had told her mother, who, with her consent, mentioned the fact to Dewitt. One day when they were in the library he asked her about it; and she repeated the whole affair from beginning to end.

Dewitt studied over the matter for some time, and then said, "I think, my dear cousin, that you acted in great haste, and also with great imprudence. I do not think it was really wrong in your doing so, but you do not know what sorrow it might bring you. I cannot see what kind of a soft simpleton of a man he is. I regarded him very highly until I heard of this affair; and I say now that that man is a fool who will complain and hanker after a lady when he knows that she cares nothing for him. If I loved the finest lady on the whole earth, I would renounce her at once as soon as I ascertained the fact that she did not reciprocate my love. I would tear the very

heart-strings out of me before I would be so humiliating as to implore her companionship when she had really told me that she did not love me. I consider this thing of people getting sick and dying over one another all nonsense. There are as good fish in the sea as have ever been caught."

"But, Dewitt," replied Blanche, "it is easy for you to talk. Wait until you are environed by the fascinations of some fair young lady, and you will change your mind. It is very easy for you to talk now; but I say, Wait. I think myself now, as I thought so at the time, that I did wrong; but I could give no positive reason for refusing his request. Now, as it is granted, would I be justified in recanting it without a good excuse?"

"No," Dewitt replied. "Since you have given your word, adhere to it. Any lady's word should be as good as her oath. When I find a lady making promises, either in small or weighty matters, and then breaking them, I have a very poor opinion of her. Truth and candor and fair dealing should always animate the soul of every true lady."

Nothing more was said on the subject, and other matters were introduced, in the course of which Blanche said, "I have often wanted to ask you, Dewitt, what profession or business you intend to pursue. You never told me."

He looked up and laughed outright, as he said, "I have been waiting for you to ask that question ever since I came. I believe all Claremont have asked me the same question. I wonder what interest they have in my welfare? Can you tell me?"

"You answer my question first, and then I will answer yours," she said, laughingly.

To which he responded, "I cannot answer you that, as I have not yet decided. Whether I will study a profession or go into business is very uncertain. Fannie Murdoch says it is a disgrace to work, and I kind of half believe it. What do you think about it?"

"I do not think anything about it," she said in reply. "I know she is wrong, and there is no sense in any such conclusion. I am surprised at your giving the affair a second thought at all. But I am still more surprised, my dear Dewitt, that you do not choose some profession or go into some business. You say it is over two years since you left college, and you do not know what you are going to do. See the valuable time

you are losing. Life is far too short to spend it so foolishly. Won't you settle down in some business and make your home here? I would like to see you do something. I do so much admire a young man who has noble impulses and is ambitious to excel. There is so much in this world to be accomplished, and so short a time to do it in, that there is no opportunity to be lost. Oh, just look at that long and illustrious line of noble and ingenious youth that you see everywhere around you, who are moving forward, and will perform the mission which has been given them! I think, cousin, if you reflect awhile, you will give this matter serious consideration."

Dewitt was silent for some time, and then said, "There are a great many things, my fair cousin, that you do not understand, because they are not in your sphere of duty. You see the main point in life is to have a starting-point; and therefore it will not do for one to rush into a profession or a vocation without giving the matter mature consideration. This is what I am now doing. When I have made up my mind, then you will see me moving forward like a wonderful storm."

"But, you see, you are not investigating the matter at all. You consult with no one about it, and hence I will venture to say that you are no nearer a decision now than you were two years ago. I ask you, now, if this is not correct."

He was prevented from a reply by the announcement that Miss Fannie Murdoch and Nancy Spriggins had called; and they both went to the parlor. They had come to take tea, which was the custom in Claremont for young ladies to do.



## CHAPTER XIII.

O love, O glory, what are ye? who fly  
 Around us, even rarely to alight;  
 There's not a meteor in the polar sky  
 Of such transcendent and more fleeting flight.  
 BYRON.

THESE tea-parties, as they were called, were pleasant little affairs. Sometimes three or four were at them, sometimes only one or two,—just as they took the notion. They had a tendency to strengthen that desirable sociability which should exist in the human family. If there were more genuine good feeling and sociability among people generally, I think this life would be more pleasant than it is, and we would live a happier and better one.

They had a very pleasant time on this evening. Fannie was very lively and pleasant, and put on her sweetest and most fascinating smiles. Nancy Spriggins looked as fresh and felt as happy as a new-born flower. She was always happy when in company with Fannie; and more especially so on this evening, when she had the pleasure of taking tea at Judge Alpen's.

When they were ready to go home, Dewitt presented himself as their escort; and, each lady taking an arm, they departed. They took Nancy home first, and then Fannie and he walked leisurely along the street in the moonlight, until they arrived at home. Instead of going into the parlor, they sat down on the piazza, as it was very warm, but still pleasant in the evenings,—being about the middle of July.

Fannie seemed very thoughtful, and looked sometimes as though she was very sad. In fact, he had noticed this manner for the last two or three weeks; and once he mentioned it to her, with an intimation that she was tired of his company. But these sad moods seemed to make her more fascinating than ever, for she seemed to have more good sense than usual, and did not talk so silly. Dewitt looked at her some time in silence, and then said, "What makes you so quiet, Fannie? It seems to me that you are not enjoying my company. I

knew you would soon tire of me, and I think I told you this one time."

She looked up to him with all the beauty and fascination of her whole nature,—her eyes full of that love and sweetness which no one could help but admire, and, in a low, soft voice, said, "Now, dear Dewitt, do not talk so; you know I never tire of your company. The happiest and sweetest moments of my life have been passed in companionship with you. But I will tell you what I *was* thinking about. You know you told me the other evening that you were going to your New England home. I was just thinking how lonely I will be without you. Oh, what a happy, happy time I have had since you came! And now, in so short a time, you say you are going away, perhaps never to return. Now, believe me when I tell you this truly, and now ask yourself if I am tired of you."

She spoke so softly and so sweetly that Dewitt was much affected by her words, and after a short time he said, "I am so glad to know that you appreciate me; but, if I remained all summer with you, I have no doubt but in the end you would tire of me. You see, Fannie, you have had so many admirers, and you have become tired of them all, and turned them away, perhaps some with broken hearts. Why should I think, then, that you would never tire of me, when you have discarded more illustrious men than I am? You see I have grounds for thinking that you would soon tire of me."

She was silent for some time, as if engaged in deep thought, for she seemed to be unconscious of all around her. But, presently awakening, as it were, from a deep reverie, she looked into his face again with that calm, sweet expression, as she softly said, "I comprehend now, Dewitt, the import of your words. I did not before. I see clearly now that you believe me to be a flirt, vulgar as the word now sounds in my ears. It was not until a few weeks since that the enormity of my past acts burst full upon my mind, and I felt then, and feel now how wickedly, yes, cruelly, I have acted. But, Dewitt,"—and her voice became very low and sweet,—"*the secret of it all is,—I have never loved until now,—I have heard people talk of love, and I have read about it myself, but I have often laughed it to scorn; and said that there was no such thing. But now, alas! I feel how terribly mistaken I*

have been, and I feel all the power and deep feeling of that first love which touches the most tender chords of my heart. Strange, indeed, that this confession should come from me, but I know now the light in which you view me, and I know, in the full light of all my past flirtations, what your opinion of me must be. But believe me now, as I tell you truly,"—and she spoke the words scarcely above a whisper,—“that the cause of it all has been that my heart has never been touched before with the sweetness of love. And if I have been called a gay and handsome flirt, it was because I have met with no one until now on whom I could place all the affections of my soul. Whatever your opinion of me may be, I beg of you not to think that I am now perverting the truth, and telling you a deliberate falsehood. Oh! believe me when I tell you that I speak the truth from my heart.”

And when she ceased speaking, a tear ran slowly down her cheek, and she took her pocket-handkerchief and wiped her eyes. If ever there were a time in Dewitt's life when he felt utterly ashamed of himself, it was now. Designing, and perhaps vain, as she had been heretofore, what was that to him when now she had the magnanimity of heart to make the confession she had just finished? He believed every word she said, for it seemed impossible to him that truth could be perverted in a human form so divinely made and so exquisitely adorned.

He felt so utterly ashamed of himself, and so mean and miserable, that he silently and affectionately drew her hand through his arm and led her into the parlor, and, after a short conversation about general subjects, took his departure, after assuring her that he would call the next evening.

When he had closed the gate after him, he walked rapidly to Mr. Belmont's office, intending to tell him that he would withdraw from his engagement and renounce the flirtation and return home immediately. His mind was thoroughly made up to do so; but, alas! when he came to the door he found it locked, and all was dark and drear. He stood there a long time, waiting for him to come; but seeing it was late, he returned to his uncle's, and the impression made on his mind gradually wore away.

The next morning Blanche handed him a note from Belmont, which stated that he would be absent from the city a

few days, and when he returned he desired him to be sure and call at his office.

There was too much honor in Dewitt—that is, he had too profound a regard for his word—to break this engagement without telling Mr. Belmont about it. He continued his attentions as usual, without any change, but strong in the determination to renounce the flirtation, of which he was now heartily ashamed.

Alas for our good resolutions! How often are they torn asunder by the lapse of time, or other circumstances over which we have no control, or do not desire to have any!

#### CHAPTER XIV.

In her youth,  
There is a prone and speechless dialect,  
Such as moves men. Besides, she hath prosperous art,  
When she will play with reason and discourse,  
And well she can persuade.

SHAKESPEARE.

OWING to the fact of Mr. Belmont's continued absence, longer than he had intended, Dewitt was becoming discontented and petulant, and sometimes very much down-hearted. The only place he visited was at the Murdochs', where Fannie treated him so kindly and with so much consideration, and seemed so delighted to see him when he would come, that he could not help but be highly entertained. When he would take his leave, she would always make him tell her when he would come back again; and many other little kindnesses would she say and do,—all in such a sweet, loving, and fascinating manner,—that it completely turned his head, and he felt so miserably when he thought of this—almost damnable—agreement hanging over his head, that he did not know what to do.

And one morning when he was sitting in the parlor, in one of these moods, he called Blanche as she was passing the door with the broom in her hand, and said, “Let us take a ride on horseback this fine morning; I feel so tired and uncomfortable,

and it will be so pleasant, that I know we cannot help but enjoy it."

Blanche in a very kind and amiable manner replied, "I would gladly do so, Dewitt, but you see I am not dressed, and two of the servants having gone away, I am compelled to help with the work, or else a great part of it will devolve upon mamma. But I will tell you what I will do. If you wait until this afternoon, I will go with you cheerfully, and I have no doubt but that we will enjoy it very much."

"Oh, you talk so silly!" he impetuously and impatiently exclaimed. "You are always talking about work, and have always so much to do, when there is no manner of use in it at all. Why need you work? Uncle is rich, and you have not the slightest occasion for it. I hate work, and consider it unlady-like, and you should know better. Put away your broom and go dress yourself, and I will order the horses, and we will be off at once. Fannie Murdoch is dressed all the time, and never thinks of work. Why do you not decide and go, and what are you thinking about?"

The words fell like a thunderbolt on her ears. She could scarcely understand what he meant. She had often heard him speak before about hating work, but she did not think he meant it. She was convinced, however, that he was leading a vain and aimless life, and she longed to be the means of stirring him to action; she longed to strike the match that would set his whole being in a flame of enthusiasm and stir his soul—dormant now as it was—to deeds of noble achievements.

But the opportunity had never presented itself until now, —a golden opportunity it was,—and would she let it pass unimproved?

She was about to speak, when Dewitt said, "What are you hesitating about? Why don't you go? What *can* you be thinking about?"

She raised her beautiful dark eyes towards him, with all their brilliancy and glory, as she said, "I am thinking, my dear cousin, of yourself. You despise work; you despise industry; and, in fact, you despise every thing that is noble, grand, and great. Though you have been favored beyond the common lot of men, yet you have no desire to grasp the golden opportunities presented to you,—no ambition, which animates you to rise above your present lot. To few men—and to some

never—comes the rare opportunity of making themselves immortal, or of winning an enviable name. That opportunity is now presented to you. Will you embrace it? By birth and education you have a great and wondrously cultivated mind, which would enable you—if you but made the effort—to soar upon the wings of fame to higher and nobler fields of glory. The way lies open before you, and there is not the slightest barrier to check your onward career."

Here she stopped, it seemed, for a moment to calm her nerves; and seeing that he was listening attentively, resumed her speech in her clear, sweet, and loving voice,—“Now I ask you, my dear cousin, in all truth and candor, what there has been in your life for the last two years that any one could admire,—yes, that your most devoted friend could approve? You seem to have no purpose in view,—no aim in life,—and, to all present appearances, your existence is of no more importance, in one sense, than the poorest vagrant upon the streets. Oh, it does seem to me that in this great, free land of ours no one should doubt which course to pursue. A man with your eminent abilities ought to command any position he desires. In this, the noon-tide of the nineteenth century, on which reflects the glorious achievements of the ages that have passed away, it does seem to me that no one should doubt as to his duty to himself, to his country, and to his God. It does seem to me that at a time when knowledge is almost made the province of mankind; when the very atmosphere around you is pregnant with the deeds and actions of great and good men; when the very bowels of the earth have been forced to yield up its treasures, and the bosom of the great deep throbs with the electric shock; and when the very lightnings of heaven—the thunderbolts of Jove—have been arrested in their fierce and destructive course and made subservient to the will of man,—yes, I say, it does seem to me that a man with your golden opportunities should be animated with that spirit which is said to raise mortals to the skies, and that thereby you would mount the shining course spread out before you. Oh, if I were a man, how gladly would I join that long and illustrious train of noble and ingenious youth who throng the great thoroughfares of life! But, as I am only a frail girl, I can but animate others to deeds of noble action and glorious achievements. Go forward, then, I would say, with a will to conquer. Toil day after

day, burn the midnight lamp night after night, until finally—as most assuredly you will—plant your feet upon the sun-crowned heights of victory.”

While she was speaking, Dewitt had sank down as low in his arm-chair as he could, and, having pulled his hat over his face, was sitting in that crumpled position when she ceased speaking. Long he sat there without saying a word, until, at last, Blanche spoke; and then seeming to be awakened as from a dream, he straightened up, put on his hat, and, before she could say another word, rushed from the room, and was soon upon the street out of her sight. She closed the door after him and returned to the parlor, and burst into tears, for she thought that she had grossly offended him.

## CHAPTER XV.

Society itself, which should create  
Kindness, destroys what little we had got;  
To feel for none is the true social art  
Of the world's stoics,—men without a heart.  
BYRON.

WHAT kind of society have you? is the question we often hear asked when one becomes acquainted, or is introduced, in any new locality. And just as often we will hear the reply, “Oh, it is excellent indeed!—we have fine society.”

Yes, one hears these expressions until they become positively disgusted with the name—Society. For when we make our first appearance into this society that is called excellent, what do we find to make it excellent?

It might be well to inquire, in the first place, what good society is. Men, and women, too, differ in what they may term good society. But what the vast majority call good society may be found in almost any city, town, or hamlet in the land. To be dressed well, to have a little smattering of French, a piece or two of music learned by rote, a tremendous amount of small talk, which is suitable on almost any occasion, is what

you will find most of the common and popular society of to-day composed of.

Most gentlemen, when they go to call on a young lady, can think of nothing else but small talk. They have spent a great deal of time arranging their toilet, which sometimes becomes very troublesome. The fashionable young man tries on one shirt, and it does not fit rightly; and then he tries on another, and another, until there are a half-dozen soiled and thrown aside, before he finds one that suits his fastidious taste. And when he puts every hair in its place, then he wends his way to call on his very fashionable young lady.

She has spent hours at her mirror fixing this little thing and that, until she thinks she is dressed “superb,” as she terms it; and this always includes a great amount of paint and powder. When everything is completed, she makes her appearance in the drawing-room, where her sweet and amusing “Willie” is waiting for her.

What an amusing and sometimes ridiculous sight it is to see half a dozen of just such ladies and gentlemen as above described together of an evening! One would sit the whole time listening, and scarcely hear one sensible word spoken. Indeed, if one original idea would happen to strike one of them, and she or he, as the case might be, should give expression to it, the shock would set all of them crazy. This one will say something funny, and then they will all laugh at it. Next some other one will relate a nonsensical anecdote, and then they will all have to laugh at him, or it would be treating him with great disrespect.

It does not matter if a stranger happens to be present, who knows nothing about their local affairs, or their personalities,—these are all discussed and told to him as though they were of the most profound interest to every person. They never think that it is unpleasant for him to listen to this talking about some local affairs of which he knows nothing. And yet it is astonishing how they rattle on, and never stop to think whether they are entertaining their guest or not.

Just in this manner did Ophelia Brandon and Milton Marlan spend an evening at the house of a friend, where there happened to be a stranger who was not acquainted with anything in Claremont, but who was a fine scholar and a gentleman in every respect. The whole conversation consisted about the

flirtation of Dewitt Lu-Guere and Fannie Murdoch. Some of them named over all the beaux with whom she had ever flirted, and told what excellent gentlemen they were,—some of them better looking and with a nicer appearance than Mr. Lu-Guere. And they wound up by saying that she was only flirting with him, and in the end would throw him overboard when the proper time came.

Others said that none of her other gallants had the prestige of being a New-Englander, and of having relations in Boston; and this fact was very flattering to Fannie, as well as pleasing to her mother, who would urge the alliance with all her power and will. In this way Fannie would learn to love him, and they would ultimately be married. But still there were others who insisted that he was only flirting with her, and would never marry at all, as there were finer and more accomplished and better educated young ladies in the East; that he would flirt with her and then return to his home, and never give her another thought, unless he would happen to return again.

Thus the gossips had it for one whole evening, scarcely without any intermission, until our stranger friend thought he would have to take a walk.

Milton Marlan carried on very gayly,—so the young ladies thought,—for he made some funny little remarks that made these innocent little souls laugh. Milton was a clever sort of a young man. He was very vain of himself, however, and considered, because he was the son of a rich father, that he was better than any person else. He was very aristocratic in his views, and was very expressive of what he called "good society." With his gold-headed cane, bought with his father's money, for he was only a clerk, he went sailing along the street with all the presumption that any mortal could have. At the same time there were many of his father's clerks, and some of the mechanics in the workshops, who knew more than he did. But such is life, as we see it every day around us.

Fannie Murdoch was not certain how matters stood with her and Dewitt. She did not know what to make of his actions that evening, when, for some cause or another, she did not know what, she told him of her love. When she told her mother about it, that acute personage thought it a great mistake. In her more sober reflections she thought so herself. But when he came back again, and was just as pleasant as usual,

she thought nothing more about it, except that she was now endeavoring to find out what he thought of her.

When one loves, and is uncertain whether it is reciprocated, the uncertainty alone is the most harassing feature of the whole affair. There is nothing makes one so weak as uncertainty, and nothing so strong as being positive. If she just could have known from his own lips what he thought of her, it would have taken a great burden off her mind. That she loved him there was no doubt. It is true that his New England ancestry and relations had something to do with it; but now, when she became his companion, she experienced in her heart a different feeling for him, long before she was convinced that she loved him, that she had heretofore felt for any other of her admirers. The influence of love softens one's nature, and she felt more kindly towards every one,—even condescended to be more cheerful with Grace—a something which the latter could not understand.

One day when these three were sitting in the drawing-room together, Grace with a book in her hand, the mother embroidering, and Fannie reclining on the lounge doing nothing, she suddenly raised up, took a large arm-chair and drew it near her mother, and said, "I am uncertain, mother, what Mr. Lu-Guere's intentions are. I do not know whether he loves me or not. I have given him all the chance he certainly desires, but he does not seem to want to declare his intentions. Of course it would not do for me to say anything more than what I have already done to get an expression from him."

"No, my dear child," the fond mother replied, "I think you have said enough; but the next time he comes look your sweetest, and in some manner try and get an expression out of him."

"I will make that effort," she replied, "and I think it would be well for me to take Walter Scott's poems in with me, and say I have been reading the 'Lady of the Lake.' I heard him say, the other day, he admired it very much, and I think he would think more of me when he saw me with the book that he admired."

Grace could stand this no longer, and she closed her book and exclaimed, "Oh, vanity! oh, vanity! where will it end? There is not that being on the broad green earth that I would lay so many plots for as I have heard you at for the last fort-

night. If he loves you, he will declare his love; and if he does not, you are only making a fool of yourself. I never yet heard of ladies making proposals, and you have just as good as made one. For pity's sake, have a little good judgment, and do not bring disgrace on the Murdoch family."

Before she was through speaking, Mrs. Murdoch had removed her spectacles, and was looking daggers at her. And when Fannie burst into tears it made the old lady nearly rage, and she almost fiercely exclaimed, "Grace, I will have to lock you up in your room, and give you nothing but bread and water, if you do not behave yourself better. Why in the world it is that you are so naughty and treat your elder sister so I cannot imagine. I will most assuredly have to tell your father if you do not reform. I bid you go to your room," she continued, in a peremptory tone; "and I will not allow you to come into the parlor for a week, to entertain any gentleman who may call on you. I will certainly, this evening, tell your father all about you."

Grace arose, and, as she was leaving the room, said, "I will do what you say, but I do wish you would tell papa, and at the same time tell him all. I am very willing that *he should know it all*. If you do not tell him all, I will."

This was almost the daily occurrence in the Murdoch family. Grace's proud and impulsive spirit could not allow her to sit still and listen to such nonsensical talk, but sometimes would crop out and find expression just in the manner narrated.

She went to her room and resumed her book; and Mrs. Murdoch went to Fannie and wiped the tears from her eyes, and told her never to mind the words of her ungrateful sister.

## CHAPTER XVI.

They awaken  
Such thoughts as these; an energy,  
A spirit, that will not be shaken  
Till frail mortality shall die.

*Willis's Poems.*

WHEN Dewitt Lu-Guere rushed from his uncle's house, he walked through the main street and turned up a road which led to a most beautiful grove on a hill overlooking the city. Having become sufficiently calm to think clearly, his mind naturally went back to his boyhood's days. Then he was animated with a noble impulse, and looked forward with throbbings of joy to the time that he would take his place on the great stage of life, where he could carve out for himself a name that would never die. Yes, even during the first year of his college career he was ambitious to excel and to become a great man; but as time rolled along this ambition began to wane, and when he graduated, there could not have been a more aimless man in his class than he.

And he thought of his absent college-companion,—Walter Ludwick. He considered what a lofty ambition he had,—how he was bending every effort to rise above his present position, even to such an extent that, when he left college, he was very much broken down in health; but still his resolution was strong, and he was destined to become a great man.

His cousin's words were still ringing in his ears; and he seemed to see his past life spread out before him as distinctly as though it were on some vast panorama. It is not only what she said, but the manner in which she said it,—the deep pathos, the inspiration of her soul, the magic influence of her voice,—all combined to impress her words indelibly on his heart. For a time he thought her comparison of him to the poorest vagrant on the street was too severe, and perhaps uncalled for. But then he thought again, "Is it not true?" Aside from being fed and clothed by his father, how much worse was he than the poor vagrant? And, in another sense,

of what more use to mankind was he than the poor vagrant? What benefit, so far in his life, had he been to his country or to his God? And was he making any improvement? "Ah," he thought, "was she not eminently justified in every word she said? And did she not feel a deep sorrow in her heart when she was compelled to give her thoughts utterance?"

As these thoughts came to his mind, he was compelled by a calm deliberation to admit the truth of them, and therefore he could not blame his cousin for what she had said.

And, as he was thus sitting meditating upon the future, his eyes were turned towards the active and busy city below. He saw there that every one had something to do. Men were walking with quick step to and fro, and all seemed to be leading a busy and active life.

Oh, how often has one viewed from some prominent elevation the great, heaving, active city below, with its myriads of throbbing hearts, and yet seeming to be one living human being! It is music to the ear; and long can one sit there and learn lessons from its busy and bustling life. In that city we can read tales and see pictures that brighten the eye and give joy to the heart,—and sad ones too, over which the tear of pity falls, and we turn sorrowfully away. Yes, how many happy and joyous homes there are there! but we know there are sad and dreary homes there too,—heart-rending cries and agonies of sorrow, which, if heard and seen, would almost freeze the very blood in our veins.

Long Dewitt sat there thinking upon the past, and then looking into the future. He could not make up his mind what he would do. The science of physiology he had always studied with a great deal of pleasure; but he did not think that he would like the practice of medicine. All these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, and he was uncertain what to do.

The air was soft and fragrant, and resonant with the carols of nature's own songsters. From the city below came sweet and soul-stirring strains of exquisite music. The band was playing in the park; and the music, distant though it was, sounded sweetly in his ears. Everything around him was so full of life that he felt himself imbued with a feeling heretofore almost unknown. And, arising to his feet, he impulsively exclaimed, "Oh, I must do something! The very birds seem to mock at my indolence. Oh for the spirit that animated my

boyhood's sunny hours! Oh for that ambition with which my soul was then inspired by the fond hopes of being a great man! Oh that I were a child again, so that I might nurture that spirit which is said to raise mortals to the skies!"

He resumed his seat and sank into a deep study. Long he sat there,—longer perhaps than he knew,—for when he again arose and looked around, the sun had passed beyond the tree-tops and was shining in upon him. There seemed to be, as he was standing there in the sunshine, a brightness in his eyes heretofore unnoticed,—a determination in his face seldom, if ever, seen; and, drawing himself up to his full stature, he said, in a low, full, and determined voice, "Yes, I am bound to succeed. [By these huge oaks that wag their tall heads to the sun; by that heaven that bends above us; by all that I hold near and sacred; by the memory of my sainted sister, whose voice now swells the chorus of the redeemed,—I will lead a new life,—I will be free from indolence,—I will endeavor to mount the shining course that now looms up before me, and will yet make a man of myself."

Having ceased speaking, he again resumed his seat. After meditating for some time, he arose and walked rapidly to the city, with the intention of going to a restaurant for his dinner. But as fate would have it, when he turned the corner who should he meet but Fannie Murdoch? She immediately took hold of his arm, and made him walk with her down the street, saying that she was going a-shopping, and therefore desired company. But Dewitt replied, "I have had no dinner, and therefore I must have something to eat." "In that case," she said, with a laugh, "you can come home with me and I will give you a lunch, which will satisfy your hunger until tea. Of course you will remain and spend the evening with us."

Being unable to resist her fascinating persuasions, he at once, without any further excuses, accompanied her. After having stopped at several stores, they returned home. She had a luxurious lunch set out for him, and it is true to say that he did it ample justice.

When they returned to the parlor, she played several pieces on the piano, after which she requested him to read some from Sir Walter Scott's "Lady of the Lake." In this manner they passed the time until tea was ready.

After tea, Grace, the mother and father, all came into the parlor, and they passed rather an enjoyable evening. Grace was even permitted, for some cause or another, to play some of her finest instrumental pieces and to sing some of her sweetest songs. And thus the evening passed away before he knew how late it was.

As he was about taking his leave, he informed her that he intended leaving the next day, at which she portrayed and expressed great sorrow; but when he told her that he would call before going, she seemed comforted and happy. Late as it was, he wended his way to Mr. Belmont's office, and found him at home.

## CHAPTER XVII.

I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak;  
I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more.  
I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,  
To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield  
To Christian intercessors.

SHAKESPEARE.

AUGUSTUS BELMONT had been watching the flirtation very attentively, and was pleased to see the progress his friend Dewitt was making towards winning her affections. His brightest and most sanguine anticipations were more than realized. One of his friends had been in the office a few moments before Dewitt entered, and in speaking of this flirtation said, "I saw Mr. Lu-Guere accompany her home shortly after dinner, and as he went into the house, and did not come out again, I suppose he intended remaining for tea."

This pleased Mr. Belmont, and he said, "Do you think it will make a match? What are your opinions?"

"Well," he replied, "I am not certain; but it always seems to me when a young man commences running home with a young lady to take tea with her, and gives her almost his daily attentions, that he is either deeply in love, and means business, else he is making a most consummate fool of himself. I do not know in which position this young man is placed, but if I

were to give an opinion on such matters,—something I very seldom do,—I would say that they are both deeply in love with each other, and that she has got her match at last. These are only speculative ideas of my own, however."

Mr. Belmont was amused with his friend's seeming earnestness, and said, "Of course I cannot tell, but would be willing to wager all my modest fortune that he will never marry her while the sun shines. You see, sir, that he is from New England, and there are about ten young and beautiful ladies there to one gentleman. Now, certainly among that vast throng of intelligent and accomplished young ladies he could find one far superior to Miss Murdoch. You see, the affair, in that light, looks unfavorable for the alliance."

This argument seemed very conclusive, and nothing more was said about it. The client departed, and Mr. Belmont resumed the preparation of an important case, and was thus engaged when Dewitt, late in the evening, entered the office.

He was greatly surprised to see him, and, quickly springing to his feet, he grasped him by the hand and shook it quite warmly, as he said, "I am rejoiced to see you, and I now offer you my most complete congratulations on your transcendent success, as well as my gratitude for acceding to my wishes. Let me hear the history of your victory."

Dewitt sat down. Mr. Belmont's sharp eye detected that there was something wrong, but said nothing. Dewitt called for a cigar, and, having lighted it, leaned back in his chair, with his thumbs hooked in each armhole of his vest, and puffed away at his cigar in silence. Then, tipping the ashes off the end of it with his little finger, he again leaned back in his chair, and looked up at Mr. Belmont, as he said, "You ask me for a history of the whole affair? The most I can say is, that I have been making a most consummate fool of myself. This is not the ruthless and heartless girl you said she was, but, on the contrary, I find her warm-hearted and affectionate. I have, therefore, made up my mind to renounce the whole affair."

The pain and blank amazement with which Mr. Belmont received this announcement were so vividly written in his face, that, had Dewitt Lu-Guere here noticed it, he would really have been frightened and alarmed. This was followed, however, by a sharp, keen anger, and he said, without looking



towards him, "Let me hear, in full, your reasons for so doing."

Seeing the gathering storm of anger that would probably soon burst upon him, Dewitt replied in a very conciliatory manner, as he said, "I have turned a new leaf, as it were, in my life. As I told you the first time we met, I have been living an aimless and worthless life these last two years, and I now think it is time that I should reform, and become once more a man. I have therefore made a firm resolution that I will at once go into some business, or commence the study of some profession, and thus take a position on the great stage of life. This being the case, you see, then, how weak and silly it is for me to be here wasting my time in a flirtation with an innocent girl, and making a most consummate ape of myself. For these reasons, I desire to cancel an engagement which should never have been made."

Belmont's face grew pale with anger. All the fierce indignation of his soul was aroused, and he abruptly arose, and paced the room once or twice; and then stopping right in front of Dewitt, his eyes, as it were, flashing fire, and in a low, deep, and fiercely angry tone, said, almost through his clinched teeth, "You ask me to cancel our engagement! No, by the 'eternal gods,' I never will do so while there is one breath of life in me! I stand upon that agreement,—yes, I stand upon that bond. Your solemn word of honor, which should be as sacred as your oath registered in heaven, is pledged to me to fulfill this engagement; and if you break it, lie upon any resolution in life you may make! You talk to me about the good resolutions you have made and expect to carry out, and yet you stand here with cool indifference and talk about canceling a solemn engagement, to perform a task on which my very life has been set for years. No, by the Eternal, that rules the world, you shall not recede from this engagement with my consent! Talk to me no more about it. As well might you bid the noonday sun to cease his western course as to think to change my mind of this one indomitable resolution to ruin this girl. My solemn oath is registered in heaven to, do so, and think you I will lay perjury on my soul? No, not for all the women who walk the face of the earth. I stand now upon your word of honor, the same as your bond; yes, the same as your solemn oath. If you violate all these sacred obligations,

you do so at your own peril, but not with my consent. Be in every sense a man."

He took his seat. Dewitt was dumfounded with amazement. He could not know what he meant. Such a fierce demonstration of his passion he never dreamed of. It is true that he always knew he had a wonderful passion and an indomitable will, but he never dreamed that it was so far beyond his own control.

After sitting there for some time contemplating the scene, he said in rather a calm voice, though slightly mingled with anger, "I expected when I came here this evening to be treated as a gentleman, and with that consideration which my position merits, and which is due from one gentleman to another. But, I must say, that this reception quite surprises me, and does not approach that dignity to which I supposed you aspired."

This curt reply quite disarmed Mr. Belmont, and his whole manner changed. He moved his chair closer to him; and in a very different tone and in a very friendly manner said, "I most humbly beg your pardon, my dear friend. I cannot imagine what made me become so angry, unless it was the dreadful fear that my most cherished hopes were about to be blighted. You see, Dewitt, I have never been so happy in all my life as I have been since you commenced this flirtation; and then to have the thought burst suddenly upon me that my bright anticipations were about to prove a dream, it quite revolutionized my whole being. But now I am calm again, and we will talk over the matter carefully and in a friendly manner. It is due to you to say that any expression or word that I may have made use of which would in any way reflect on yourself as a gentleman or a man of eminent ability, as I have always considered you to be, I here retract the same, and most contritely beg your pardon. There is no young man of my acquaintance whom I so highly regard as you, else I would never have intrusted you with this secret."

This explanation and apology, so candidly and earnestly given, effected a complete reconciliation, and the two friends commenced to reason the matter together.

Dewitt then explained everything to him, and how she had confessed that she loved him; and that she had repented of her past follies, and thought she would live a better life. That

heretofore she had never believed there was such a thing as love, but that now she was convinced that she was wrong, and felt very, very sorry for the hearts she had broken, if they all felt as she did.

He listened very attentively, and then said, "But do you not see the folly of this whole affair? There is no lady, I do not care who she is, who is so soft as to declare or avow her love to any gentleman. You see this affair is incredible, and she does not love you at all, and is only leading you on. But I want you to pursue the matter, until such time as you can cast her away, so that it will throw her in an embarrassing position in society."

"But I know you are mistaken," Dewitt positively replied. "This thing of young ladies being soft, as you term it, is only another name for warm affections and a pure and open and undesigning heart. The most I prize in a woman are her affections; and, although it is the rarest thing in the world for a lady to avow her love as this one has done, yet it by no means depreciates her in my estimation, but, on the contrary, it winds her right into my affections, so that I think a vast deal more of her than I did before. I always did admire a lady who did not conceal her affection or regard for me. But if there is anything on this earth that I most utterly despise, it is that woman who, though she love you dearly, will, on almost every occasion, manifest a total indifference for you. Yes, I have seen this the case when her very heart throbs as she hears her lover's every foot-fall. As sure as the sun shines, if I were engaged to be married to a lady, and I would discover this trait in her character, I would cancel the engagement at once. Give me a true, pure, candid, and affectionate girl for a wife, and I will ask nothing more; but Heaven deliver me from a designer and a wire-worker! The world is so full of these latter disgusting creatures, that I now indeed admire the candor and magnanimity of this girl, who, as you say, is a heartless flirt. But as to your thinking she is not in earnest, look at this diamond ring, and then tell me if she is not speaking the truth."

Here he handed him the ring, saying, "That ring, she said, was never before on any gentleman's finger, as it was a gift from her dead brother. She told me I could wear it until I went home, but that I must then return it to her."

Augustus, in the most profound surprise, looked at the ring and then thoughtfully said, "You must be right. Although I was engaged to her for a year, yet she would never trust me with this ring out of her sight. She said it was sacred to the memory of her lost brother. It is a beautiful ring. Her brother told me himself that he had paid one thousand dollars for it, and I do not doubt his word, for you see it is magnificent."

"Oh, I have not the least doubt but that she is in earnest in what she says," exclaimed Dewitt, "and that is the reason I want to get out of the affair in time. I do not think I would ever learn to love her myself; but I feel so miserable and unhappy in her presence, with this engagement hanging over my head, that if it were canceled I would experience a sweet relief. I might then love her, for I could mould her ideas just to suit my own, for you know that some of the gayest flirts make good and subservient wives."

Mr. Belmont looked at him a few moments, and then laughed outright, as he said, "Oh, no, my friend Dewitt; I could never think of canceling the engagement. To do so now, when victory is so nearly attained, would but sink me down into deep and darker despair. Oh, no! come, now, my friend, and adhere strongly to your resolution. If you fall in love with her and marry her, then I will consider the agreement as being fully complied with; but if you do not marry her, nothing short of a year's flirtation, or thereabouts, will satisfy me. Then cast her away, and your victory is complete; and you will thus have avenged the wrongs of your friend. Adhere strictly to the new leaf which you say you have turned; and whenever you make an agreement, always comply with it, and endeavor to win the reputation of the man whose word is just as good as his bond. Now, come, let us go home, and don't ask me any more about canceling this agreement, for I could not entertain the thought of it for a moment. Come along, and stay all night at my hotel. Your uncle's will all be abed before this time, and you will have to arouse them in order to gain admittance to your room."

Dewitt saw that it was useless to persist any longer, and told him he would stand firm by his agreement, let it come to what it would.

Mr. Belmont was so rejoiced that he clasped Dewitt to his

breast and exclaimed, "I will remember you the longest day I live!" And as he went to turn down the lights, a tear could be traced down that great, strong man's face. Yes, the man who had a passion like a volcano, and a will strong in some things as steel,—yet, in this one affection of the heart, soft as a woman's.

Oh, what a strange world this is, and how strange, complex, and varied are the people who live in it!

He took Dewitt's arm, and they went to the hotel, where he remained all night, with the intention of returning home the next day.

Was Dewitt Lu-Guere happy as he was walking along the street with his confidential friend, while this agreement was still in force? Did he not feel that his honor as a man was still impaired? No, nothing of the kind. Raptures of sweet joy filled his heart, for to himself he repeated the words, "If you fall in love with her and marry her, then I will consider the agreement as being fully complied with."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Good-night,—good-night,—parting is such sweet sorrow,  
That I shall say good-night, till it be to-morrow.

SHAKESPEARE.

You have bereft me of all words,  
Only my blood speaks to you in my veins.

SHAKESPEARE.

THERE was great sorrow in the Alpen family when they learned of Dewitt's intentions to return home. Notwithstanding his strongest protestations to the contrary, Blanche would still say that he was going away for the reason that he was angry at her. He told her, time and again, that he was not; that he did not blame her, and that it had been his intention for some time past to return soon, as he had stayed now far longer than he had anticipated. She said, however, that she could not believe him, as he had never even mentioned the fact

of his going away before, and now it made her feel so very sorry that he was leaving them in anger.

There was no doubt but that Dewitt felt a great deal chagrined at the humiliating position in which he had that morning appeared in the estimation of his fair cousin; but that inborn pride of his would not allow him then to make the confession, which would have cleared her mind of all doubt as to his being angry with her. How could she help but think he was angry when he rushed out of the parlor, and never came back until the next day, and only then to tell them of his departure? It was the most natural thing in the world for her to believe, when he was leaving so suddenly, and that, too, after their difference had occurred. But if he had told her all—the resolutions he had made—and that his purpose was now to make a man of himself—she would at once have believed him, and would have taken him by the hand and bade him God-speed. It would have filled her heart with joy; but as it was, she felt that painful, sad, and lonely sensation which one feels when they realize the fact that a dear friend has parted with them in anger.

Mrs. Alpen could not understand it, and said he must not go; and so said the judge. Even the servants were very sorry, for they would miss the extra quarters that Dewitt would give them; and then he always was so pleasant, that there was not one of them but would have arisen at the hour of midnight to have done him a favor.

But, notwithstanding all their protestations to the contrary, Dewitt packed his trunk and had it sent to the depot. And, as he bade them good-by, he said, "I cannot find words to express to you my many heartfelt thanks for the kind reception I have received at your hands; and believe me when I say that some of the happiest days of my life have been passed with you here. When I go home I will tell my mother all about you, and tell her how kindly I was treated, and what a most brilliant time I have had."

He could say no more, for he broke down with tears in his eyes. And shaking them silently by the hand, with averted face, he turned and walked rapidly away. When the door was closed they returned to the parlor, and Blanche, who had restrained her breaking heart all the time of their parting, now burst into a passionate fit of tears and wept bitterly.

Dewitt, intending to leave on the midnight train, procured a ticket and a berth in the sleeping-car, and then, as he had promised, went to spend his last moments with Fannie.

As he was walking along the street, the question occurred to his mind, "Dare I say that I do not love her?" And the words of Mr. Belmont—"If you fall in love with her, and marry her, then I will consider the agreement as being fully complied with"—came ringing in his ears again, and he felt the peculiar charm which love infuses into the soul. And, as he thus walked along, his heart became lighter, and his step quicker, and his countenance in the moonlight was more cheerful than it had ever been before.

Before he reached the gate, he saw something white standing there; and it made his heart throb with joy, for he had a presentiment as to who or what it was. And when he came up she grasped him by the hand affectionately, and he passed his arm around her waist and led her to the summer-house. They had a fine view of the bright full-orbed moon, that seemed to be shining for them and no one else. Oh! it was a scene for poetry,—it was a scene for love,—just such a scene as lovers worship.

She was lovely there, as she sat on that rustic seat, with the moonbeams playing around her. Dressed as she was, in a pale-blue silk, that rustled amid the flowers growing around her, she was extremely fascinating and beautiful. Oh, the pen is as inadequate to depict her immaculate beauty as it is impossible to portray the rapturous bliss that throbbed Dewitt's heart, as he sat there by her side in silence, quaffing in the sweetness of love's own enchanted bower!

Having scarcely more than uttered each other's names since he had come, impulsively and passionately as was his nature, Dewitt folded her to his heart as he exclaimed, "Oh, Fannie, Fannie, dare I say I do not love thee? Tell me, oh, tell me if this be a dream or a reality!"

And he folded her closer to his breast, but received no answer, for her heart was too full to speak and her eyes were dim with tears. After he had released her and she had wiped the tears away, she softly and tremulously said, "Oh, my dear Dewitt, you bereave me of all words to answer your question. I can only do it in silence,—the best interpreter of love's own sweet language."

And she placed her arms upon his shoulder, and rested her head upon his bosom in silence.

Long they sat there,—how long neither knew, until suddenly Dewitt thought of the train, and looking at his watch, he saw how late it was. When he told her that he must now go, she encircled her arms more caressingly around his neck, as she exclaimed, "Oh, how can I part from you? It is too much,—more than I can endure!"

Thus time passed rapidly away and Dewitt saw that he must go, torturing and all as it was to him. "My dear Fannie," he said, passionately, "the time draws nigh when we must part. But, oh! you cannot tell the deep sorrow with which our parting fills my soul. But let us think for a moment. We must not interpret this love as making an engagement. It is too sudden, too sweet, it seems to me, to last. You have not had time to think, neither have I. It seems to me like a sweet dream, I pray would last forever. And now, when we part, let us part free from any promise, only remembering the deep love we have for each other."

She was now calm, with one hand resting on his shoulder, and was looking wistfully into his face, with all the sweetness of her soft blue eyes. "Be it as you say," she said. "You know best; I will bow to your will. I only know I love you, and I only know you also have said that you loved me."

After imprinting sweet loving kisses on her rosy lips, and pressing her passionately to his breast, he passed quickly away, leaving her standing there in the moonlight, weeping, oh, so bitterly! She remained until his last footfall died away in the distance, and then, with a sorrowing heart, she entered the house.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Oh, how this spring of love resembleth  
The uncertain glory of an April day!  
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,  
And by-and-by a cloud takes all away.

SHAKESPEARE.

MR. BENTON RUSHWOOD, of whom but little has been said, was an exemplary young man. He came to Claremont when about fifteen years of age, and obtained employment with Mr. Marlan in his store. Being very attentive to his duties, he was rapidly promoted, so that at the age of twenty-three he was chief book-keeper, for which he commanded quite a fair salary. He was kind and courteous and polite in his manners, and was highly esteemed by every person who knew him, and commanded the highest regard and fullest confidence of his employer.

For years he had been devoted in his attentions to Ophelia Brandon, whom he dearly loved. She reciprocated his love, and an engagement followed. Her parents, however, always opposed the alliance, and told their daughter that she could never have their consent to marry him. Notwithstanding this opposition, she said that she loved him and therefore intended to marry him.

Ophelia was a fair and interesting young lady, as the reader probably has already observed. She had a good, kind heart; but she belonged to that large class of young ladies who read very little and think less. The most of her time was employed in going to parties and visiting,—the consequence of which was a lady who could not carry on a conversation of any interest, and therefore could only entertain her guests by small talk and the other accomplishments of such ladies. It is true that she had a taste for literature, but, never having had any training, she had always neglected it, and therefore lacked those mental accomplishments which are admired by gentlemen of culture. But, as Mr. Rushwood did not give these accomplishments any consideration, of course she appeared faultless

and without blame before him. She was really a very interesting and fascinating young lady, as far as her appearance went; and one, too, with whom there is scarcely one man out of a hundred that would not fall in love with her. Benton, therefore, loved her with all the power of his soul, and often told her that he could not live without her.

But she had a hard time of it at home. There was never, scarcely, a day passed over her head but that Mrs. Brandon had something to say about the penniless clerk she had for a beau. "How in the world," she said one day, "will you get along without a girl, when you never do anything at home? If you intend to work all your life, you had better commence now and learn, so that you will understand all about working when you get your poor man."

She was sure to make these remarks, too, before every person, when she thought it would annoy and provoke her daughter. She thought, by so doing, that it would finally disgust her, and that she would abandon him entirely. She was one of those unnatural mothers who calculate that the affections have nothing to do with the marriage relation if there is not an equality of wealth and position. Therefore the industrious habits and energy which were urged by Ophelia in Benton's favor amounted to nothing in her aristocratic way of thinking. She would have been entirely willing, and even urged the marriage of her daughter to Milton Marlan, notwithstanding the fact that he would not unfrequently get intoxicated when he would be out sporting with some of his companions. He, she would say, was of noble birth, and his father was wealthy, and therefore such defects as these could easily be overlooked, and that she would have no objections to his being her son-in-law.

Benton spoke to Ophelia about her parents' objections at the time of their engagement. "Now, my dear Ophelia," he said, "let us understand each other. I know very well that your parents oppose our marriage, and that they will never consent to it. What will we do, then, when our marriage-day comes? Where will we be married?"

She studied for some time, and then, brightening up, she said, impulsively, "I know what we can do,—run away, if they will not allow us to be married at home."

Benton brightened up as she said these cheering words,

and threw his arms around her and pressed her to his heart, as he said, "You are the sweetest and dearest girl on earth. I would not give you for the world."

Then, after a prolonged silence, he continued, "Now, dear Ophelia, are you sure you understand yourself? I feel certain that we will have to run away when we are married, and I wish to know now if you will have the courage to do so. If you think you would not, it would be a great deal better that we should part now. Hard and torturing as it would now be to us, yet it would be nothing to that despair I would experience by your refusal to do so on the eve of our marriage. Speak, my dear Ophelia; speak your own heart now."

After some reflection, she impulsively said again, "Oh, my dear Benton, how is it that you have so little confidence in me? Do you not know that I would almost go through fire for you? It does not matter what transpires in the mean time. If my parents do not let me get married at home, why, we will go away, as I told you before, and get married some other place. Now, my dear, are you satisfied with my answer, or must I say something more?"

"I am satisfied," he said. "When the time comes, I firmly believe now that you will not hesitate, and that, if it be necessary for us to fly, that you will do so quickly. It would almost kill me if you were to disappoint me after this conversation to-night."

Nothing more was said, and soon after he took his leave. As the wedding-day had been set, the subject did not occur again. He had full confidence in her, and therefore he never dreamed that she would ever recede from what she had said. Ophelia was just as confident as he was that she would firmly keep her promise. Her heart was set on him, and she thought there was no one on earth that she could ever love as well as she did him. And it is true to say that it would have made a good match. Neither having anything more than ordinary minds, they were just suited for each other, for their purposes and tastes were alike. She liked a gentleman who was funny and handsome, and would say many things that would make her laugh, and he admired her pretty face, her sweet laugh, her graceful appearance, and never looked to her mental qualities further than that he knew she was kind-hearted, and would make an affectionate wife.

Thus time passed away. Her mother, being determined to break off this match, left no opportunity pass in which she could say something to his detriment. Occasionally she requested her father to say something that would place him in a ridiculous and humiliating light, and one time she asked her son James to say something to her, but he declined, saying that they were all wrong, and that he would not interfere in the matter.

A year passed away since the engagement and since the conversation before referred to, and the wedding-day was near at hand. Ophelia knew now that they would have to run away from home to be married. As the time grew nearer and nearer, the bare thought of doing so terrified her. All the books that they could find, relating to runaway matches, were purchased for her, and, fool that she was, she read them all. Here she saw vividly portrayed the remorse and misery resulting from such clandestine marriages. Her mother finally told her that the very day in which she left their house, that from that day forward they renounced her forever and would never consider her as their daughter. Her father said that when he would make his will he would leave her nothing, and that she would always have to consider them as strangers to her, for they would never recognize her.

She studied over all these things carefully, and heart-rendingly too, and they were too much for her. She began to wilt. How could she leave her beautiful home forever? she said to herself. And then again, she thought, Suppose she would regret it; then what would she do? The bare thought of it almost maddened her. How could she leave forever? she said, with tears in her eyes.

Thus she questioned herself for weeks and weeks before the marriage-day. In the night-time she would rise up in her bed and say, despairingly, that they had better separate than to bring dishonor on themselves. Then she would almost inaudibly utter, "But, dear Benton, don't leave me, don't leave me; let us wait."

Time passed on, and a fortnight before they were to take their flight she rued, and with tears in her eyes, asked Benton to cancel the engagement. "How can I," she said, "leave my home forever? Let us part now finally, and bury our love until a change is wrought in my parents."

The decision stunned Benton, and he became as pale as a sheet. It almost snapped the very strings of his heart. For a time he thought he was dreaming, but at last the reality but too vividly began to dawn upon him. He looked towards her and almost gasped for breath, as he said, "Are you in earnest? Tell me that."

She replied that she really was, and desired him to so understand it.

Her manner, in this reply, was something cold, and so it seemed to him, for he said, "I see now in your face, without asking you, that you mean it;" and then he bowed his head and wept bitterly. Then raising his head, and with a terribly chilling and heart-rending look in his face, he exclaimed, in the bitterest agony, "Oh, my God, my God! why is all this misery visited upon me? What have I done that my prosperous life should thus so suddenly be almost brought to a close?"

But little more was said. There was a deathly pallor in Ophelia's face too, and one could easily see that the scene was also torturing to her. As he passed out of the door, he cried from the inmost depths of his soul, "This is the last time you will ever see my face!" The door was closed, and he was soon out upon the streets. Ophelia threw herself down upon the sofa, and burst into a passionate fit of weeping. "Oh, mother! mother!" she exclaimed, "you have blighted the fondest and most cherished hopes of my young life!"

It was midnight darkness without, but not darker than the midnight darkness that enveloped the soul of Benton Rushwood. As he was walking along the street, he feelingly exclaimed, "Oh, I loved Ophelia with my whole soul, and now, after years of weary waiting, she has deserted me! Oh, it is too much! too much!—more than I can stand."

With some men their affections are the controlling element of their being. Let them once be blighted, and the star of their destiny has set. This was so with Benton Rushwood. This seemed to crush all the energy of his soul, and he wilted down like a tender plant before the scorching sun. The next day he settled up with Mr. Marian and packed his trunk, and from that night Claremont knew him no more. He gave his employer no reason for his sudden departure, neither did he tell him where he was going. Thus, the consequence was that

they knew nothing of his destination,—as they knew nothing of his antecedents. So that, to Claremont, Mr. Benton Rushwood was a mist of the past.

## CHAPTER XX.

How happy they  
Who from the toil and tumult of their lives  
Steal to look down where naught but ocean strives.

BYRON.

THE long, sunny, rosy days of summer had passed away, and the hills and valleys were becoming slightly tinged with that golden hue which one sees all around him when the soft, mild, and balmy days of autumn set in. It seems as though the busy, active, turbulent world was settling down in the eventide to take a luxurious rest. It is true that the fruits of our industry are not all gathered in, but the satisfaction and pleasure felt as the bustle and turmoil of the season seems past being such a sweet consolation, a calm delight, that fills the soul with joyful reflections.

It had been Judge Alpen's intention to take an extended tour in a foreign land almost from the time he was a boy. This desire was first implanted in his young heart as he read of those ancient wars in which Alexander and Caesar and other ancient warriors participated. And when he read the history of England and France, where, as well as in Greece and Rome, their most renowned orators and purest statesmen and Christian martyrs were either burned at the stake or butchered in cold blood at the executioner's block, the scenes were so impressed on his young mind that he resolved, if ever he would have the means, to visit all those places, as well as the Holy Land, where our Divine Saviour trod and preached burning words to a lost and ruined world.

His term of office expired in September. Although they wanted him to be a candidate for another term, he declined, saying that he desired to retire from public life, in order to de-

vote his intervening time to arrange his private business, so that it would not be injured by his absence, but, on the contrary, would be still making him a fair income.

When one evening he came in and announced to Blanche that in one week from that time they would sail for Europe, her joy knew no bounds. Springing to her feet and throwing her arms around his neck, she kissed him time and again. Then she ran to find her mother, exclaiming, Joy! joy! joy! and told her all about it. Oh, she was so happy! so happy!

Blanche, since her return from school, always delighted to travel, and seemed to be overjoyed when she had an opportunity of seeing new and strange faces. But in all her travels and sight-seeings, she only gave them a passing glance, satisfied that they did not fill the ideal of her imagination. No matter where she was, it was an interesting and satisfying disposition of hers to give a passing glance at new and intellectual-looking faces, as if she seemed to be in search for something or some one, she did not know whom. Four years and more this had been a characteristic of hers, and yet no one had noticed anything of the kind, so artfully did she practice it. But when she would return home, she always seemed down-hearted and careworn, and resumed with indifference her monotonous life.

But when her father made this announcement, new life and vigor seemed to spring into her veins, and the blood came to her cheeks, and joy came in her face, and her eyes were brighter and prettier, and her every step was so light and elastic that she seemed like a new being.

A great many people were sorry when they heard of the Alpen family making such an extended tour as would keep them away for two years and more. Ophelia Brandon said that she would be delighted to take such a tour, and Lizzie Marlan said she would give ten years of her life here for two years' travel in a foreign land. Nancy Spriggins said she did not care to go to Europe, but that she would like to go to Italy, where, she said, the air was so soft and balmy, and the skies were so blue. It was supposed that she had heard some one of her soft, sap-headed dandy gallants say so, for the poor soul did not know that Italy was a part of Europe.

Mr. Belmont said that he was sorry to see them leave, as he would miss them so much. "But," he said to Blanche, "it is a tour I expect to make soon myself; and when you come back,

I want you to give me a sketch of all the important places you have visited, as it will no doubt be interesting." Charles Spencer did not know whether he was glad or sorry. Sometimes he was glad, for then he thought he might learn to forget her, —sorry, because he had still a faint hope that she in time might learn to love him. He still pursued this delusive hope, until it was now almost becoming fixed, as it were, in his mind. He regretted that he made a proposal to her at the time he did, for his suspicions that she loved her cousin proved groundless, and now the subject, according to their agreement, was to be an interdicted one between them. But still the fond hope that she would still love him was his guiding star by day and his pillar of fire by night.

The day arrived, however, for their departure, and before they went to the depot Mr. Spencer bade them good-by at their own house, and turned—sadly, tearfully—away. The depot was crowded, and every one wanted to shake hands with the old judge, as they called him. Many were the tears that were shed, and many the "God bless you's" that were said. Soon, though, the bell began to ring, the engine began to puff, the cars began to screech, and in a few moments more their beautiful home was left far behind them.

The sorrowing crowd returned sadly home, and in a few days the Alpen family were ushered into New York City, with its heaving and jostling life all around them. Here they procured a passage on the "Baltic," bound for Liverpool. And now as the captain gives his orders the anchors are lifted, the engine begins to blow, and the great ponderous wheels begin to roll their lazy lengths around, the ship begins to move slowly away; and soon their native land, with its stars and stripes, becomes dimmer and dimmer, and at last fades from their sight; and they turn away with tearful eyes. But soon the father looks aloft, and there he sees their own dear flag, with its silken folds waving gracefully in the mystic breeze. And he says, "Blanche, look up;" and he points to the dear old flag. She looks upward, utters one cry of joy, as she hears him say, "We are all safe when beneath its silken folds, for the Star-Spangled Banner waves over every land and sea beneath the azure skies."

And thus we leave them, joyfully passing their happy hours away, on their "life on the ocean wave," bound for a foreign land.



### BOOK III.

#### CHAPTER I.

Joy! the lost one is restored,  
Sunshine comes to heath and board:  
From the far-off countries old  
Of the diamond and red gold,  
From the dusky archer bands,  
Roamers of the desert-lands,  
He hath reached his home again.

MRS. HEMANS.

SOMETHING more than a year has passed away since we left the fertile valleys and the sunny hillsides of Riverbank, where the very air was fragrant with roses and flowers, and every breeze was resonant with the songs of merry birds. Then when we gazed upon its mystic and sylvan scenes last, the mild and gentle days of spring were just coming, with its varied changes of sunny mornings and cloudy evenings. But now all is life and gayety,—the lovely month of May has come, with all its flowers and roses and singing birds, and its soft, sweet, and balmy zephyrs,—and all nature seems to be clothed anew, and baptized with the gentle dews, and imbued with the sweet inspiration and benign blessings of a heavenly hand.

Yes, on one of these lovely, fascinating, and bright May days Walter Ludwick returns home from his wandering upon Western plains and mountain-peaks. Yes, he has traveled long and far,—extending his tour to the golden slopes of the Pacific, and then away down among the uncouth and dusky sons of toil in the burning plains of Mexico, where the diamonds and gold-mines gather adventurers from almost every clime beneath the sun.

It was not his original intention, as the reader perhaps knows, to make such an extended tour. One summer upon the plains of the West, it was thought, would satisfy his thirst for travel. But who can calculate, when he leaves his sunny home, which

then seems so very dear to him, when he will return again? Infatuated with new scenes, and imbued with a sense of the greatness of our land, as he looked upon those fertile plains and lofty peaks, he resolved to go farther and visit that lovely land whose very streams sparkle with gold, and where the flowers and roses almost bloom forever. Impelled with this great desire, to see the terminus of this great free land of ours, and to look upon the blue, misty, and incomprehensible deep,—the Pacific Ocean,—he joined a hale, cheerful, and whole-souled band of adventurers, and turned his face and footsteps, with an enthusiastic and throbbing heart, for the land of gold and princely fortunes.

When they arrived in California, he separated from his jovial and convivial companions, and passed most of his time in the metropolis of the Pacific coast. He was delighted with everything around him, and passed the balance of the summer and autumn in this lovely land. But, as the colder days of winter drew on apace, he longed to turn his face towards the sunny South, and seek a more congenial clime,—the land of flowers in perpetual bloom. He lingered along its picturesque ravines, and visited the places rendered immortal by the valor achieved by our own sons of liberty, who showed their superior skill in arms by scattering the enemy's forces like chaff before the wind, and crushed out that haughty Mexican pride which showed itself in the presumption of disregarding the will of the greatest republic on earth. And he gazed with a patriotic pride upon those historic and famous spots where the unrivaled bravery of our warriors enabled the departed Scott to unfurl the stars and stripes to the breeze, and at last to plant them in victory upon the sun-crowned heights of the Mexican capital. And he viewed with great delight and curiosity the place which will always live in history, and teach the monarchs of the Old World the solemn lesson that this is *the* land of liberty, and that no foreign prince or potentate shall ever set his imperial foot upon an inch of American soil. Yes, with trembling steps he viewed the place where poor Maximilian sacrificed his life at the shrine of a ruthless ambition, and to gratify the whims and caprices and haughty pride of a foreign tyrant. The lesson is a sad one, and should teach every European monarch that this continent is "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

Having satisfied his thirst for travel in this sunny land, he

turned his steps homeward with a joyous heart. And now we find him, on this bright and sunny May day, seated amid the environs of his own home, surrounded by all the joys and pleasures of domestic life, resting happily, calmly, from his varied wanderings in distant climes. The father, who had watched with pride his gradual approach to manhood; the mother, who had nursed and prayed for him in his infancy, and nurtured him into manhood; and the sister, who had been his companion all the days of his life,—all welcomed him home with such gushings of joy and such heartfelt affections, as boundless as space and endless as eternity.

When the first transition of the unbounded joy that filled their hearts had passed away, and another day had dawned brightly and cheerfully upon them, the sister narrated, in her sweet and gentle way, the scenes that had transpired since he went away. A year, though in one sense short and fleeting, yet, when we come to count the changes that time's ruthless hand has wrought, voluminous and vast, they rise up before our wandering and frightened minds. Among all the scenes that had transpired,—some very sad indeed,—yet there was nothing touched his heart so sorrowfully—nothing which pierced his noble soul with such poignant grief—as the death of poor, sweet Carrie Merton. Of course he had never heard of it, and he never dreamed that such a sad, sad incident would occur. But when she told him in her kind and sympathetic way how her last words had been of him,—how she had asked if she had thought that it was because of any act of her own that he had ceased to love her, and, when assured that it was not, how she said to tell him that with her latest breath she loved him, and that when she would go to heaven she would still watch over him and pray for him,—his heart was filled with deep and absorbing grief. And when the reality of this scene burst full upon his imagination,—as he saw her pale, sad face turned upwards, baptized with the dews and inspiration of heaven, and with her last feeble, faint breath still uttering benisons of love and joy for him,—it was more than his strong, sympathetic nature could endure, and he turned aside and silently wept. Yes, that great, strong man, as he now was, wept,—wept bitterly for the deep sorrow that filled his heart over the death of his early love.

And when evening came, and when the bright twinkling

stars came out,—the stars she loved so well,—and when the moon's soft silvery rays cast a solemn and mystic scene over the whole earth, he cast his tearful eyes and heavy heart towards the old cemetery, and soon found himself in the presence of the dead,—yes, the last remains of those whose spirits have flown to the celestial world.

Ah, it is an interesting, yet solemn, occupation to linger amid the realms of the dead, and to read upon the grave-stones the history of the sleepers there,—the dead speaking to the living,—the ages ago teaching, by epitaph and eulogy, the ages to come! Oh, it is a time and a scene which touches the mystic chords of our hearts, and makes us feel the utter vanity of all things earthly, and gives us a glimpse of that better world beyond the shores of time!

Amid this solemn and sacred scene, he wended his way slowly to the grave of Carrie Merton. It was now green, for the young grass was growing beautifully, and the early flowers, that had been planted there with careful and delicate hands, were in full bloom. He knelt down on the sacred spot and wept again,—yes, wept bitter tears for the young and pure and innocent life that had found such an early grave. He could not banish from his mind the dread thought that he, in some manner, had hastened her untimely death; and as the impression became more deeply stamped on his mind, it touched and pierced every chord of his heart with that harrowing remorse which almost revolutionizes the whole being.

Long he knelt there, how long he scarcely knew, until the solemn chimes of the village clock, reverberating in the stillness of the night, told him that the solemn, mystic midnight hour was near; and he silently and sadly arose and retraced his steps to his father's house, resolving to live a better life, and live for a higher and nobler purpose than he heretofore had done.

## CHAPTER II.

Ah, Juliet! if the measure of thy joy  
Be heap'd like mine, and that this skill be more  
To blazen it, then sweeten with thy breath  
This neighbor air, and let rich music's tongue  
Unfold the imagined happiness that both  
Receive in either by this dear encounter.

SHAKESPEARE.

EVA DRAYTON had only returned home a few days before the arrival of Walter Ludwick. She did not expect to be home so soon, but the severe illness of her mother hastened her return before the session at the Seminary closed. This she regretted exceedingly, as she was making rapid progress in her studies. It was her intention to commence music at the next term, which she had, up to the time of her departure, neglected. She was desirous of becoming proficient in that accomplishment, though she was free to say that her taste for music was more acquired than natural, as she never did think that she had even an ordinary musical talent,—a deficiency she very much regretted.

But a year in the city had made a marked improvement in her appearance. Whether it was entirely owing to being in the city, where she had the associations of refined and highly-cultivated people, was not clear, for any close observer of the growth of a young lady of seventeen summers will notice the very great improvement that one year will add to her appearance at that tender age. Her cheeks were something fuller, and tinged with that color which improved health brings to any delicate young lady. Her complexion was fairer, and she had a more cheerful and fascinating face, while her soft, tender blue eyes still retained that sweet expression and that calm, limpid beauty in which no improvement were possible. And her figure was better,—something straighter and neater than it was when we last saw her,—and she had a more graceful appearance, and a certain queenly bearing, which made her very fascinating indeed.

And Walter Ludwick was somewhat changed in appearance

too. His face, slightly bronzed by a southern sun, was fuller and more fleshy than when he went away, while his frame and sinews had become stronger, which gave him a more towering and dignified bearing. With a heavy moustache and neat chin-whiskers, and with his eyes large and full of expression, he presented that strong, manly, and masculine appearance which, though not handsome, yet intellectual and finely-cultivated young ladies so much admire. His step was firm and elastic, and he felt strong and vigorous, and seemed to be imbued with a new life, destined to accomplish a high and honored mission.

When they met, neither one seemed to be disappointed in the other, for the appearance of both indicated a feeling of joy as they affectionately took their seats by the window, where they had a view of the river as it ran peacefully along this picturesque valley.

"Though I have only returned myself, Walter, yet I welcome you back to Riverbank, and am rejoiced to note the improvement made in your appearance, which indicates that you have been restored to that perfect health which you sought by a summer on the plains."

He thanked her warmly, and said, "I am surprised to observe the change in your own person, not so much in regard to your health, though there is a decided improvement in that. But the change of which I speak is in your general appearance, which is more graceful, and there is a brighter and sweeter expression in your face, though there is no improvement in your eyes, for I cannot think how that could in any manner be possible."

Eva laughed sweetly as she bewitchingly said, "We are complimenting each other all around, and though I suppose you note it but little, yet you know some ladies can live on compliments, and I happen to be one of them, when I know it comes from a gentleman whom I know to be no flatterer. You see I have not forgotten the promise I made long time ago, when I told you that I would never again charge you with flattery."

Walter laughed also, and said he was glad to know that she was so good in keeping resolutions. And in regard to the compliments, he said, "I am free to say that I am one of the entire number of men on the face of the earth who appreciate and is pleased with any compliment that a clever young girl

may bestow upon me, when I know, as you say, that there is no flattery or designing purpose in it."

"Why," replied Eva, soberly, "I did not think that all men are fond of compliments. Do you really think it is so?"

"I have not the least doubt of it," he positively replied. "It is as natural for man to be pleased with a compliment from a true, honest, and undesigning young lady, as it is for the sun to shine in the heavens of a clear noonday."

About this time Cordelia came in, and Eva, after their first greetings were over, told her what Walter had said, and she replied, "Of course they do, and a great many of them like it, whether the lady means it or not; and though she sometimes flatters them very sycophantly, yet they seem to relish it very much."

The conversation then became general, and they wanted to know where all he had been, and he, in reply, gave them a brief sketch of his tour and some incidents connected with it, over which they were very much pleased.

When he had finished, Cordelia said that her mother, who was very sick in bed, desired to see him, and asked if he would go up to her room.

"Of course," he said, "I will go to her room." And as he approached her bedside, weak and all as she was, she desired to be raised up so that she could see him. "Ah!" she said, faintly, "you seem to bring a fresh breeze and a golden ray of sunlight with you. Where in the world have you been this long time?"

But she was too weak to sit up, and had to be laid down again, and softly said, "When I get well again, Walter, I want you to come down and tell me where all you have been."

In a few moments more he took his departure home. It is difficult to analyze the sentiments of this young couple. Walter's, however, is not so difficult a task as Eva's.

He was changed, but in only one respect,—in his affection for her. He could now tell what it was; before, he was in doubt whether it was love or not, but now he could make up his mind and say it was not. His regard and admiration for her was none the less than when he went away, but he could now tell what it was, and felt satisfied that it was nothing but the warmest, purest, and most sincere friendship. He very much questioned which was the nobler attribute of the soul,—

true love or genuine friendship. It is true that the former is strong and would almost drag its victims through fire, but is there not after all, he thought, a selfishness,—an anticipated acquisition which combines all the impulses of our nature,—which are not induced by the latter? For where is the gain to be reaped from true genuine friendship (which can only exist where self is forgotten), except in the calm delight and sweet pleasure we experience when in the exquisite companionship of a congenial and warm-hearted friend?

And another thing that enabled him to decide what his feelings were,—the fact that during the idle moments of his tour that vision of his college days—those dark eyes and that angelic form—became for some reason or another on his twilight evenings more indelibly impressed on his memory. Each new face he saw he scanned closely, but turned disappointedly away. He felt that this affection for that ideal being, as she now really seemed to him, was so different from that which he felt for Eva, that it did not now leave a shadow of doubt upon his mind but that he had only the purest and most sincere friendship for Eva Drayton.

A sketch from his journal probably will throw more light on this subject: "If this affection or feeling of the human heart, which the poets and mankind in general call 'Love,' is different from any other affection, it must be similar, if not the same, as that feeling which I have always experienced for that angel visitant, as I sometimes call her, who still continues to be the morning star of my memory. For of all the faces I have ever seen, there is none that fixes and impresses itself so indelibly on my mind as that one did. And since I reflect,—suppose I should meet her now,—would I ever think of calling her my friend only? Call her merely my friend who has been the morning star of my memory for years? Oh, no, no! the thought even would madden me. Why, if I even thought now that she was lost to me forever, the brightest and most cherished hopes of my life would be crushed, for there would not be one ray of light to illuminate the darkened channels of my soul. Ah, no! I still think I will find her."

It is difficult to tell or describe Eva's feelings. Perhaps a young lady could tell better than I could, if she would put herself in her place. It is very doubtful, too, if Eva herself knew what her feelings for him were. We can tell this much,

however, that when the door had been closed behind him, and when she and her sister had gone to the parlor, she remained but a short time, and then went to her own room with a peculiar feeling in her heart.

She took a careful survey of herself in her mirror, which was large enough to show her whole figure; and then she came near and took a careful look at her eyes, on which he had said there could be no improvement whatever, and which she thought must therefore be perfect. She smoothed back some stray ringlets that were hanging around her fair brow, and then took her seat by the window and watched the last glimmering rays of the setting sun die away until they deepened into twilight.

It is enough to say that in most of that twilight reverie she was thinking most of him and the manly and dignified appearance he presented.

A few days after this, Walter called again one afternoon, and found Mrs. Drayton better, and the young ladies in excellent spirits. There was a meeting of some kind transpiring in the church, which Cordelia was very anxious that Walter and Eva should attend. Neither of them wanted to go, and so expressed themselves; but nothing else would do than that they should go, and in due deference to her impulsive and imperative wishes, they did go.

This incident is only mentioned to show a trait in Cordelia's character, which will in the future be more apparent, though it would be difficult now to explain satisfactorily her purpose of having them go.

After the meeting, which was of very little importance, Walter and Eva walked leisurely along the main street, with her arm linked in his, until they came to a beautiful little grove on the outskirts of the village. Here they sat down on a grassy mound, where they had a fine view of the village below.

After they had gone through with quite a conversation about the changes that had transpired, and when they had arisen to return, Walter, in his usual calm and thoughtful tone, said, "I will tell you, Eva, what I have been thinking about to-day, and see if it meets with your approbation. I have made up my mind that I will not commence the study of my profession until autumn comes, and have therefore concluded

to remain at home this summer and studiously pursue a course of historical reading. I think it a great deal of importance to a young man who is about entering the profession of the law to give the 'History of England' a thorough study, as nearly all our laws and customs are derived from the mother-country. Then there are some very important ancient histories that I desire to read, such as Gibbon's 'Rome,' and also the 'History of Greece,' besides the biography of those ancient statesmen, and some of our more modern ones; and again, I want a more thorough knowledge of literature. There is where we can acquire that eloquence and accurate expression of language which nothing else can give us. Do you understand now my purpose fully?"

"Yes, yes!" she replied, enthusiastically; "and I think it just elegant. When you commence your legal studies, you will not have time to pursue these; and therefore you will always neglect them. I think your idea a most admirable one."

"I thought so myself," he said, in a very affable manner and with a pleasant smile; but he continued: "I intend in connection with this to have some amusement also; and as I desire and enjoy the companionship of my very amiable friend, Eva, I have thought it best to make this request to her,—whether I shall have the pleasure of being her gallant during our summer excursions, until such times as she may become tired of me and desire a change."

Eva reflected a few moments and then said, with a pleasant smile, "I thank you, Walter, for your clever consideration of me, and shall most willingly accept your kind invitation. I do not know as my companionship will contribute much to your pleasure, but if it should do so, I shall be most happy to accompany you on any excursion you may desire. As for changing you for another gallant," she said, with a quiet laugh, "who in the world do you suppose he would be? I could not tell who it would be, for as you know that I had but few gentlemen friends when you were here, I do not know as I have any more now. But I am certain that there is no friend here whom I admire as much as you."

Walter thanked her kindly, and then said, "I do not think myself that there is any one here whom you admire more than I think you do myself, but will you make me this one promise,—that if anything of the kind should occur, will you

tell me candidly about it, so that I will not be any barrier in your way? Let us be true, sincere, devoted friends."

She reached out her hand, as she said, "I promise you I will do so, truthfully and candidly, as you desire."

He pressed her hand warmly and assisted her to her feet, and they walked home leisurely, having enjoyed exceedingly their evening walk.

### CHAPTER III.

In this wild world the fondest and the best  
Are the most tried, most troubled and distress'd.

CRABBE.

I cannot speak; tears so obstruct my words  
And choke me with unutterable joy.

OTWAY.

ABOUT a fortnight after the events recorded in our last chapter, Walter called one sunny morning at Mrs. Drayton's, and finding them all up-stairs, without stopping, he went up into the room where they were sitting. Mrs. Drayton felt much better, for she was sitting up in her bed. A short time after he entered, she said, in her usual candid and open way "There, now,—the very man has come who can help you out of this difficulty, and I will venture to bet my life that he will succeed."

"Of course," Walter replied, "I will succeed. I never undertake anything in my life in which I fail."

Nothing more was said at the time, and after they had gone down-stairs Walter noticed that there was something in their minds, and he believed then that Mrs. Drayton's words meant something more than a mere jest,—the light in which he at first received them. A something of a painful silence followed after being seated in the parlor, which was broken by Walter saying, "I thought you told me, the last time I was here, that you were going to move this week, and expected to commence day before yesterday. What is the cause of the delay?"

A very transparent pain was now perceived in Cordelia's face, and, in rather an angry and indignant tone, mingled with sorrow and humiliation, she said, "Walter, I never dreamed that we would ever be placed in such a humiliating position as the present one,—a position in which I am compelled to make a request that almost snaps the very heart-strings of my life. I know the people here all say that we are proud. I own it, but I deny that it is the kind of pride they imagine. Indeed, our affliction has been great,—almost greater than we can bear,—but if it were a hundred times greater, so that I was compelled to bite the dust, even then this inherent spirit of pride, which is as much a part of my being as life itself, would remain as strong as ever. But there has never been a time in my life in which an act pained me so much as being compelled now to make a request of you,—our only friend here on whom I could intrude to ask such a favor,—which my tongue almost refuses to let me utter."

Here she broke down, when Eva said, "Why, my dear Cordelia, why don't you tell him what you want, and not be talking so long about it? You know Walter never likes such long prefaces about matters of any kind. He always wants you to come right to the point at once."

Being set at ease by these appropriate remarks, she resumed, "Well, I know I am wrong, dear Eva, but I do get so provoked when I think how we have been used by these contemptible people at Riverbank, that my indignation knows no bounds. But, as you say, to come to the matter at once, we did intend, Walter, to move at the time we told you, but imagine our surprise, the other day, when Clarence asked Mr. Montague for the key of the house, that contemptible Benedict told him that he could have the key when we paid the quarter's rent in advance, and not until then. So you see here we are,—with no money to pay the rent, and cannot get any for two weeks. And there is not a living soul in this town to whom I could go to ask the loan of it from but yourself. It almost kills me to do so, but indeed I cannot help it."

Walter sat there the whole time they were speaking, and spoke not a word. After she had concluded he said, with a merry laugh, "Well now, Cordelia, I am surprised that you should make such an ado about nothing. Why, it just seems to me as clear as Eva here says,—that you have taken a

monstrous long time to tell me what you wanted. Why, I could have asked that in one hundredth part of the time."

Here Eva broke out into a merry laugh, and said, "I told you, Cordelia, that he would just make fun of you about your long speech, and that the only way to do was to come right to the point, and tell him what you wanted."

"Certainly," he replied; "that is business."

"Yes," Cordelia replied; "but business of this kind is not the kind of business I like."

"Still, it is nothing more than business. Do you think that you are the only persons in the world that ever borrowed money? Why, I have done so an hundred times myself. There is nothing wrong or humiliating in wanting to borrow money, for that is one of the main traffics of trade in this business world. Just name the amount of money you want, and I will take good care to charge you enough of interest for it. Usance is very high in Riverbank nowadays."

There is nothing he could have said that would have so tended to set Cordelia right, and make her feel entirely at ease, as the intention of charging her interest. She knew full well how the habit of borrowing money from a friend tends to blight their friendship forever, and it was this, combined as well with the humiliation of asking the same, that so tortured her very soul. But now, the affair having been presented in such a manner by which she was to pay for the favor she would ask, the burden seemed lifted from her heart, and she looked up cheerfully, and with a bright smile, as she named the amount she wanted, and then continued, "I did not look at it in that light before. Oh, I am so glad you spoke of it! I will cheerfully pay you whatever interest you may desire for the use of the money for two weeks."

Walter knew their disposition so well,—he could not have known it better had he been raised with them all his life,—and he said, "Very well; so you keep the interest paid up, I do not care when the principal is paid; but you know when one gets behind with the interest, then the lender begins to look after that and the principal too. There now, pay that Shylock off and let him go."

He said these words in such a half-carnest and half-comical manner, that they amused Cordelia very much. But after she had taken the money, she endeavored to thank him; but the

words choked in her throat, and she turned away to hide the tears that were rolling down her cheeks. Her heart was so full of gratitude for the great favor which had been conferred, that she said, "Words are such a mockery in expressing gratitude, it must appear in some other way than words. I can only say now, however, that you will never be forgotten."

After this transaction—painful at first, but joy and sunshine in the end—had transpired, Cordelia said, "But I must tell you the way Benedict Montague served mother the other day. It is most dreadful to think of it. She had been up street, and on her return entered the store, where she saw some very nice hams; and after inquiring the price of them, said that she would take one. He expressed great satisfaction, and said that she could have it. Having returned home, she sent Clarence for it, and what do you think he said? Why, the very first thing that he uttered was, 'Have you the money?' 'No,' he replied. 'Well,' Benedict said, in his most contemptuous manner, 'I thought she was going to send the money along too. You can just tell her to send up the money, and I will send down the ham.'

"Poor Clarence turned away with burning indignation; and the next time I saw him I never deigned to notice him, and now I suppose he is angry, and wants to show his revenge in this affair of the rent. Oh, if it were possible that I could ever have revenge on these people for the manner in which they have treated us, it would be the happiest moment in my life."

After taking his departure, Walter went immediately to Dr. Patterson's office. He had been sitting there but a short time when the three of them—Cordelia and Eva and Clarence—passed the office, on their way to Montague's. When Cordelia entered the store, she walked proudly and haughtily to where Benedict was looking over the books, and calmly but indignantly said, after she had gained his attention, "I wish you to look over this sum and see if it is correct." And she counted it down to him, without letting him have the money in his own hands.

"Yes, ma'am, that is correct," he very cautiously said.

Then folding it up, she peremptorily and dignifiedly said, "Now, sir, I demand the key of that house, and then I will pay you the money."

Her dark eyes flashed and she seemed to look into his very soul.

After he had overcome his surprise at her strange conduct, he graciously said, "I will do so, ma'am, with the greatest of pleasure."

And stepping aside to where the key was hanging, he took it and handed it to her. She took it, and then said, with as much sarcasm as her impassioned nature could command, "I thank you, sir, for the courtesy and gentlemanly manner with which you have treated us in this whole transaction."

In his usual calm and unconcerned manner, Benedict replied, "You are very welcome, ma'am."

The next time Walter was there, they had moved and were cosily situated in their new abode. Everything around them looked comfortable and tasty, except their front room,—intended for the parlor,—which was without carpet. Cordelia explained this by saying that as soon as they had the money they intended getting a new carpet for it. They did not attempt to conceal in any manner the straitened circumstances in which they were placed.

When he was about to leave, Cordelia said, "I expect to be able to pay you that money next week, and I wish to know what the interest will be."

He looked at her with a great deal of curiosity, and then, with a pleasant smile, said slowly, "Well, I do not exactly know, but since it is you, I will only charge you twenty dollars for the use of the money two weeks."

The blank astonishment that was written in her face as he uttered these words can better be imagined than described. She sank down in a chair near her, and could not say a word. Eva, who had been a silent spectator the whole time, could restrain herself no longer, and, bursting out into a merry laugh, said, "Why, Cordelia, what in the world do you mean? Do you suppose Walter would charge us any interest for the money? Why, you are foolish to think so. Come, cheer up, and do not look so pale."

When the utter ridiculousness of such a thing dawned clearly upon her mind, she could not help but laugh herself. Then, after a pause, she said, "But it seems to me you ought to have something, and I would feel better if I should pay it."

Walter looked at her curiously for some time, and then said,

soberly enough, "Never trouble yourself any more about this affair, Cordelia. You can hand the amount to me whenever it is convenient. But let me tell you candidly that, unless you wish to insult my dignity and honor, you must not talk to me any more about remuneration for such a trifling little service as this. My proud spirit would spurn anything of the kind. Do you suppose that I am that kind of a friend? Why, the most sordid miser that walks the streets certainly would not think of such a thing. Try and make up your mind to think that I am your friend, and if there is anything that I can do for you, never, at any time, fail to ask it. I am always at your service."

"I told you," Eva said, quietly, "that you would insult Walter if you would offer him pay for the favor he has conferred on us. I told you that he could never imagine how great a favor it was to us, and that it would seem a very trifling one to him. So now say nothing more about it, and when you get your money pay back the amount. It is useless to thank him, for, as you say, words are such a mockery to express gratitude."

Anything that Eva generally said was so much in place, and was expressed in such an elegant and unassuming manner, and with such a soft, sweet voice, that there generally was no room for any reply, and consequently nothing more was said.

But it is true to say, that as Walter was returning home, he did not feel altogether satisfied with the situation of matters in general. He was no exception to the general class of men, or women either, whose friendship for another is not shaken by borrowing money under just such circumstances as these. Though a friend may be very true and sincere indeed, yet one of the rarest things that we find on this earth is, where one can retain such a friend after he has been in the habit of borrowing money, even though it has always been promptly returned. There seems to be a gulf betwixt friendship and pity, which nothing can close, for the friend, if he does not despise, is always pitying his money-borrowing friend. I have seen the purest friendship sicken through the pitiless habit of borrowing money. If it continue, it is that priceless friendship which we seldom find, and the being in whom it is found should be grappled to our hearts with hooks of steel. For the prevalent idea of mankind is, that when friendship has to be



bought, it is better that it should then be broken at once, for sooner or later it will find an early grave.

But Walter Ludwick's warm and generous nature was different from most people; and though this same feeling found its way into his heart as he was meditating over the matter on his way home, yet he banished it from his mind as an injury and injustice done to these noble and whole-souled girls, and resolved to be their firm and steadfast friend.

#### CHAPTER IV.

He that's liberal  
For all alike, may do a good by chance:  
But never out of judgment.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MONTAGUE and son had the largest dry-goods, hardware, and grocery establishment in Riverbank, and they did an immense business. Mr. Montague was a very fine old gentleman,—a Christian and a good citizen. Being very close and exacting in his business, he had accumulated quite a fortune.

Benedict, his eldest son and partner in business, was a sharp, shrewd, and energetic young man. He was of medium height, well built, rather inclined to corpulency, with a rather prominent forehead, full, fleshy face, with a fair complexion, and light-brown hair, and with a keen, far-seeing, business-like eye. He was what the world calls a first-rate business man, who is bound to accomplish whatever he undertakes, from the sole fact that he possesses that superb accuracy, and that good, hard, sound common sense, which at all times, and on all occasions, insures success. With these natural acquirements, he had by close attention to duty, and by a strict adherence to truth and fair dealing in his business, attained the reputation of a successful young man.

And besides these qualifications, he was a kind, genial companion and a warm-hearted friend. Many a time and oft he and Walter have sat out in the old dock, talking confidentially

until almost midnight. But, though he was a warm and congenial friend, yet he never allowed friendship in the least respect to interfere with his business, and should such a thing occur, he would dismiss the friend at once. Nothing in the world was so repugnant to him as for a friend to come up to him and ask the loan of ten dollars. He would, no doubt, lend it to him, but should he repeat the occurrence, Benedict would invent some plan to cut his acquaintance. This was something he never could endure, and thus the practice was revolting to his rare taste of business.

One day he and Walter were in conversation together, and the latter, in rather an affable manner, said, "You and Miss Cordelia Drayton do not have that pleasant association which your not uncongenial natures would seem to inculcate."

"No," Benedict replied, smilingly, at the rather artistic manner in which Walter had mentioned the subject. "If you care to know how the difference between us arose, I will take pleasure to give you a truthful statement of it, for I have no doubt but that you have got the one side of the affair already, and it will probably place us in a very uncomfortable light in your estimation."

"I shall be very much obliged if you do so, as there are always two sides to almost every statement; and I am free to say that I have heard one side of it already, which is not at all flattering to you."

"Of course then I assume," he continued, "that you do not know so much about their history as I do, for the reason that there was comparatively little known about them when you went away. When they came here, Mrs. Drayton said that they desired to deal with us, and would pay us monthly. This, of course, was very satisfactory to us, and we assured her that we would sell as cheap, if not cheaper, than any other firm in the village, and would take pleasure in procuring her anything that she might desire. She was a lady, as you know, with a very prepossessing appearance, and her daughters were very fine-looking ladies, and I was congratulating myself on the nice time I would have. Well, things went along swimmingly until they began to run in debt, and, before we knew what we were about, three or four months' bills were standing back unpaid. You see this was not business at all, and I told father that he must go down and see about it. I did not care to go, for I

can dun a man to death, but it was a little too much for me to go down and trouble these fair young ladies. So my father went down; and her excuse was that the man who owed her money in the city could not pay it until—some time, I do not now remember when. She had made so many excuses that I was tired of it, and I told father to go down and get an order from her on this man, and that that would be sufficient. He did so, and, to our surprise, obtained the order. I went immediately to the city and presented it to him; and he immediately flew up in a passion, as he said, 'I wonder what in the world Mrs. Drayton means by giving orders on me for any money? I owe her nothing, and therefore will not pay it.' This surprised me very much, as I then counted the claim a very doubtful one. Knowing, however, that he was a relation of theirs, I explained the circumstances under which most of the goods were purchased, and intimated as much that it would be better for all concerned if the bill were paid. He scratched his head very nervously awhile, and then said that he would pay it if I would deduct fifty dollars, it being only gratuitously that he did so, but would rather pay it than have any difficulty about it. I at once told him I would do so, and he paid me the amount and I returned home. The people here found out, in some manner, that I had got my money, and inquired how I had done so; but I gave them no satisfaction, and thus the matter with us dropped. After her relation had paid me he made some inquiries concerning them, and then said that she was a very fine old lady, but that she had not been trained to work; that those Southern people never did anything, and that she was now thrown upon the world, and did not know as much about business as a child. 'When I see a mother,' he said, warmly, 'raising up her children in ignorance of the culinary department of her household, it makes me almost blind with rage.'

"So they quit dealing with us, and then went to other places. One day, three or four months afterwards, Mrs. Drayton came in the store, and looked at a very nice ham, and said, after inquiring the price, that she would take it, and that she would send her son up for it. I of course told her she could have it, but never dreamed of anything else than that she would send the money along. When Clarence came up for it I weighed it, wrapped it up, and told him the price. He seemed very

nervous at this, and said that he would bring it up in the evening. I expressed my surprise, and said that I thought she intended to pay for it before it was taken away. I then, very politely, said, 'You just leave it and tell your mother to send up the money and I will send down the ham.' This insulted her very much, and none of them has ever spoken to me since. Cordelia passed me on the street the next day, and never looked the course I was. I felt sorry for this, as I generally liked to talk to her, and passed a very pleasant time. But I was determined that they should not become indebted to us again, and carried out my very early rule in life,—never to allow friendship to interfere with my business.

"And a few weeks ago the landlord of the house they are now living in left the key here, with instructions to give it to them if they paid the rent in advance. It was no difference to me, and if I had known that there would have been any trouble about it, I would not have taken it. So when I told Clarence what my instructions were, he became highly indignant, and went very angrily away. I saw nothing more of them until a week afterwards, when the whole three of them came back; and Cordelia counted me out the money, but would not give it to me until I gave her the key. We have not spoken since, and I don't believe that there is any chance of her becoming reconciled, as they are very high-toned. I have nothing against them in the world, and always considered them very fine ladies, and do yet. But when friendship has to be bought, then it is high time that it was closed indeed. This is a true and candid statement of the whole matter, and do you see anything wrong in what I did?"

"Nothing," Walter replied. "Yours is a business transaction clear through; but they view it otherwise, and cannot look at it in the light in which they should. They have an idea that every one is down on them, and they are thus liable to magnify every little thing that is said."

"Yes, that is very true," he replied; "but still I do not blame a great many, for the reason that she is greatly in debt to them. About a month before you came home it was astonishing to see them and the bailiff running to the house. It seemed like a perfect thoroughfare. I do not know how they fixed matters up, as I have heard nothing for some time about them. But you know, Walter," he calmly and candidly said,

"that when any person, no matter whom it is, becomes in debt, mainly through their own extravagance, why, it draws very hard on human nature to stand it. They keep a hired girl all the time, and you see that is something that very few families in the town keep. There is reason," he concluded, slowly and firmly, "in all things; and as we must be just before we are generous, you will see how inconsistently their actions appear when you learn that, being indebted to almost every store in the village, they would still invite persons down there to take tea with them. It is indeed a great misfortune that they had not more prudence and discretion combined with their elegant manners."

## CHAPTER V.

View them near  
At home, where all their worth and pride is placed;  
And then their hospitable fires burn clear.

HALLECK.

It was about the middle of June, and the flowers and roses were in bloom and the air was soft and balmy, when, in compliance with Marian's urgent request, Cordelia and Eva were brought out in the barouche to the Ludwick mansion, to spend a week where they could hear the birds sing and breathe the pure, fragrant air unsullied by the smoke of the village.

And it is needless to say that they were delighted. One could only form a correct idea of the hospitality and kind, generous hearts of the Ludwick family by visiting them. All that could be done to make their visit pleasant and interesting was done with a hearty good will. Even Tom, who never did see anything good in the Draytons, and who looked upon them from the very first as Southern curiosities, relented and felt rather kindly towards them. He thought they were middling interesting people, notwithstanding their pride and Southern proclivities.

He seemed to have a better liking for Cordelia than he had for Eva. The latter he thought prouder and haughtier than the former,—an impression which more than he formed. But

the cause of Tom's admiring her resulted from Cordelia being a great talker and having been drawn into a conversation before he knew what he was about.

Walter and Eva were delighted with each other, and they roamed the hills and valleys together, and culled the flowers and roses that were everywhere blooming around them. They read their favorite books together and played their favorite games, and the sunny hours passed happily away. She was so delighted that she remained a week after Cordelia had returned home.

As soon,—the very day that Cordelia received their monthly remittance,—she inclosed the amount in a letter and sent Clarence with it direct to Mr. Ludwick's, and directed it to be given to Walter. This did not surprise him any, for he never dreamed of anything else than her returning it to him as soon as she would have it, for he knew her disposition so well.

But it was wonderful how some of the people did talk when they saw Walter Ludwick driving Eva around in the buggy. It was a shame, Mrs. Frothingham said, for him to be gallanting that "slipling" around, after deserting and causing the death of such an angel as Carrie Merton.

Mrs. Climax said it was outrageous. They were nothing but a lazy set, for nobody that had any spunk about them at all would be keeping a hired girl while they were still running in debt. It was "preposterix" to be of such a worthless disposition.

And in fact this is the general tone in which most of the people talked. Walter knew as much by their treatment toward him, but none of them—not even Mrs. Climax and Mrs. Frothingham, the boldest of their slanderers—ever dared to utter one disparaging word against any of them in his presence.

And thus their time was passed pleasantly away, and there seemed nothing to disturb the cheerfulness and pleasure of Cordelia and Eva. But they did not know the heart-throbs of the mother, who knew more about their financial affairs than they did. As Benedict Montague observed, a great many of her creditors brought suit and then just let the matter drop for the present.

She was aware of this, but dreaded the thought of telling them, as she knew what a dreadful shock it would cause their nervous temperament. That the gathering storm would soon

burst ruthlessly upon them she had not the least shadow of a doubt, and many a time she had it on her lips to tell them, but as often she failed. Having deferred the exposition of matters so long, she now concluded to let them rest, believing that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and when the thunderbolt would fall they might probably be prepared for it.

## CHAPTER VI.

How vain all outward effort to supply  
The soul with joy! The noontide sun is dark,  
And music discord, when the heart is low.

YOUNG'S BROTHERS.

ONE bright, sunny morning Walter again called on the Draytons. Mrs. Drayton was a great deal better, and desired him to come up in her room, where they could all talk together. She said that she had heard him talk so little since he came home, that he must soon commence or she would forget what he generally did talk about. With the exception of Dr. Patterson, but few gentlemen called on them. Clemens Frothingham called occasionally, though he was of so little importance, one way or another, that it made no difference to them whether he called or not. But the cause of this dearth of gallants was unknown to Walter, and he never paused to inquire about it.

They had only been talking a short time when some one knocked, and after awhile Clarence came in and announced Mr. Smuggins.

"Oh, it's that miserable tax-collector!" Mrs. Drayton exclaimed. "This is the fourth time he has come, Walter," she said; "I wish you would let me have three dollars until I return from the city; I do not wish to disappoint this man again."

The pain of anguish that passed over Cordelia's face was too transparent for any one not to notice. She drew a deep sigh as she exclaimed, feelingly, "Mother, mother! what in the world do you mean by asking Walter for more money? what in the world will or can he think of us?"

Walter appreciated her feelings very much, and with a desire to soothe them as much as possible, said, "This, my friend Cordelia, is a matter between Mrs. Drayton and myself, with which you have nothing at all to do."

But it was too much for her, and she soon left the room, and a short time afterwards Walter left also.

But the crisis which Mrs. Drayton had been expecting for some time had come. A few days after this occurrence, a tall, slick, slim looking-man, with dark hair and sharp, piercing eyes, knocked at the door. As Cordelia opened it, he stepped in and inquired if this was where Mrs. Drayton lived.

She told him it was, and he replied that he would like to see her.

Cordelia said that it was impossible, unless he would go upstairs, as she was very sick and could not be out of bed. "But I, probably, can attend to whatever business you have with her."

"You have charge of affairs, then, in her place while she is sick?" he said, looking kind of out from under his long eyebrows.

She bowed and replied that she had.

"Then you will answer the same purpose," he replied, as he commenced to take some papers out of his great pocket-book. As he was searching for the one he desired, he said, "I am the sheriff of the county, and I have a couple of executions here on which I am directed to make the money." And he handed them to her.

If a thunderbolt had dropped right beside her she could not have been more frightened. She almost gasped for breath as she took the execution writs, while her face was as pale as death. Mechanically almost she read them over, so as to give her time to collect her wandering thoughts.

Oh, the terror that an executioner of the law brings with him when he invades the sanctity of the home circle! In a peaceful, quiet village like Riverbank, the appearance of the sheriff in their midst was a terror to some and a great curiosity to others. They wanted to see if he looked like other people, and therefore they gazed upon him with glaring eyes.

Such an occurrence as this was something of which Cordelia never dreamed, and it made the very blood freeze in her veins. She looked almost like a statue, and the sheriff stared

at her in speechless amazement. When she had finished reading the writs, she handed them back and said it was impossible to do anything for him. "We are penniless," she said, "at present; and it is no use in attempting to disguise the fact from you."

She had now recovered herself, and spoke in a kind and conciliatory manner. She saw that her hand was in the lion's mouth, and it would not do to treat him harshly.

The sheriff was surprised to see such a finely-accomplished lady. Though a rough and surly-featured man, having the appearance of a wolf, yet he had, as is frequently the case, a warm heart within. He had been told by the plaintiffs on the writs and many other parties, that he had better watch himself or some of them would lay the poker to his head. But now, how surprised he was! and therefore kindly said, "I am sorry, very sorry, Miss Drayton, to oppress you; but you know I am the executioner of the law, and must do as I am commanded, else the penalty will fall on me. I will be compelled to take what we call in legal terms 'a levy;'—that is, an inventory of all you have in the house, or as much as will satisfy these writs, and if you will be kind enough to assist me, I shall feel greatly obliged."

"Any assistance," she faintly said, "I can give you will be willingly granted, as I see that you have a duty to be performed, and, as a matter of course, it will not do for you to shirk it."

He looked up at her very much surprised, as he said, "I attribute to you a great deal of rare good sense, very seldom to be found in a lady so young. And now," as he had seated himself for writing, "if you will be so kind as to enumerate the articles of furniture in this room, I will just write them down, as it will save a great deal of time."

She named over everything that was down-stairs, and then she told him there was some furniture up-stairs that she could enumerate, but perhaps he would rather go up and see it.

"Thank you," he replied; "my duty requires that I should do so, and if you will be so kind as to show me the way, you will much oblige."

When he entered the sick-room of the mother, a tableau such as he had never seen before met his bewildered eyes. There on the couch lay the mother with her hands folded

across her breast,—almost the picture of death,—by her bedside, quietly fanning her, sat a young and delicate girl, with her sad, pale face and tearful eyes, just, it seemed to him, like a drooping lily. Neither one spoke nor moved, but remained there statue-like as they seemed. The stern officer of the law gazed silently upon the scene for a moment, then glanced quickly around their scantily-furnished room, and then turned hastily away and walked rapidly down-stairs and resumed his former seat, as he said, "Be so kind, Miss Drayton, as to enumerate those articles, and be careful that you do not miss any of them. I will take your word for it when you say that you have enumerated all of them."

She complied, and as he had written the last article down, he folded up his papers, and then bidding her good-afternoon, took a hasty leave, and rushed along the street as though he had been committing some fearful crime.

After the door closed, Cordelia's nerves relaxed, and she sank almost exhausted upon the sofa, as she exclaimed, in the agony of her soul, "Oh, kind Heaven, what have we done that all this misery should be inflicted upon us!"

Eva heard the plaintive cries, and came down to see what was the matter. A singular trait of character or disposition of Eva's was, that whenever she saw any person else excited or angry, she was always calm herself. Though she had been crying up-stairs, yet she dried her tears and came down; and, after seeing how sorry her sister was, said, "Why need you worry so, Cordelia? I do not believe there will anything come of this. I have not the least idea there will. They have just done this to scare us. They know mamma will pay them when she gets well and can get her money; but they want to hurry us up, and do not worry so. Light will shine through this darkness some place, I am sure."

These words had some effect on Cordelia, and feeling a faint hope that such might be the case, she arose with a lighter heart, and seemed to be cheerful.

In our darkest hours of grief it is wonderfully strange how even one faint gleam of hope will light up the darkened channels of our soul, and for a time make our hearts light and cheerful; but when this ray suddenly fades from our view, oh, how the very life-blood seems checked in our veins, and we sink down in deeper and darker despair!

Poor souls! They did not know that a darker and drearier day would come, and that their hearts would be filled with deeper sorrow.

## CHAPTER VII.

My mother earth,  
And thou, fresh breaking day, and you, ye mountains,  
Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye;  
And thou, the bright eye of the universe,  
That openest over all, and unto all  
Art a delight,—thou shinest not upon my heart.

BYRON.

MISFORTUNES, as Eva often remarked, never come single-handed. They carry in their train all the miseries and aching griefs that flesh is heir to, blight and extinguish all the joys and beauties of this world, and at last crush the human heart down into the most abject and hopeless despair. And there are times when the tide of life seems restrained, and the will ceases to exert its almost omnipotent sway over this mortal tabernacle, and the immortal part of our being here on earth yearns to take its flight to the Elysian fields in that unknown clime beyond the shores of time.

But a spirit voice seems to whisper, "Not yet! not yet!" and the weary soul, realizing the unalterable decree of the "Everlasting," against self-slaughter, rises again to action; and thus drags out a miserable existence, only praying for the time when the "lamp of life" will become extinguished, and the soul takes its flight at last to the ambrosial fields of glory.

After the sheriff had left Mrs. Drayton's, he went immediately to see the plaintiffs in the executions, who were two moderately wealthy men of the village, and who were reputed to be Christians, and therefore he had reason to believe that they would have some compassion for suffering humanity. For it cannot be denied but that the world looks coldly upon the Christian who professes to follow in the footsteps of the Divine Saviour if he turns a deaf ear to the cries and lamentations of the poor. Christ's own words were, "Be good to the

poor." Oh, if it were only possible to behold in one vast panoramic view, or if the veil were so raised that we could have a glimpse of their abject and meagre homes,—the intense suffering of body and soul, with the almost ghastly effort to keep them together,—we might then form some idea of their misery and woe. But as it is, there is only a chance time that one sorrowful scene is presented to our view, and the consequence is, that is passed by and soon forgotten.

The sheriff knew these men to be Christians, or at least wearing the robes of Christianity, for they were members of the church. He told them of the utter pennilessness of their condition; how the mother was almost nigh unto death; that those innocent and almost broken-hearted girls were frightened out of their senses; that there was no person about the premises to do anything for them; and that it would take every particle of furniture in the house, even to the very beds on which they slept. "This," he concluded, "I consider a crime against high Heaven which no repentance on earth can ever appease."

The two men went aside and conversed a few moments together, and then returned, and one of them, a long-faced, gray-haired, and miserly-looking man, said, "We have consulted on this matter, and have made up our minds that the affair is not in our hands, but that it is your bounden and sworn duty to proceed at once and make the money. And further, we have no sympathy for any person or persons who are too lazy to work, and then contract debts which they cannot pay. So we leave the matter in your hands, to proceed as the law directs. The law gives us this property you have levied on, to make our money out of it, and what is law is justice and right."

Something disheartened by this cold and callous reply, the stern executioner of the law said, though restraining his indignation as much as possible, "But you see the mother is helpless, and the daughters of course cannot be made to suffer for her imprudence. And again, are you not Christians? are you not members of the church? The Master whom you follow, near his last moments here on earth, commanded you to 'be good to the poor.' How now will you disregard this divine command, and take the very bed from under this woman, who is now trembling on the very verge of the grave? I say to you now, Recall this execution, and let the crime—for crime I say

it is—of robbing this widow and her orphans of the last vestige of property they have to harder and more ruthless hands than yours. Gentlemen, I do not pretend to be a Christian, but my mother was, and she taught me that 'whosoever casteth his bread upon the waters shall find it again'; and I have always found this saying to be true. Now, let me know what I am to do."

This same white, hoary-headed miser replied, without consulting his colleague in this most disgraceful affair, with such a stern determination and cold-hearted cruelty that left no doubt upon the sheriff's mind but that it was impossible to change their inflexible will: "We have told you, sir, of our purpose, and while we know our duty as Christians, we want you to distinctly understand that we consider we do nothing wrong in this whole transaction, and that it is one of the first laws of nature to preserve our own property and to preserve our own rights. It therefore comes with very poor grace from you, who acknowledge yourself to be no Christian, to endeavor to teach us who are Christians. You had better, therefore, teach yourself to be a Christian, and let us alone. We tell you now that no widow's crocodile tears and no orphan's plaintive cries will change our minds from the unalterable decree of having our money. Why, they might just as well have put their hands in our pockets and have taken out that much money as to have obtained it in the manner they did. We know all about them and you know nothing. So we tell you now, once for all, to proceed and make that money, or we will, in default of the same, look to you for it."

They bid him good-day, turned around, and left him standing there in blank astonishment.

He looked after them for some time, and then, turning around, said, bitterly, through his clinched teeth, "Hell is full of such Christians as they are," and then walked down to the hotel.

Of course he had no other alternative than to proceed at once and sell the goods, else pay the debt himself. He sat down and wrote out the advertisements, and directed his deputy to put them up in one week from that day, and then he returned home.

The delay of designating the day of sale was caused by the effort of the sheriff, as has been seen, to have matters settled;

but Cordelia and Eva, ever full of that hope which seemed to be the guiding star of their existence, concluded that all was over and that nothing more would be done about the matter. And though Walter had been there several times, yet they never mentioned a word about it to him; and thus the impending storm was again to burst full upon them, heavier and fiercer than before; and being so utterly helpless, they had made no exertions to avert it. They could not believe that such a thing could be,—that they would sell the very last article of furniture they had, and thus leave them in actual want. This hope was reasonably to be entertained, when they remembered that they lived in a Christian land and among Christian people. But, alas, their only hope was doomed to be blasted, and they drew near the fearful abyss of a desolated home.

One afternoon, when Clarence was coming home from school, he saw the advertisement; and with a throbbing heart and trembling frame he read it over. He was too young to comprehend all the deep impenetrable woe that it would cause; but the mortification of such a calamity burned into his very soul. He hastily took a copy of it, and then hurried on home and impulsively rushed into the room where Cordelia and Eva were sitting, and handed the former the paper, as he said that there were any number of them posted up in the town.

Cordelia nervously took the paper and hastily read it over, and, having finished it, she sank back in her chair almost breathless, while the picture of despair was written in her face. The paper involuntarily fell from her cold hands to the floor, and she uttered the shuddering cry, "*Death, death* is preferable to all this!"

Eva almost frantically picked up the paper, and, with a deadly pallor in her face, read over the articles of household furniture, that had now almost become relics of the past, from their being so long in the family, and as she, too, had finished it, she sank back in her chair and covered her face with her hands, as she faintly uttered, "Gone, gone forever!"

And as the dark and shadowy draperies of night were gathering around them, and friendless, solitary, alone as they felt themselves to be, it is no wonder that their cup of sorrow was almost drained, and that they were now drinking its bitter dregs.

And long after midnight, when they sought to drown their almost unbearable grief in the arms of balmy sleep, that soother of all our woes,—still the monstrous spectacle passed before their eyes, like the dim spectre of death. Ever and anon Eva, in her dreams, would rise in her bed and plead with them not to sell her father's lounge, and Cordelia would still repeat, "Those are my books; you cannot sell them;" and, thus troubled and harassed in their dreams by these hideous spectres, the night wore away, and as gray dawn began to appear, they both sank into a sweeter, quieter sleep.

When Cordelia awoke again, the bright, cheerful beams of the morning sun were shining in upon them, and she could hear the sweet warblings of the happy birds as she was just returning to consciousness. She felt the first sweet sensation of the blissful joy that comes to every heart just before that moment of entire wakefulness when reason begins to ascend its throne. She was about to arise with these first bright beams of the morning, but when the recollections of the previous evening and night swept across her mind, like the fatal simoom, blighting everything before it, she sank back exhausted on her pillow, while a cold shudder ran through her whole frame. And as she lay there, weak and faint, reflecting upon their forlorn condition,—how utterly hopeless it was,—she covered her face and bitterly exclaimed, "Oh that this too stolid flesh would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into dust!"

She awoke Eva by her piercing cries, and Clarence, who had been awake for some time, was now clamoring for them to get up, for, he said, he was so hungry; and Mrs. Drayton faintly asked for a drink of water.

The sun was shining brightly, the birds were singing sweetly, and the soft, fragrant zephyrs were coming in the sorrowing room, as if to make it cheerful; but all these pleasing and delightful tributes of nature now brought no joy to their weary and darkened souls, and it all seemed but a mockery of their intense grief and sorrow.

The day passed slowly along, and in the afternoon clouds began to gather over the sunny skies, and soon the rain came down in torrents, and all looked dark and drear without, as it really was dark and drear within.

And when night came, and its dark shadows gathered

around them, a deeper and more intense despair pierced their aching hearts, when they were now almost forced to believe that the last faint, flickering ray of hope to which they clung was likely to fade away and leave them in utter, impenetrable darkness and despair. All day long they had both the same thoughts as to their deliverance from this terrible calamity, but neither dared to trust herself to speak, through fear that the other might say something that would blight the tender flower in its bloom. But now, as the rain still pattered against the window-panes, as if singing a sad requiem over their departed joys, and as the last glimmering hope died away, Cordelia, almost gasping for breath, faintly cried, "Is there—is there no hope? Tell me—oh, tell me—is there—is there no hope?"

Eva looked up with the paleness of death in her face, as she faintly replied, "Yes, I still think there is some hope."

"What is it?" gasped Cordelia.

"Walter!"

"Walter!"

They both simultaneously uttered the name, so that their hope had been the same all the time.

"But why is he not here?" Cordelia said. "It cannot be possible that he will now desert us in this—the darkest hour of our existence. He was never absent so long before."

"Why, my dear Cordelia, I am surprised at your thinking so. I would as leave doubt that there is a heaven as to doubt that he would now turn coldly away and leave us in our deep adversity. He told me the last time he was here that he was going to the city, but could not tell when he would come back. I know he will come as soon as he returns, if it should be at the very hour of midnight."

No reply was made, and a deathly silence stole over them again, such as one feels when in the presence of the dead. Indeed, it is impossible to depict a scene like that which was now presented in that sad and lonely home. Imagination can better fulfill the task, for the tongue fails to tell, the pen is inadequate to portray, and the heart can scarcely feel the utter misery, the unutterable woe and fathomless grief, that must have filled the souls of that lonely and friendless group who had lived nearly all their lives in luxury and affluence. The mother,—sick and helpless, up-stairs in the very bed adver-



tised for sale, with her infant son by her side soothing her,—the two orphan girls,—sitting friendless in the front room below, listening breathlessly to every footfall they heard, as if their salvation depended upon some deliverer who was apace coming to their rescue,—sitting there with the full knowledge that the last morsel they had in the house had been consumed for their supper, and with the dreadful revelation that there was not one penny in the house to obtain that which would keep body and soul together,—then added to this the intense agony which vibrated through their delicate and sensitive organization, as with their vivid imagination they saw their hated enemies read the advertisements, and heard the ribald gibes and gambols of the motley villagers speculating as to what articles of furniture they would purchase! Alas! no one could have been surprised had reason given away and insanity had asserted its right to the throne of the mind.

It was now the solitary midnight hour, and all was dark and drear, with not a single murmur to break the deathly stillness that reigned around them, save the beating of their own aching hearts. The last grain of sand was quivering in the hour-glass, the tender chord that binds us to this mundane sphere was stretched to its utmost, and its acute vibrations penetrated each secret winding of their souls, the last faint glimmering hope was dying away, and they were about giving up all as lost, when suddenly a gleam of light flashed across the window, and soon they heard footfalls coming near. They put their hands on their hearts to still its throbbings, while a mysterious quiver ran over their whole frame, and in their faces was painted that terrible picture of distress caused by a complete revolution of mind and soul. Nearer and nearer came the hasty footfalls,—whiter and whiter grew their sad faces,—soon the footfalls came to the door and stopped,—they pressed nervously their hearts which had almost ceased to beat,—they heard a ruffle, as if some one letting down an umbrella,—then all was silent as the tomb,—and in the next instant the door was thrown open and in there stepped—Walter Ludwick.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Were my whole life to come one heap of troubles,  
The pleasures of this moment would suffice,  
And sweeten all my griefs with its remembrance.  
LBE.

IF there are times when the tide of life seems checked, and draperies of woe are hanging all around us by some sudden and unlooked-for misfortune which freezes the very blood in our veins, it is also true that by the sudden transition to prosperity and pleasure the soul is filled with that sweet and rapturous joy which only can find relief in tears.

So it was with Cordelia and Eva Drayton. When upon the very brink of the utmost despair, they were suddenly—almost as if by magic—lifted up into the glorious sunlight of hope by this—to them—almost supernatural appearance of the only friend who could save them from the unutterable woe of a desecrated and broken-up home. The transition was so great that they scarcely knew whether it was a reality or a dream.

When Walter Ludwick entered each one uttered a wild cry, and, rushing frantically forward, grasped him by the arm and escorted him to the sofa, where each sat down by his side in silence. Their hearts were too full for utterance, and the words choked in their throats. Walter himself felt so much affected by the ghastly look of despair in their faces when he entered, that he was chilled to the very heart and could not utter a word.

It was a rare occurrence that either of them shed tears. Cordelia could look on death almost in all its forms, and, though pained to her very bosom's core, yet not a tear came to her eyes. In all those trials and sufferings, which were great enough to prostrate almost any woman in the land and blind her eyes with tears, yet the grief of this girl was so great, the mortification so intense and scathing, that her tears were consumed by the torturing pain which burned in her very soul. And Eva's disposition was the same. Their suffering seemed to be the more severe, because there is a relief

in tears for sorrow that nothing else can give,—no balm so soothing,—none so effective.

But this sudden rapture of joy was a different feeling from that of grief, and a few stray tears rolled down Cordelia's cheek; but with her utmost will she stifled them and wiped her eyes dry. Eva did not shed a tear, though her joy was complete; but not so great as Cordelia's, for the responsibility of the whole affair devolved upon the latter, and hence her joy was proportionately greater.

But when they all had become composed, Walter said, "I know partially your circumstances; I know that all your household furniture is advertised for sale, and will be sold unless some proceedings are immediately taken to prevent it. Now, as briefly as you can, give me a clear statement of all your difficulties, in order that I may know what to do. A good client states his case clearly and concisely, I am told by my lawyer friends."

These last words were said with a smile, and Cordelia felt more at ease, and told him then all she knew about the affairs, which was indeed but very little. The explanation she gave for being so ignorant of her mother's affairs was, that the latter would never allow her to do any of the business, as she drew the money they received, and expended it as she desired, in laying in provisions and in otherwise maintaining the family. And in answer to other questions, said she did not know how much her mother owed, and furthermore, for I may as well tell you the whole story, she said "we have not a solitary dollar in the house, and we ate the last morsel of bread we had for supper." In fact, she told him all, and then asked him what they should do. "We are utterly helpless here," she said, "but if I were only in the city, I could then probably get some money on my own account and pay the creditors off. But we may as well wait until you tell us what to do, for we leave everything to you."

"You know so little about your affairs," he said, "that I cannot tell you what to do until I examine into matters further, and get a more comprehensive idea as to how they stand. I will then give you the information you desire." Knowing that they had nothing to eat, and nothing to get anything with, he gave them some money, sufficient to provide for their wants at the present. "As soon," he said, "as I examine

the records and ascertain the extent of your mother's liabilities, I will then return and tell you what has to be done."

And as he was about to go, he said, "Now, do not worry yourselves over this matter, for I will see that you come through all right. If you do not, then I do not know myself." He closed the door after him, and stepped into the lonely and deserted streets.

Cordelia and Eva returned to their sleeping-room after they had told their mother that Walter had come and told them that he would see that everything was arranged, and that the furniture should not be sold. They retired and fell peacefully to sleep,—the sweetest relief and most exquisite bliss they had ever experienced.

The next evening Walter returned and explained everything to them, which created the greatest consternation and surprise. He said that there is ten times more against your mother than all your furniture is worth, and if you pay this debt off, others will only issue again, and then you will pay that off; and if you commence in this way, you will either have to let the furniture go or pay all the debts now on the record.

Then Cordelia despairingly said, "There is no alternative but that the furniture and all must go, for I know I never can pay it. Could you not persuade them to give us time?"

"You might as well try to persuade them to take their lives as to even ask them to give a day's grace beyond what the law allows you, for they think then that they might be incurring some risk, and endanger their entire claim. So that you must give up all hope of expecting any mercy from them. There are only these two executions out now, and the furniture will about cover them, and the others are holding back to see what will be done; and if there is any chance in the world for making their money, they will take it."

After a long and painful silence Cordelia exclaimed, "What in the world, then, Walter, are we to do? Have you nothing to suggest by which we can escape the mortification of a public sale as well as to save this furniture, which has now become almost as relics of the past. Tell us, do tell us what must be done to avert this terrible calamity!"

"Very well, I will now tell you all that can be done in this emergency. This furniture, if sold separately, will bring twice the amount of these two executions, but if sold in toto, it

would scarcely amount to the sum the execution calls for. The plaintiff has the right, in case he thinks the property would not bring the amount of his claim, to designate the manner in which it is to be sold. On the contrary, if the sheriff is sure the amount of claim can be made, he can dispose of it as the defendant requests. Now, the sheriff is disposed to favor you all he can, and if you can raise money enough to cover this claim, in order to bid the property in yourself, then you will own it in your own right, and no one else can touch it. Otherwise the whole thing will have to be sold, for your mother has signed judgment notes which waive everything."

A dead silence ensued until Walter spoke again. "If you cannot raise the money I think I can, and you can refund it to me at your leisure."

"You are very kind," Cordelia replied, respectfully, "but it is dreadful to think of making you—for it is nothing else—pay this claim and trusting to me to refund it, which I might never be able to do. But, since I think of it, if you will be kind enough to loan me a sufficient amount to go and return from the city, I will make an effort to raise the sum desired there."

"That will put you to a great deal of trouble; but if you would rather do so, I will cheerfully let you have the amount desired," he replied.

"I would much rather raise it myself, and then, if I fail, I will have a reserve to fall back on. You see," she said, smiling, "there is nothing like planning a good retreat."

Walter laughed and handed her the required amount, and then passed the evening with them in friendly talk. When he was about to leave, he said that he would return the evening before the sale, when at that time Cordelia would have returned.

Drearly enough the three intervening days passed away, but they were rendered more cheerful to Eva by reason of Marian going down and remaining with them. She also brought some bread and butter, and some other little delicacies, which she knew they would relish, as Walter had told her in what straitened circumstances they were placed.

On the evening before the sale Walter came, and they counseled together as to the best course to pursue. Cordelia was successful in borrowing the amount desired, but when she

mentioned the fact to Mrs. Drayton, the latter disapproved of the whole affair. She said as long as they remained with her she was going to be boss, and if the things were sold, they would just have to be sold; but that she was not going to let the officers sell them at all; that she would not allow it to be done under any circumstances. Cordelia said she often took such spells as these, and that they could do nothing with her. "You, Walter," she said, "are the only being that she will mind, and if you tell her it is the best, and that she must do as I tell her, all will go off right. I do not want her to be excited and talk so, as she may do when the whole town are around us."

Walter said he would do so, and remarked further, that he did not fear any trouble at all. Poor Cordelia was so delighted that she did not know what to do. She gave the money to him for fear that she might lose it, or that some difficulty might arise by her keeping it herself.

They felt happy and cheerful while he was there, but when he had gone it seemed that a dark cloud had fallen over them. Cordelia mournfully said, "The evening, Eva, previous to our father's funeral did not appear any darker to me than this one does. Oh, it seems to me the morrow will be a distressing day! How can we stand it?"

Morning dawned again, and the hour of sale arrived; and the whole town, almost, gathered around their house. The old and young were there, all eager to purchase something. Walter had made all necessary arrangements with the sheriff how to conduct the sale, and to make a public announcement of the same. It had been his intention to bid the property in himself for Cordelia, but there were a great many cried out that the sale was illegal on account of being sold in toto, and designed to defraud her other creditors, that he told her to bid it in herself. He explained to her how and when to bid, to which she replied, "But you must stand near me, Walter, or I will faint, for I don't think I can ever endure it. Such a trial as this I never endured in my life."

"Never mind," he replied, "I will stand by your side and bid myself, and then, when it is necessary for you to make the last bid, I will tell you."

The sheriff cried out the sale, and one of the plaintiffs put in a bid pretty near to cover the claim; and then Walter bid,

and the plaintiff put in another bid, high enough to cover all the debt and costs, and then Walter directed Cordelia to bid one dollar higher, and, as there were no other bids, it was knocked down, and the sheriff cried out "and sold to *Cordelia Drayton*."

The crowd then dispersed, some of them cursing and swearing at Walter Ludwick for defrauding them out of their claims by reason of selling the entire amount of their property.

As the sheriff was in a hurry, he did not take time to write out a bill of sale of the property, and only gave Walter a receipt. And in the afternoon he called in to see them, and was surprised to find how happy and cheerful they were. Suddenly Eva said, "Cordelia, what have you got to show that you bought this property?"

She replied that she had nothing but a receipt for the money paid by Walter.

"Well," she replied, angrily, "that is not sufficient. Suppose some one would come and levy on it again, what would you have to show that you purchased it? Indeed, Cordelia, I do not think you have done your duty in this matter, and you know you have not."

And she looked real angry and flushed in the face, just as she did the time she and Walter had their quarrel. Poor Cordelia was frightened, and did not know what to say.

Walter was sitting there looking at her; and her ingratitude thus shown to Cordelia, who had done so well and struggled like a heroine through the whole affair so nobly, provoked him so much that he scarcely believed his own eyes that it was she who was speaking. Even had Cordelia committed a gross oversight or mistake in the transaction of the business, it came with poor grace from her, who had done but little in the whole proceeding, to charge her with not doing her duty. Besides, it was just as much of a reprimand to him as it was to her, and he mildly, with some slight indignation, said, "Why, Eva, I am astonished at your charging your sister with not having done her duty, when you know that she has acted so nobly and heroically in this whole transaction. Even if she had made a mistake in her duty, as you say, how can you be so cruel as to reprimand her for it? It is not necessary for her to have a bill of sale at all, as there is a record made in the courts of the whole proceeding, and thus your title is secure."

This mortified her very much, and she begged pardon, and nothing more was said.

Walter was exceedingly tired, and he lay down on the sofa and soon sank into a sweet slumber. When he awoke, it was late, and he arose to go home; and as he was about to go, Cordelia took him by the hand, as she said, "Oh, Walter, what can I say to you to show how much we appreciate what you have done for us?"

"Oh, Cordelia, what is the use," exclaimed Eva, "in your trying to find words to express our gratitude to him? Do you not know, as I have often told you, that words are but mockery on an occasion like this? We must wait until we can do some act that will show our gratitude, for we can never express it in words."

Walter in reply said, "You overestimate what I have done for you; but, whatever I have done for you, consider it as done as your friend, and that no recompense is ever to be desired. I have only done what any true friend should do."

"But, Walter," Cordelia replied, "all my other griefs are washed away by this moment of calm, sweet joy; and every future sorrow of my life will be made light by the sweet remembrance of this happy hour. And if ever I cease to remember you, no matter what you ever may do to forfeit our friendship, it must be when my heart is turned to stone."

Eva said she joined in with this declaration and wished to be considered as his immortal friend. And then they bade each other a happy good-night.

## CHAPTER IX.

It gives me wonder, great is my content  
To see you here before me.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Dewitt Lu-Guere returned home, he did not know what to do. It is true that his resolution was sincere and firm, but he was in very great doubt whether to commence the study of medicine or go into business in the city with his uncle. He

had only been at home, however, a few days, until he became very sad and desponding and discontented. He longed for some true, confidential friend in whom he could confide, to the end that he might lay all his troubles before him, and obtain thereby a good, sound advice. He was thus wandering sadly around his pleasant home, as though he had lost the dearest friend on earth, until one day he happened to think of his old college friend, Walter Ludwick, whom he had so faithfully promised to visit when they parted at college. Quick as lightning the thought flashed through his mind that he would visit him at once and lay all his burdens before him. He knew his well-balanced mind, and was therefore confident that he could receive from him that good, sound advice which he so much desired. But suddenly he stopped stone still, and his face grew slightly pale as the question, "Is he at home?" escaped audibly from his lips. He studied a few moments, and then rushed to the telegraph office and sent him a telegram asking him if he were at home. This being done, he felt happy, though he awaited with impatience an answer.

When Walter Ludwick returned home from Mrs. Drayton's the evening after the sale, he found this telegram lying on his table. He instantly tore it open and read as follows:—

"GLENDALE, July 20, 18—.

"TO WALTER LUDWICK, Riverbank:

"Have concluded to visit you. Are you at home?

"DEWITT LU-GUERE."

"Joy, joy!" Walter exclaimed, as he went down and showed the telegram to Marian and his parents. "My old college friend going to visit me! This is indeed the happiest moment of my life!"

The next morning he sent him a telegram stating that he was at home and would be only too glad to have him visit him. When Dewitt received it, he commenced immediately to pack his trunk, and then took his departure on the first train with the most exulting joy that the human heart can feel.

Marian Ludwick seemed to be as much delighted as was Walter, for she had heard him talk so much about this friend and school-mate that she was only too anxious to see him, more to satisfy her curiosity than anything else. At least

she so expressed herself to Walter when he told her that he was coming.

But where, as has been observed before, is the young lady on the face of the earth, of about twenty summers, who would not feel a peculiar throbbing of the heart when she is informed that the college-mate and confidential friend of her brother is about to visit him? If she is unconcerned, or does not experience a feeling of sweet and exquisite joy thrill her heart, then she is a rare exception to the average American girl.

It does not matter, however, what Marian Ludwick said concerning his visit,—the tell-tale expression of her face but too plainly portrayed the rapturous joy that swelled her breast. Yes, she was delighted, and her heart throbbed as it had never throbbed before. Is it anything more than any other fair young lady would do if she went to her mirror and took a particular view of herself, and then stroked back her light, auburn hair, as it hung in profuse curls around her shoulders? No, it is nothing more than any clever young girl in the universe would have done.

Marian has not changed much in the last year or two, except that she has become more queenly in her bearing and has a more graceful appearance. Her eyes are still of their beautiful gray, and her cheeks are like the roses, and her lips are as sweet as the honey from the honey-comb, and her voice is soft and gentle. She is a most excellent player on the piano, and sings very sweetly. Having a most excellent mind, well stored with valuable knowledge, she can sit down of an evening and entertain her guest in a most accomplished and interesting manner.

It was a calm and delightful evening when Dewitt drew near Riverbank on the train. The sun's last rays were tinging, with a peculiar grandeur, the beautiful surrounding hills and valleys, and everything looked so lovely and delightful. He could hardly realize that it was indeed true that he was now, for the first time since they parted at college, going to meet his old and cherished friend. And as the engine whistled, and the brakes were applied, and after some screeching and jarring the train stopped, and, looking out of the car window, he saw standing on the platform his confidential friend—Walter Ludwick. His heart throbbed as he picked up his valise and left the car.

When the two friends met, it was with that silent and calm, sweet joy which often finds relief in tears. They grasped each other affectionately by the hand in silence, and as they took their seats in the barouche Walter feelingly said, "Is this a dream, Dewitt, or is it indeed true and real that you—my college friend for four long years—are now by my side again, and intend to remain for months with me? Tell me, my old friend. Speak, till I hear your voice, that I may be assured that this is not a dream."

"There is no dream about it, Walter," Dewitt replied. "I am here by your side, although ashamed that I have postponed this visit so long. But now I will remain a good long time with you."

When they were seated in the parlor, Dewitt felt himself quite at home, and not long thereafter Walter came in with Marian, to whom he introduced him. Marian looked exceedingly beautiful this evening,—more so, it seemed, than usual. She was dressed with exceedingly rare good taste. Her hair hung in profuse curls around her neck and shoulders, and her dress was rather a dark poplin and very neatly made. Around her neck, and tied in a beautiful bow on her bosom, was a dark-blue ribbon, with a delicate golden pin securing it to her dress. She had but one ring on her finger, and a golden chain around her neck. She was the picture of simplicity in her dress and beauty combined.

"I am happy, indeed, Mr. Lu-Guere, to meet you, and bid you welcome to our home. Indeed, it does not seem to me that you are a stranger, for your name is as familiar to us as an acquaintance of six years can be. I think brother Walter never wrote us a letter home in which he did not mention your name, and since he returned I have often heard him say that he would be more than delighted to see you, and often wondered why you never came to visit him, as you had promised when you last met."

Dewitt was surprised and delighted with this timely compliment, by which that first stiff and cold reserve, which one feels in the presence of a lady on his first appearance at her home, was entirely dispersed, and he felt a ray of sunshine streaming all around him.

In reply he said, "I did not know, Miss Ludwick, that Walter had made my name such a household word in your

family, but I do not wonder at it, since I remember that of all my friends I have always considered him the truest and the best and dearest friend I ever knew. There has never been a secret of mine that I have not shared with him, and if I have protracted this promised visit so long, it was not the fault of the heart, but rather of other causes, over which I had but little control."

"Then," replied Marian, "since you are here, make us a long visit, for I know you will be delighted with the scenery surrounding Riverbank."

About this time Walter returned and said that tea was ready, and the conversation ended.

Marian was one of those truthful and candid ladies in whose presence you feel at ease, for there was nothing designing or mysterious about her actions. She had rare good sense and a kind and generous heart, and gave the friend of her brother that sincere welcome that was so much her nature. And when they returned to the parlor the evening was passed in pleasant and lively conversation, interspersed with sweet music. Marian sang some of her sweetest songs and played some of her choicest selections from Strauss and other eminent composers. The evening was a delightful one to all, and to none more so than to Dewitt Lu-Guere.

## CHAPTER X.

The dignity of truth is lost,  
With much protesting.  
JOHNSON.

WILLIAM MONTAGUE, a younger brother of Benedict's, had come home from the seminary, where he was being educated for the ministry, about one month previous to the sale of the household furniture of Mrs. Drayton. There was a great deal of difference between him and Benedict. William, or Willie, as he was more frequently called, was not so tall, and rather slenderly built, and being at school so long and then coming home and going immediately to the seminary, he

had grown very delicate and quite effeminate in his appearance. His face—smooth as a boy's of fifteen—was a very handsome face. His was a something more than an ordinary mind, with a fair education, which gained for him the reputation of a pleasant, moral, and sensible young man. But the fault—if fault it be—in this composition of his character, was the predominance of his sympathetic nature over his mental faculties, which would sometimes sway his reason and better judgment, and thus lead him into something which would probably be to his interest and welfare to studiously and carefully avoid. In fact, he belonged to that large class of men whose feelings and sympathies are so strong that they would be liable to overrule and sway their better judgment. But he was a kind and true-hearted friend, and every one liked him.

The summer Walter was away Willie had become quite intimate with the Draytons, where he enjoyed himself very well; but when he returned home again, at the time before stated, he did not renew the acquaintance, on account of the enmity existing between them and his own family. He had called once on them, but he thought he observed a studied coolness which he did not altogether relish, and therefore never repeated it.

Walter and he had always been very intimate friends. The former asked him, one day, why he had cut the acquaintance of the Draytons; and he explained the whole matter, and said that he was very sorry that any difficulty should have intervened, as he had always enjoyed their company very much, but that he supposed it could not be avoided.

Walter explained to him that he was mistaken; that of course they did not like Benedict and his father, on account of some difficulty that had occurred between them in relation to some business affairs, and that he could assure him that they would not mistreat him on that account. "They know," he said, "that you are a very particular friend of mine, and if you come with me some evening I know that you will be exquisitely entertained, and will be pleased with their company."

Being very fond of the society of young ladies, Will of course accepted his kind invitation, for he had no resentment towards them on account of the difficulty with his father and Benedict. William cared nothing for money beyond the con-

venience and comforts it would afford, and therefore had quite a different disposition from any of his family.

Walter told the Miss Draytons that he and William Montague would call on them on that evening, saying at the same time that Will was his friend, and that he had always admired them and enjoyed their company.

Cordelia said that they were quite willing and desirous for him to call; that they did not blame him for the indignities that his father and Benedict had heaped upon them.

In compliance with their arrangements, Walter and he called, and passed a very pleasant evening. They were very entertaining, and Will was delighted with them, and thanked Walter very much for being so kind as to effect a reconciliation between them.

He replied that he was very welcome; "but," he said, in a more earnest tone, "I am not here all the time, and they are no doubt lonely enough. I wish you would call on them frequently, and occasionally, when it suits you, take Eva out to play croquet, or any other place, and make it pleasant for her."

Willie looked up in the greatest surprise possible as he said, "You do not mean that, do you? Take Eva out in society, when you and she are engaged? Impossible! you certainly do not mean it!"

Walter laughed outright at the earnestness of his friend, and then said, "I am surprised at you. Certainly you do not think that we are engaged, do you?"

"Why, most assuredly I do. What reason have I for not thinking so, when you have been her escort for near two years past, including the one you were away? And then I am told how much you did for them in the early part of spring."

These facts Walter could not gainsay, and he was silent for a few moments. He had great confidence in Will, and knew that anything he told him would be kept strictly confidential. So he said, "I, of course, Will, cannot tell what construction you may put upon our actions, but I will just say to you now, in confidence, that we are not engaged. There is no use in employing or using any protestations to convince you of that, but, upon the honor of a gentleman, I repeat that we are not engaged, and the relation between us is only pure, confidential friendship."

Will looked him straight in the face, and saw at once that

he was telling him the truth, and therefore doubted him no more.

After a brief silence he replied, "I think you are right for not marrying her, for several reasons. There is no doubt but that she is a most exemplary young lady, and her equal perhaps you will never find; but then, a man, when he wants a wife, as my brother Benedict says, why, *he wants a wife, and not a doll*. They are so exceedingly delicate, and, I am told, it is all hereditary. Then, whoever marries her will have the whole family to keep. I think your decision in not marrying her a good one. My advice to them would be, never marry. A man wants to look away into the future when he thinks about getting a wife. It is a fearful plunge to make."

Walter listened to him with a great deal of interest, and then said, "I believe you are right in your first assertion, but, in regard to the latter, I would never give it a second thought. If I loved the girl I would not care how many poor relations she had, for I would marry her and either keep them or send them away, just as the circumstances of the case required."

They had now come to their parting place, and Will said, "Walter, you do not do right in thus gallanting this young lady. You never intend to marry her, and you might be keeping some one else away who would marry her. Now, did you ever think of that?"

"Yes, I have. I think there is no one here that she would have. They are not marrying girls, for they have said so to me a dozen times."

"You are wrong; all ladies want to get married. That woman does not walk on the earth who does not look forward, with the greatest delight, to the time she will be married."

"But they have told me so, and I have complimented them frequently on their exception to most of the young ladies I have ever met."

"That amounts to nothing, Walter. I wonder, when you are so acute in so many things, that you are so insipid in this. We will say no more about it, but just think the matter over."

"Well we will drop it for to-night; but I want you to give them attention, and call on them at any time, for I know you will be welcome. Take other gentlemen with you."

"Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

## CHAPTER XI.

'Tis with our judgments as our watches,—none  
Go just alike; yet each believes his own.

POPE.

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the conversation in the last chapter between Walter and Will Montague. The words of the latter impressed themselves deeply on Walter's mind, and he was not altogether satisfied as to the opinion he had heretofore formed concerning these young ladies. One always considers his own judgment better than any person's else; but Walter was one of those men who wishes to be fully satisfied as to his position.

He had introduced Dewitt to them, and they were both delighted with him. Cordelia said he was just elegant, and so reminded her of her city friend. They visited them often and played croquet together, and had always a very pleasant time in general. The Draytons were becoming more popular under the new administration of Cordelia, who lived within her means, and therefore did not run in debt for anything. She was a cash customer wherever she went. This pleased the store-keepers wonderfully, and they praised her very much.

Will Montague was there almost every day, and sometimes he walked out with Eva, and at other times with Cordelia, just as the circumstances suggested. Dr. Patterson called frequently, and took great delight in teasing Eva about anything that came into his mind, in which Cordelia joined with infinite delight.

One day Walter called alone, and after he had been seated, Cordelia said, in her usual cheerful tone, "Did you hear the news, Walter?"

He of course replied no, and she then said, "Eva here is going to marry a preacher. She and Will have become great favorites, and I see them in here every day alone."

At this Walter laughed, and said that was very flattering for his friend Will. Then a general conversation ensued about preachers in general. After they had teased Eva to that degree



in which forbearance ceases to be a virtue, she rather indignantly said, "I just want you to understand that I am not going to marry a preacher. My dear father was one, and I know what a time we have all had of it; and I have therefore made up my mind that I never would marry a minister under any circumstances. So there, now, is the end of it; and I wish to hear nothing more from you."

Cordelia felt sorry, for she observed that Eva's feelings were hurt, and so she said, "Well, dear Eva, we both know what your opinion is in regard to marrying a minister. I know you have no intention of doing so; and as for my part, I would remain single all the days of my life before I would marry one. For you know that their families are always half starved and cannot dress at all as other people do if they live within their means. I know what it is by sad experience, and I mean to keep clear of any such an alliance."

There is no doubt in the world but that both these clever young girls were speaking the truth, for they knew by sad experience what it was to be a minister's daughter. It is a shame to the Church that her servants are not better paid, so that they can live in a manner becoming to their position.

Walter replied, after a brief silence, in his usual pleasing and artistic way, "I cannot say, of course, what the secret thoughts of our friend Eva are, further than what she has said; but there is no doubt great truth in what both of you have said. There is no more exalted profession in the world than the clergyman's, and there is no doubt that there will come a time when we would all be glad to fill a minister's grave. But I say it is a shame to the Church and this Christian land that ministers—ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ—are not paid so that they can live respectably, and in a manner suitable to their tastes and desires. They should also have sufficient means to educate their family, besides paying up a certain sum each year for their support in old age. 'The laborer is worthy of his hire,' and it is certainly right that he should be paid a sufficient sum to enable him to provide for himself and family when his day's work is done, and when he has fulfilled the mission which his Saviour gave him. But, on the other hand, if he enter the ministry, as a great many do, with the idea of having an easy time and of gaining a respectable livelihood, he will no doubt lead a harassing and

miserable life; for there will thorns spring up all around him, and torment him whichever way he turns. If, however, his heart be in his work; if he be animated and filled with the love of Christ, his Saviour and his Master, and delights in doing His work, though it may sometimes be very laborious and burdensome, yet there will shine streams of light over his soul, and flowers will grow up in his pathway, and he will lead as happy a life as any human being here on earth can lead. And so it is with his wife. It has truly been said that the minister's wife is the golden link that binds him to his congregation. I think this is eminently true. She is peculiarly fitted for cheering him up, when clouds will, in spite of himself, sometimes gather thick and fast around his pathway, and in making his life one perpetual stream of sunshine. So by her kind and gentle manner with his congregation, she can draw them toward him and her, and can endear and bind them together in a thousand different ways. But, if she has a taste for the fashionable world, and delights in fine dresses, and has great desires for society, she will lead a miserable life, by reason of not having her wishes satisfied. If, however, her heart is in his mission; if his work is her work; if she delights in visiting the sick and of directing their minds to the Lamb; and if she experience a joy in doing those little kindnesses which so endear a congregation to their minister's wife, why, I have no doubt at all but that she will live a happy and contented, Godlike life."

"You seem to speak," replied Eva, "as from experience. I do not hesitate to say but that the minister's wife is an honored position; but I am not in favor of early marriages, and I think people should take their time and look around them."

"I have always said that you ladies showed more good sense on that point than all the ladies whom I ever saw put together. With nearly every lady their whole object in life seems to be in the consummation of their marriage. Indeed, it seems to me that they should have higher aims, by endeavoring to win husbands by their worthy actions. Why, a gentleman can scarcely go with many ladies more than once or twice until they think they want to marry them. It is perfectly disgusting, and I have often said that I admired the rare good sense of both of you on this point. Now, for instance, what is the use, or what would be the use, in my thinking about getting

married? Why, look at the long course of study that is yet before me ere the time comes when I can settle down in business. And these long engagements are ridiculous in the extreme. I do not believe in long engagements, at any rate. Persons are foolish for entering into them, for there is no telling how soon they might change their minds, and then you know what a trouble generally comes."

Here the conversation ended, after Cordelia and Eva both coincided with his views, and he left more strengthened in his own opinion in regard to his position toward them, and concluded that his own judgment was better than William's, and that there was not the slightest opportunity of her ever consenting to marry any one in Riverbank.

Every person considers his own judgment, as a general thing, better than any person's else. And thus the world moves on!

## CHAPTER XII.

For all things, friendship excepted,  
Are subject to fortune; love is but an  
Eye-worm which only tickleth the head with  
Hopes and wishes; friendship's the image of  
Eternity, in which there is nothing  
Movable, nothing mischievous; as much  
Difference as there is between beauty  
And virtue, bodies and shadows, colors  
And life, so great odds is there between love  
And friendship.

LILLY'S *Edmon.*

THERE is no doubt but that the poet, when he sings of the heavenly boon of friendship, is correct. It has been said that love is that affection akin to angels; but wherefore is the justice for the assertion? Love, at best, is selfish, for he who loves looks to "the beyond," where, amid the green fields of an ideal life, he wanders with the object of his love in sweet companionship forever. He loves, but something more than the attributes of admiration in his loved one animates his heart and electrifies his soul. Yes, he fondly and exultingly looks for-

ward to the time when he shall clasp his loved one to his breast and call her by the sacred name of wife. But there are no such hopes or wishes in pure, genuine friendship. Nothing beyond their congenial natures, tastes, and admiration for each other swells their hearts and electrifies their souls. It is, as the poet says, "love purified and purged of all the dross and selfishness of mankind, and is next to the angels' love, if not the same." True friendship has no motive, no end to reach, and there is nothing that animates the soul or identifies the affections in each other save that natural outgrowth of two devoted hearts.

This is beautifully exemplified in the character or nature of Walter Ludwick's friendship for Eva Drayton. It is the congeniality of her soul and the similarity of her tastes and sentiments that so wound herself into his affections, that caused him willingly, as we have seen, to start out of a dark, rainy midnight to do her, as well as their family, a service for which he never could expect to receive the slightest remuneration, save the gratitude of their faithful hearts. And he stood by them until they emerged by his aid from the darkness and gloom that enveloped them into the clear sunlight of prosperity. And where is the motive for his thus standing by them in the hour of their adversity, when all their other friends had deserted them, save the desire to aid them all he could? Had he loved Eva, and expected to make her his wife, then he would have had a motive for wading through fire and blood to save her; for what won't a man do when galvanized by the almost omnipotent power of love? But where, I ask, was the motive in his serving her when he knew that he did not love her, unless it was the fruits of the genuine friendship he bore her? No wonder that Willie Montague looked at him in the utmost surprise when he told him that they were not engaged. Neither he nor any one else could believe that he would have served them so faithfully had he only been a friend. Yes, there is no doubt but that friendship is a truer attribute of the human soul than love ever can be.

One evening Walter and Dewitt called, and as it was a beautiful moonlight night, a walk by the river-side was proposed. Walter and Eva took the lead, and left Dewitt and Cordelia to take care of themselves.

They walked along slowly up the river until they came to

a beautiful gravel spot, where there was a log upon which they sat down. It was warm and delightful, with not one fleecy cloud to obstruct or darken the bright silvery rays of the full-orbed moon, and everything was as beautiful as the most sentimental lovers could wish or the most ideal poet could imagine.

And as they sat down, Walter, in answer to a remark of Eva's about them never forgetting him, said, "I would like to convey to your mind, Eva, the fact that this imagined debt you think you owe me is all paid. I told you long ago that I was your friend, and that anything I did for you was in friendship's sacred name. Now, I am not, and never was, one of those friends who, when adversity comes, will leave and desert you, but, on the contrary, I stand firmer and more steadfast than ever before. Now, I say to you to-night that I am your friend, and many are the happy days I have passed in sweet companionship with you, and all I ask is a continuation of that confidence which you have always had in me. If, however, there comes a time when you think that by some act of my own I have forfeited your friendship and confidence, then all I ask of you is to tell me frankly wherein I have wronged you. No matter how low I may have fallen in your estimation, do no act by which you will fall from that throne of glory on which I now have placed you. Never let me have the opportunity to say that you were not the truthful and candid girl I took you to be. Always preserve and maintain that grandeur and dignity of soul which from the very first so wound yourself into my affections. Never do any act by which I will lose the transcendent confidence I have always reposed in you; for if you fall by proving recreant to friendship's heavenly claims, you not only injure yourself, you not only injure me, but you injure and commit a wrong against humanity, for which no repentance of yours can ever atone. The best words that I could utter to any young lady are, 'Be candid, be truthful, be good.' Now, my dear friend, have I, by this roundabout way, made known to you my wishes?"

"Yes, yes, Walter, you have! Oh, you are so true, so noble, and so generous, that any favor which you can or do confer you always consider it of so little a value. I see you consider what you have done for us as almost nothing, and yet it seemed to me almost that our very existence depended

on what you did do. Cordelia and I have often said since, 'What *could* we have done but for Walter?' But as I often have said, how useless it is for us to try to thank you in words. I never will attempt it again, and therefore, as you know, have never done so. But you may rest assured of one thing, Walter, that there is no person living who occupies a warmer and more affectionate place in our hearts than you do, and that, not so much for what you have done, but for the kind and generous soul which your actions show that you have. Now, have I intelligibly made known to you how deeply you are imbued in our affections and in our heart of hearts?"

"Yes, yes; I understand now, and I thank you so much. But now I want to say another thing,—perhaps you are tired of me as your gallant. Is it so?"

"Why, Walter, what makes you talk so? Why should I be tired of the only genial companion I have ever had? I wonder at you for thinking so!"

"Are you willing, then, that I should continue your gallant until autumn comes, when I will go away again?"

"Why certainly, if you desire it. Why should I not want a gallant,—a friend,—yes, a confidential friend, in whom I can confide and go to for advice when I need it? Oh, Walter! you are very, very kind indeed!"

"Oh, I am glad to hear you speak so candidly, Eva! I never, never want to hear it said, or to be compelled to say myself, that you are not true and candid. I will be delighted to continue your confidential friend, and supply, as well as I can, the place of your elder brother, and anything I can ever do for you that you think will contribute to your comfort and happiness, never fail to make your wishes known, and I will do all in my power for you."

"Oh, Walter! you are so very kind! I will never forget you."

"But there is still another thing I want to say to you, and that is this: should it happen, for life, you know, is so changeable, that we even do not know ourselves,—but, should it ever happen that you see any other person here whom you would rather have to gallant you than me, will you candidly and truthfully tell me about it the moment you make the discovery? Now, answer me this, and I will question you no more."

She gently and softly laid her hand on his shoulder, as she

said, "I promise you all you desire, and give you my word of honor that I will do so. But, even should I not promise you, would it not be my duty, as a lady, candidly and truthfully to tell you so, as it would be your duty, as a gentleman, to tell me that you did not desire to pay your attentions to me any longer? Why, I think I would be more than a fiend, and would be untrue to myself as well as to you, if I did not do so. I know there are many ladies who have not truth and honor enough to candidly speak their minds, but who will show their displeasure by sulking around, and hints, and sometimes insults so disgraceful to any true American lady. I never could do such a thing, and, therefore, dismiss all the doubts and fears that you may have concerning the same. Now, my dear friend, are you answered?"

"Yes, yes, I am answered;" and he drew her arm in his and they walked leisurely on home.

Walter was so satisfied now in his own mind that their understanding was so perfect and clear, and considered her so truthful and candid, that, if he had seen William Montague after they had left Mrs. Drayton's, he would certainly have told him that he did not understand anything about human nature, and that it was all nonsense to suppose that she would marry any one in Riverbank.

Yes, if any one would have said, or even intimated, that she was not the same truthful girl that she appeared to be, and that she would ever endeavor to practice deceit with any one, he would have branded the imputation as a base slander, and would have demanded an apology or would have taken satisfaction out of him.

## CHAPTER XIII.

The all-absorbing flame  
Which, kindled by another, grows the same,  
Wrapt in one flame.

BYRON.

DEWITT LU-GUERE was exquisitely happy at Riverbank,—happier than he had ever been in his life. It had been his intention to remain two or three weeks with his friend, but now the time had passed into so many months, and still he was loth to leave,—yes, loth to break and tear himself away from the allurements in which he found himself wrapt by the scenes and associations that he had found at Riverbank.

Marian, of late, had become almost his daily companion. If he wished to read, they would sit down in the library and read, verse about, from some of their favorite authors. If he desired music, she was ever ready to sing some of her sweetest songs that he loved so much to hear. If he wished to ramble in the fields and by the river-side, she was his most congenial companion; and if he desired to take a ride on horseback in the bright sunny mornings, nothing delighted him more than to see the animation and enthusiasm of her cheek, as they went flying along at the utmost speed of their horses. And in the twilight evenings they would sit out on the veranda, and she would play some sweet ballads, accompanied by the soft and tranquil notes of the guitar.

Yes, the time passed so joyously away that now, when the time came for his departure, he felt a sadness at his heart which he had never experienced before. And when he asked himself the cause, intuitively almost his eyes turned towards Marian. Yes, he knew that he loved her. But still, in these waking dreams that now haunted him, ever and anon the angelic face of Fannie came flitting before his mind, but soon again it would pass away. He was in that very intricate dilemma from which he could scarcely now extricate himself. He remembered that he had told Fannie that he loved her. Could he tell her so now, beautiful and all as she was? No, the answer almost spontaneously escaped from his lips. It is true her beauty far

outshone Marian's, but when that was passed upon, what remained? When he turned to the inner temple, how vast, how wonderful, was the contrast! When he compared their accomplishments,—when he looked into their hearts,—he asked himself, which was the true woman? Instinctively again his eye flashed upon Marian. Yes, she had a soul, and was the very personification of all that was true, amiable, and good. Yes, she was to him so sensible, so conciliatory, so void of affectation, and yet so dignified in manner and so graceful in appearance, and combining with all these accomplishments a warm, kind, and affectionate heart, which made her companionship so congenial to him that, as often as the thought of her came into his mind, he was convinced that he loved her with all the power of his soul, and that his imagined love for Fannie was only an infatuation which would soon be forgotten forever.

And when Dewitt studied this whole matter over sincerely, he was convinced that he no longer loved Fannie, but, on the contrary, adored Marian with all the impulses and power of his soul. But (and his face grew pale as the question rushed into his mind) is my love reciprocated? Sometimes he was determined to make known his mind and to learn his fate; but then he considered again that their acquaintance was so recent, and his love so sudden, that, by confessing it to her now, it might be such a surprise that she would become offended by such hasty action.

These were about his thoughts on the subject. He did not know exactly how to proceed, for he could not endure the disappointment, the blight, that it would cast over his now happy life. And, different from most persons, he preferred the uncertainty which gave him hope, to the utter despair which his rejection would cast over him. He was sitting out on the veranda one evening, a short time before he intended taking his departure, thinking sadly over the matter, when a new thought entered his mind. He would ascertain what was Walter's purpose in paying his attentions to Eva, when it would be so long before he would be established in the practice of his profession. This incumbrance troubled Dewitt more than anything else. He thought it would be so long before he could take his place upon the great stage of life, that it was a seeming ridiculousness to make an engagement so long before their marriage could take place.

While he was thus soliloquizing, Walter quietly came out and took a seat by his side, as he said, jovially, "What now, my boy? I never saw you look so sad in my life. What is the matter?"

Dewitt looked up and, with a smile, said, "To be brief and to the point, I was just thinking whether or not you were engaged to or intended to marry Miss Eva Drayton. You seem to be so devoted in your attentions to her that I am induced to believe that you have very serious intentions of marriage."

Walter laughed heartily, and then, after a pause, said, "Well, I infer from your remark that you would like to know whether I am or not; am I correct?"

"Correct. I intended to ask you the first time I had an opportunity, and I see no more auspicious one than the present."

"As you have always been my very confidential friend, I have no hesitation in saying that we are not engaged, and that I have not the least idea of marrying her or any person else at the present time."

"What is the reason of all this? and why are you paying such devoted attentions to her?"

"I can answer you the latter very easily. I admire her society very much, for you know that I always did have a great fascination for the companionship of highly-cultivated young ladies; and I consider her as possessing accomplishments rarely to be found in young ladies of her age. We understand each other perfectly,—I am her confidential friend, and she is mine. But, now, as to why I do not marry her, and as to the reason why I am not thinking of marrying any one, that is a different question, and would take me a long time to answer you,—longer perhaps than you would care to listen to."

"If you will be so kind as to explain your reasons at length, I shall take great delight in listening to you. It is a subject upon which I would like very much to hear your views, and may I ask—nay, I entreat—that you tell me the whole story. I shall only be too delighted to hear you."

"Since you desire it, I will do so; but you will have to wait, until I light my cigar and get in a suitable position, and then we will proceed."

Before they had lighted their cigars, Dr. Patterson rode up to the gate, and, after tying his horse, joined them. After a

few general remarks, Walter explained the subject under discussion, and the doctor expressed himself as being very much delighted by his timely arrival, so as to hear it. Having handed him a cigar, he proceeded: "I must, in the first place, inform you that I am a firm believer in platonic love. I consider it the true basis upon which the marriage relation rests. 'It is that pure spiritual affection subsisting between the sexes which regards the mind only, and its excellencies, unmixed with any carnal desires,' and is very different from that blind infatuation which gives credence to the remark that 'Love is blind,' and that no one can see a fault in the object of their affections."

"But," interrupted Dewitt, "do you think there is any such a thing as *pure, genuine love*? or is it a kind of a passion that will soon die, having no real existence?"

"I most certainly believe that there is such a thing as love in its true, genuine sense, but as the word is so misused, I might for our own convenience divide it into two parts. I do not by any means believe in that sickly, greenhouse exotic, and questionable love which we every day see around us. Its victims, becoming attacked with a fickle, passionate kind of a feeling, which induces them to believe that they really do love some one; and as they cannot give any reason to the contrary, think it is true love; the result of which is that they will be married at the very earliest day possible. But when the honeymoon passes away, and all these dreams and idealities which each had thrown around the other disappear, then, alas! too late, they realize the fact that there was no love at all existing between them, and that both have been victimized! And the consequence of all this is an unhappy, burdensome, and tempestuous and harrowing life for both of them.

"But if you mean by your question whether I think there is such an attribute in our souls as pure, true, genuine love, I most unhesitatingly declare that there is. By the law of nature there must be a tie which, as the poet says, 'makes twain one flesh.' This only can exist, however, where there is a perfect congeniality of soul and unbounded confidence in each other. Where there is that harmony of views and similarity of tastes and sentiments and purposes,—where the standard of esteem and admiration of both are equally reciprocated,—then they will experience that true, genuine love over which warriors

have fought and about which poets have sung since the world was made. No jealousy mars it, no misfortune weakens it, and time and adversity only tend to purge and cement it, until they are bound closer and stronger together in the sweet and enduring bonds of pure and undying affection for each other. It is that power which mounts to the helm of our being and holds all the other faculties of both mind and soul subservient to its will. And once it is crossed or scared, then life is a blank, and its victim drags out a miserable existence on this, to him or her, dreary earth."

"Your question is a very timely one, for I am free to say that all persons do not love alike. Some do not love at all, in a human or divine aspect. The brutes by instinct protect their young and take a liking to their mates. So it is with some men and women, for the reason that their hearts are so callous to all human sympathy, and their souls so depraved and devoid of anything good or heavenly, that such an angel as love could no more enter into their inner temple than it could into the portals of Hades.

"But human beings love according to the amount of their social faculties and the degree of their mental temperament. Those who have their organs highly developed enjoy the pleasures of life more, and, as a natural consequence, they feel the pangs of adversity in a far greater degree. Take a lady, for instance, who has strong affections, and whose disposition is to love devotedly, and who would make a true and trusting wife. Let her affections be misplaced,—let her marry a man who could not appreciate her sterling virtues,—and then, when she would realize the glaring truth that there was nothing in common between them,—that there was no congeniality of soul, and that she did not love him with that sincere and passionate devotion which she was capable of bestowing upon the object of her affections,—I care not what luxuries of this world she possessed,—I care not that she had all the wealth of the Orient, which would enable her to adorn her house with all the choicest relics and gems of foreign lands, and all the paintings of the ancient and modern artists, and all the books of her favorite authors,—in fact, if her every wish in this world were gratified save that of true, genuine, and congenial love,—that flowing together of soul,—I say, let this cardinal attribute of her being be ungratified, and every other pleasure in the world is

but a mockery of her grief, and she will finally go down to the grave with a broken heart.

"In contemplating the marriage relation, the point to be ascertained is, your standard of esteem and admiration. I believe with Dickens, 'that there is no disparity in marriage so great as unsuitability both in mind and purpose.' A great many people say that 'persons of different motives and temperaments should marry.' To me there is nothing in this world so ridiculous and absurd. It is contrary to reason and nature itself. The first thing I claim is, to know what kind of a wife a man wants; and, vice versa, what kind of a husband a woman wants. What are their respective tastes and admirations? Let us see. There is a man who possesses a very ordinary cast of mind; he is clerk in his father's store. He thinks but little and reads less; he sports a gold watch and chain and diamond breast-pin, and dresses as it were within an inch of his life,—all on his father's money. There is not ambition and energy enough in him for his father to make him a partner,—a deficiency which the former knows and regrets very much. He is a great lady's-man though, and waits on them on all occasions.

"Now, it is very easy to portray the kind of a lady with whom he will fall in love. Being handsome himself, of course he will want a very handsome and pretty wife, and that is the kind of a lady he will look for. If, I say, she is pretty, has a small waist and a neat little ankle, curly hair, and will laugh and say some little funny things that will make him laugh, he will fall, as they express it, desperately in love with her, and will never pause for a moment to reflect upon her affections, her intellect, her habits, disposition,—whether she will love home and endeavor to make it pleasant, or whether she will always want to be in the thoroughfare of fashion. All these are nothing to him.

"Now, it is just as easy to point out the kind of a lady who will fall in love with him. All women, with but very few exceptions, are more or less vain; but the class whose highest standard of taste is fully gratified and satisfied by just such gentlemen as I have mentioned, constitute the great mass of ladies at the present time who throng and constitute society. Their highest aim is reached if they can gain such a one for a beau. They will praise his coat, arrange his cravat, and

laugh so blithely at every simple little nonsensical expression he makes, that in a short time they will be 'dead in love' with each other; and the next thing you hear of is, they are going to be married. Such a lady being pretty, will be very vain; and it will matter very little to her what his abilities are,—whether he can make any money himself or not,—for his father being rich, she of course then thinks that he is rich, and that he can and will buy her all the fine clothes that she may desire. But let her meet a young man who stands upon his own merits, who strikes out for himself, and whose whole soul is electrified with ambition and enterprise,—but who has no rich father to aid him in getting a gold watch and fine clothes,—and she will not see one noble and redeeming quality in his character. The world is so full of such sickly, nonsensical, Dolly Varden like, shallow-brained, fickle and worthless young ladies, that they are enough to disgust any sensible man from ever thinking of ever getting married. For, unless he is rich, he is sure to live the life of a slave, in order to keep apace with the style they desire; or else live with a peevish, discontented, and ill-natured wife all the days of his life. And any man who has a high conception of domestic happiness might just as well get his ticket for Pandemonia at once as live with such a woman.

"Now, I am going to refer you to another class of young ladies and gentlemen, whom you every day see around you, but who are not near so numerous as those whom I have just mentioned.

"A gentleman whose standard of esteem and admiration is higher than the mere personal charms of a pretty face and a gorgeous dress, regards the intellectual and moral faculties as the true and firm basis of love. He who admires a cultivated intellect, a kind and amiable disposition, and with music in her soul, will most assuredly love such a lady, no matter if she has not a pretty face, nor if her father is not worth a farthing. She will be admired and loved for her own priceless self. So firm and deep is this principle or standard, that if he sees a lady surpassingly beautiful, and who, apparently, has a good mind, has had great and many advantages of cultivating it, and, from her social position, should be highly accomplished in literature and music and other mental acquirements, that, when upon a more intimate acquaintance, he ascertains that her mind

is so barren,—like a lovely tree by the wayside, clothed with its rich foliage and yet without fruit,—and cannot talk upon any subject whatever, except trash and “small talk,” he only feels more infinitely disgusted and turns away with silent contempt. What would such a lady amount to after her beauty was gone? ‘Simply as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.’ It is all a dream that will soon pass away, for she is too fickle, too light, too narrow-minded to be a companion of his.

“Now, take a woman whose taste is similar to that of the man whom I have just mentioned. She, having a well-cultivated mind herself, will naturally look for the same in a higher degree in that of her husband. Her ideas are of a higher type than good looks, fine clothes, and the wealth of his father. She estimates his moral and intellectual qualities, and considers them as high above the mere outward appearance of the body as the heavens are above the earth. Her ideal of a husband is one who has strong traits of character, who has firmness and decision in his every action, and to whom she could look up and counsel with, and ask for information on questions of literature and history and science, should she so desire it. To be brief, she wants a man, and not a mere picture. How *could* she love any one whose highest standard of admiration was a pretty face, a neat form, a graceful dancer in the ball-room? It is simply impossible. She wants a husband who is congenial, whose tastes and purposes and sentiments are similar to her own,—else she can never be happy.”

Here he was interrupted by Dewitt, who said, “I think, Walter, that you are wrong. The ideas you present, and the pictures you have drawn, are all creation of the brain that can never be realized. Your position is not practical. There is no such life as you picture, no such flowing together of soul as you imagine. It is all nonsense, and your whole theory is a fabric of your own imagination, which is doomed to fade, sooner or later, into mid-air. You dare not mark out a standard of esteem and admiration, for as long as you have an ideal you will never have it realized,—hence the consequence that you will always be disappointed. I believe in the theory that love is blind, and the strongest test that you really do love is that you cannot tell the reason *why*. You cannot, do what you will, resist its all-powerful *sway*. You will see none of her faults; she will appear to you spotless and with-

out blame. Intellect has nothing to do with selecting a wife. You do not love with the mind. That part of your brain is for reason and judgment in deciding important questions in the literary, scientific, and business world. But this thing of love is an affection of the heart, and that is the oracle you must consult whether you do love or not. Hence I say this theory of platonic love of yours, which you have drawn in your usual chaste and elegant style, is all a dream and a vision. Every breath your whole theory breathes is ideality. I do not think you ever knew a man or woman marry for the mental or moral faculties. If you ever intend to be married, I tell you now, Walter, that you must throw away this standard of esteem and admiration, for it is all wrong, and you will not live to see it realized.”

Walter laughed outright at the enthusiasm and earnestness of his friend, and after they had both become composed, said, “I want you, Dewitt, to answer me a few questions, and then we can come to a better understanding on this important subject.

“1st. How do you know whether you love a woman or not if you have no standard by which to judge her?”

“The best proof and best test that you do love is that you cannot tell the reason why.”

“2d. Do you believe in love at first sight?”

“I do. I think that is true love.”

“3d. Do you think we should give it sincere and earnest thought, or should we rush into the matrimonial relation haphazard?”

“I certainly think we should give the subject sincere thought and most mature consideration.”

“4th. Very well. Now, if you are about to engage in some business project, do you take the matter into earnest consideration before you finally decide what you will do?”

“Most certainly.”

“5th. Now, what faculties do you consult?”

“The intellectual faculties, of course. They are the helm of our whole being.”

“6th. Is there any project of life in which any person can engage of more importance than matrimony?”

“I most emphatically say that *there is not*. If a man or a woman make a mistake in marriage, they are irretrievably lost



as far as all the pleasures of this world are concerned, and well might they wish that they had never been born."

"Now, you say that in all your business transactions you consult your intellectual faculties before you engage in them, and, also, that you think that matrimony is the most important step that any man or woman on this green earth can take. Now, my last question is,—

"7th. Where is the consistency in bringing your reasoning faculties to bear on merely a business transaction, which at best can last but a short time, and entirely excluding them from marriage,—the most transcendent epoch in the life of any human being,—and in which, as you say, if he make a mistake it were better that he had never been born?"

Dewitt Lu-Guere, for the first time in their conversation, dropped his head to think out an answer. He finally looked up and said he could not answer that question now, but would waive it for the present, and desired him to proceed.

"I claim, then, that the intellectual faculties should, in the main, decide whether one loves another or not. Congeniality of soul should be taken into consideration. Every one should marry so as to gratify the greatest number of faculties of both mind and soul. Some are satisfied with very limited qualifications; others require more. For instance, take the kind of gentleman whom I have just mentioned as being fond of dress, and will see that every hair on his head is in its place, and who has a very ordinary intellect, with a very ordinary temperament. Now, it is not a difficult task to ascertain the kind of a lady with whom he will fall in love. If, as I have before said, she is very pretty, and can laugh sweetly at some little jokes he may pass, she will constitute his 'beau ideal' of a wife, and all the faculties of his soul will be gratified. And, *vice versa*, she having a limited mind herself, which is mostly taken up in the article of dress, is contented and rendered happy by having all the fine clothes that she desires.

"But now reverse this picture, and give this same man a wife with a higher order of qualities, and what kind of a life will she live? Say she has a good mind which she has studiously cultivated, is an excellent performer on the piano, and possesses those two requisites of the true wife,—the desire to please, and the love of approbation of true merit,—whose whole soul would be bound up in her domestic affairs, and combining,

among her other golden qualities, strong affections and rare good common sense, and a proper idea of life. Now, suppose she, in the first impulses of her undisciplined heart, thought she loved this man, and, without giving the matter mature consideration, married him, with all the gushings of that sweet joy and bright hopes which so thrill and transport the young and innocent heart. But when all the romance and ideal notions that, with so many, cluster around this thing of marriage have worn away,—when she has come down to that real life which makes her see her husband shorn of all those graces and charms of the imagination, as it were, which she had thrown around him,—she will then sadly and sorrowfully realize the fact that they are totally unsuited for each other; that there is nothing in common between them,—no congeniality of soul, no similarity of tastes, of sentiments, of purposes,—and as she covers her face with her hands and bursts into tears at the realization of the uncontrovertible thought that all her bright and glowing dreams of domestic happiness have faded away, I ask you now, what joy, what comfort, what pleasure could she ever have in this world? Any joy that we do feel is always enhanced by having it shared with one whom we love. If I admire a book, my pleasure is increased tenfold by conversing with some congenial spirit who appreciates it in the same sense I do myself. And now, suppose this lady and her husband go out to hear some popular lecturer, and, upon their return home, if they were the least congenial, they would talk about it around their own fireside. But what must be her feelings to observe that her husband was little or nothing interested in the great orator who held millions in silence by his impassioned eloquence? Suppose she is a good musician, and when she has learned a very difficult piece, and requests her husband to hear it, what must be her mortification of soul when she receives probably the very commonplace reply, 'That'll do pretty well,' and goes about his business? Say she has learned to paint, and, after painting a very beautiful picture, notices how little her husband is interested in it. But, on the other hand, when she serves him up a nice dinner fit for a king, or gives him a well-done-up shirt, he is wonderfully pleased with the former in gratifying his insatiable appetite, and with the latter in gratifying his vanity of dress. Now, I ask you, in all truth and candor, when she sits down at the solemn hour

of twilight, and calmly, if calmly she can, reviews her situation and observes the narrow and meagre mind of her husband, and how far he comes short of the true man,—I say if at this mystic hour, when all these sad, pensive thoughts come stealing over her soul, she is not the most miserable and unhappy being on this green earth, then I will yield up every point I have advanced. But notwithstanding all this, such a woman has the qualifications of the true wife; and while she realizes the glaring truth that her life is a blank, still she will submit to her fate, and will serve him up a good dinner, and give him a clean shirt, and will thus nurse her secret grief in her own heart until the great summons comes for her to appear in another world."

"Well, that sounds very reasonable the way you present it, but you know all people are not alike," Dewitt suggested.

"That is the very reason they ought to be careful whom they marry. There is a man, we will say, who is talented, and who has well-developed social and domestic faculties. All the bright dreams of his life have been of a happy home, where peace and love and joy would reign supreme. Suppose he also, in a moment of his youthful years and undisciplined heart, should marry some beautiful lady, whose fascinating charms had won his young heart, but in the course of years, when time had sobered him down to reflection, and he had come to observe how little there really was in the partner of his life,—how barren her mind was, how expressionless her face, how little of nobility of soul in her,—where could he have, or how could he enjoy, any real happiness? For instance, in the evening when he would come home tired and weary with the labors of the day, where would be the sweet joy that would fill his heart when he would find her mind entirely occupied with the love of dress, or some other nonsensical affair? If he were fond of music and desired her to play, how disgusted and heartsick he would be to hear her excuses that she had learned nothing new, and was tired of the pieces that she had learned at boarding-school! And on another occasion, when he would bring home a new book of some favorite author whom he so much admired, what a sad disappointment he would feel, and what an aching void in his heart he would realize, as he observed that she cared nothing for it! I say, Dewitt, such a man could not be happy even though he had all the wealth of Golconda's mines. For the social faculties, when once dis-

organized, embitter every other pleasure of life. It is true that if she were a good housekeeper, and could cook him a good meal, that would indeed satisfy his appetite; but there would ever be in his mental being a void—a dreary, aching void—which she could never fill.

"Now, let me draw another picture, and then I am through, unless you have some questions to ask. My idea of domestic happiness is, that there must be congeniality of soul and suitability of mind and purpose existing between them. If they have cultivated their minds and disciplined their hearts, they will understand each other from the first: they will have formed their standard of esteem and admiration; and then, after having carefully studied the matter over, they will see that they are congenial,—their impulses alike, their tastes and sentiments similar, and their mutual desire to please and to receive each other's approbation. And when they have concluded to join their hands in the matrimonial alliance, and have settled down in their easy and comfortable little home, what supreme joy, what sweet bliss, is witnessed around their own fireside as they engage in their interesting and elevated conversation, interspersed with sweet and soul-stirring music! And then to observe the trusting confidence that exists between them!—their mutual admiration for literature, music, and painting. Oh, if there be a bright, green spot on this broad earth of ours,—a pleasing and magic picture on which we would fain gaze forever,—an Eden where the music of birds is heard forever, and where flowers are in perpetual bloom,—I think it is the happy family! Oh, the tongue fails to express, the pen too inadequate to portray, the unbounded happiness, the unalloyed bliss, of the domestic relation when congenially united! And as our professor one time told me, 'I thought I loved my wife,' he said, 'when I married her; but in a few years, when adversity and misfortune came upon me, and "hard times" hovered around our door, and as I saw how heroically she stood by me, and cheered me up with her hopeful words of encouragement and her sweet smiles, and the many otherwise dreary hours that were rendered pleasant by the sweet and soul-stirring strains of music, I find now, when I compare the love I bear her now with that I felt when we were married,—I find that the latter sinks into utter insignificance.' And this is true where platonic love forms the basis of the marriage

relation.) For you will bear me out in the assertion that the mind and heart of the true woman, with but the rarest exception, always grows purer and more affectionate, and, unless a man marries for beauty, he is a fiend if he does not love her the more sincerely. And then as old age comes, and the frosts of many winters have whitened their curly locks, and the brow that was once so fair is wrinkled, and the cheek that glowed with health and beauty has faded, and the race of life is well-nigh run, what more heavenly scene could you behold than to see this aged couple experience and feel that same pure, deep, and sincere affection that was apparent in their youthful days, and which grows stronger and stronger as the wheels of time rolls them along to 'that land from whose bourn no traveler returns'? \This is true, genuine love. Yes, this is platonic love,—the only true basis of the marriage relation.

"Now, my dear friend, do you understand why I am thinking but little about getting married? As you have seen, I am a great worshiper of domestic bliss, and think that marriage is the normal condition of man; but it is a fearful change, and no one should think of getting married until they are sure they are suited and are congenially united. When I see a lady whose mind and purposes are similar to my own,—who is, in fact, congenial, and embodies all I think pure and good and amiable in a wife,—it will no doubt be the happiest period of my life when I take upon myself the obligation to love and cherish her all my life long. <The mind, the soul, the affections, are my cardinal virtues of the true wife.>

They had both been silent for some time, when Dewitt said, "I understand you now very well; but I am some surprised that you place so little importance in a wife being a good cook. That seems to me to be a very necessary requisite in the domestic relation."

"That is all very true. I do not say, remember, that a wife ought not to be a good cook. Of course the true wife will be that. But I will speak now of some people marrying a lady because she is a good cook. With me, it would be a very secondary consideration. If a wife has good common sense, sound judgment—has strong affections and a desire to please her husband, she will see in a moment whether he is able to afford servants or not; and when she is convinced that he is not able, then she will put her hand to the wheel and help roll

it along, no matter if she never cooked a meal's victuals in her life. Her mother of course was to blame for that, and I sincerely think that for the many thousands and thousands of such mothers there is laid up a fearful reckoning for the manner in which they have raised up their daughters, and sooner or later it will come. But the truly educated and affectionate lady, who could sit down and master a difficult problem in algebra, or translate some of the difficult Priors of Virgil, could soon master the contents of a cook book, and, after three or four experiments, could cook as good a meal as any epicure might desire. I dispose of this matter by repeating the old maxim, 'Where there is a will there is a way.' And if any lady has the disposition to do that which her good sense tells her she ought to do, you will find her a jewel much to be admired but rarely to be found. But the idea of a man taking unto himself a wife simply because she is a good cook, is to me absurd and ridiculous in the extreme. In a wife, I want a companion, one that can sympathize with me, and above and beyond all, and which in fact is a reiteration of what I have already said, one who is congenial and affectionate, and then any man on this earth ought to be happy in his domestic relations."

"All you say," replied Dewitt, slowly, "seems very true; but do you not think your pictures of the true genuine lady are overdrawn, and your portrait of domestic happiness too visionary and ideal,—too far from the stony and thorny way we are compelled to travel? There are no such highly-cultivated, amiable, and evenly-balanced young ladies of whom you speak. They are either all mind and ideality, else nothing more than the strong masculine peasant we often read about. Have you ever seen any such ladies as you speak of? and have you ever seen a family with the domestic happiness to the degree of which you have so elegantly portrayed?"

"These two questions are very easily answered. Some few married ladies in my time I have seen who, I think, come up to the ideal wife I have mentioned. I will now recur to one of these, as it is growing late, and the air is chilly. She is a lady who, I suppose, has been married twenty years, and used to live in Riverbank, but moved away several years ago. I would not say that she was not the model by which the visionary lady, as you call her, has been formed in my mind, for

she approaches the nearest perfection of any lady I have ever met. If she have any faults at all, her many virtues so completely overshadow them that they are not apparent. Many a time and oft in the days of my academical course of study have I passed my evenings with her in preference to my young lady acquaintances. I would not only be pleased and entertained; but I would be improved and edified. Her entertainments were real, for there was nothing superficial. There was no small talk about the weather, a giggle and a laugh at some funny little sayings; but her conversation was of a more elevated and interesting character. No matter what subject was introduced,—whether literature, science, or general topics,—she felt perfectly at home in its discussion. And then she was a most excellent musician. You would have been delighted to have heard her sing and play. She is a standing rebuke to all those ladies who, when they get married, care nothing about music, and will eventually drop it entirely. She loves it to-day just as much as she always did. Not unfrequently I would take her some favorite selections of music, and she would have no difficulty in playing them for me. And then she is so amiable in her manner and disposition. It is said that 'the rich have few friends among the poor,' but she was loved and admired by all, both the rich and the poor. She is so sensible, so conciliatory, so void of ostentation, so unaffected, yet so dignified in manner and so graceful in appearance, and so kind and amiable, that her many virtues were the theme of every tongue."

When he ceased speaking a long silence followed. The doctor seemed to be deeply thinking about something that was brought to his mind during the conversation. Presently, straightening himself up, he said, "Do I understand you to say, then, that there is no such thing as love at first sight? Let me hear your views fully on this point."

"No," Walter replied, slowly and thoughtfully, "I did not say that there is no such thing as love at first sight. On the contrary, I believe there is under certain circumstances. Ordinarily the shape of the head, the features of the face, the expression of the eye, and the tone of the voice, are the index or the foreshadowings of the noble mind, and the kind and generous heart within. There is nothing higher or nobler in woman than these two attributes of her being. Sometimes these are so transparent in her face, in her eyes, and, in fact, in

her whole manner, that a gentleman is not only pleased, but is wonderfully fascinated with her on his first acquaintance. Now, as is rarely the case, if he gives this fascination mature deliberation, if he brings his intellectual faculties to bear upon it, and calmly and wholly obtain the approbation of reason, by which he will see that they have a suitability of mind and purpose, then this will be what you call 'love at first sight,' and will be pure and lasting, because it is more platonic. But, as is almost always the case, if he gives this fascination no consideration, and thus follows the delusive phantom of his affections, unsupported by reason, then there can be no genuine love, except it occurs by a mere matter of chance. They may indeed, for all this, *think* they love one another, but when the scales fall from their eyes, and when they realize that they cannot trust appearances, they will find that 'all is not gold that glitters,' and that they have each been most woefully disappointed."

After some reflection the doctor said, "I cannot say that I agree with all you have said; and yet I cannot gainsay your arguments. The most that I can say is, that I believe the whole marriage relation to be the work of chance. I do not think that a man or a woman can mark out an ideal and then obtain it. It seems to me, if I were going to get married, I would not hesitate or endeavor to see into the lady's heart; if I were pleased with her appearance and her manner, I would trust to the fates for the balance. But I do not think I will ever be deceived. Intuitively almost I can see through a young lady and understand her disposition without the aid of reason or the intellectual faculties. I am inclined to agree with your cousin here, and will say that I think they have very little to do with it. It is true that my whole heart is set on a happy home of my own, and I would be very miserable if I should be disappointed. But I cannot see how I can be. I have always been so fortunate in understanding ladies intuitively, that in deciding whether I should marry her or not, I would be controlled by my first impressions and feelings for her. I am a great believer in first impressions and in intuitive knowledge."

As he arose to go, Walter said, "I am afraid, doctor, that you will too late find out that you are wrong. The saddest thing in this marriage relation is, that when one makes a mis-

take, it is a mistake for life; for, there is no such thing as ever rectifying it, and I would say to you now, Be very careful when you are about to take unto yourself a wife."

"Never mind," he laughingly said. "See if I am not all right, and will some day have as pretty and sweet a little wife as ever the sun shone upon."

After he had gone, but little more was said. When they had finished another cigar, they went into the parlor, and soon retired to the arms of Morpheus. Their college days had been passed together, and the many incidents connected with that important and ever-memorable period of their existence only served to bind them closer together in the strong and endearing bonds of friendship. Oh, what more pleasing picture is there on this earth than to see two true and devoted friends meet and engage in congenial conversation with each other?

And what an absorbing and interesting subject was the theme of their conversation! Oh, if we could but raise the veil that hides from our view the inner life of every family in this broad land, what a world of sorrow and heart-burnings would meet our eyes where peace and love and joy should reign supreme! We every day see around us persons standing up before the God who made them, and there take upon themselves the solemn vows to love and cherish each other until separated by death; and yet the words are scarcely dead in their ears until their vows are broken by a ruthless and turbulent disposition. The pen cannot portray, nor can the tongue tell, the absolute misery and wretched unhappiness of a disorganized home; neither can they both combined depict the sweet, soul-stirring, and perfect bliss, and that calm, serene, and exquisite joy, that must exist where two congenial and kindred spirits are joined together in the sacred bonds of marriage.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Then there were sighs, the deeper for suppression,  
And stolen glances, sweeter for the theft,  
And burning blushes, though for no transgression,—  
Trembling when met, and restlessness when left.

BYRON.

THE warm and sultry days of summer had passed away, and the mild sweet, and sombre days of September had come, with all its limpid beauty and soft, silvery, twilight evenings. The flowers, it is true, had faded, but there were a sweetness and fragrance in the air more than delightful and joyous.

Dewitt Lu-Guere's time for leaving Riverbank had come; and the many happy evenings that he had passed with Marian were numbered with the past. Oh, what sadness filled his heart as he reflected that these joyous days—the happiest of his life—were never more to return! He knew now that he loved this girl. Never before had his heart so throbbed as when she entered his mind. The love or affection he felt for Fannie Murdoch was nothing to this. It was true that Fannie's bewildering beauty quite fascinated him; but when he came to look into her heart, what a world of difference there was in the two ladies!—the one, the fickle, shallow-brained belle of the ball-room,—the other, the very personification of all that is good and heavenly, with a mind and a soul shining with effulgent glory in her face.

But that which troubled him most was what to do. Could he go away without telling her of the deep, impassioned love he bore her? But then the conversation with Walter came in his mind, and he was thus forced to abandon all thought of it. These hasty engagements are almost as bad as hasty marriages. How could she say that she loved him on such a short acquaintance? And should she declare that she did not love him! Oh, the bare thought of it was maddening! But when he took another view of affairs, the clouds grew thicker and darker around him. What reason or what cause had he yet to ask anybody's love? With the shackles of dependence

still upon him, with what degree of assurance could he ask any one to love him? It is true his father had money, but what was that to him? Was he always to be a mendicant on his father's bounty? Heaven forbid! And yet the long years that stared him in the face before he could take his stand among the business men of the earth! Oh, these thoughts all came so crowding themselves into his mind that he felt himself almost bewildered, when Marian came out on the veranda and said she was ready for their walk along the river-side.

She was more beautiful this evening than ever before in Dewitt's eyes. It was truly a beautiful evening. The light, fleecy clouds, tinged with its crimson hues, hovered around the sunset; the soft, balmy air, the bright, twinkling stars resuming their places in the azure-skies above, indeed made a scene that filled the soul with raptures of delight.

They frequently rambled along the river-side in twilight evenings, and as both knew that this was their last evening together, a lonely and melancholy feeling stole over their souls. As they were standing at the water's edge, looking at the reflection of the bright, full-orbed moon in the river, Dewitt felt, as these same moonbeams lit up her face, that it would be the happiest moment of his life if he could just then and there tell her the story of his love. But he was not one of those men whose feelings would run headlong away with his brains; and he was therefore determined to abide his time.

When they had returned, and had sat down in the summer-house, Dewitt said, "Need I express to you, Marian, my deep regrets in taking my departure from Riverbank on to-morrow morning? The happiest moments of my life have been passed here, and, indeed, great is my sorrow to leave."

"I am so pleased," she softly replied, "that you have so enjoyed yourself. I was apprehensive, when Walter said you were coming, that perhaps you would soon tire of such a dull place, and would long for your city home. But you then have enjoyed yourself so much, that we may hope of your return soon again."

"That is the thought that so saddens me. Alas! years will have to pass before I can return again; yes, long, dreary years of hard study. Would that it were otherwise! but, alas! the fates are against an early return."

And he looked away towards the yet crimson west, with

averted face, to hide a stray tear that would find its way down his cheek. And Marian, with the utmost surprise pictured in her face, said, in a soft, low, and saddened voice, "What can be your reason for never visiting us again?"

Dewitt, gazing in her face again, told her his whole life,—how, when at school, he had been so ambitious to excel, and with what honors he had graduated at college; but that since then he had lost entirely all the ambition and enterprise that he ever possessed. That the two years since he left college had been passed in idleness, and that now he was heartily ashamed of the worthless life he had been leading, and that he had therefore made up his mind to reform and become a man again, to the end that he might redeem his former good name, which had been the pride of his friends while at school. That his intention now was to proceed at once to Leipsic and commence the study of medicine, and, after graduating, to return to this country and commence the practice of his profession. That this would occupy his attention in study for a period of two or three years, and that then he would turn his face towards his native land.

They were both silent for a few moments, and then Marian calmly said, "Why is it that so many gentlemen always go to a foreign land to complete their education? Why do they not do so in our own free land, and beneath our own stars and stripes, that we love so well?"

"The reason is, I should say, that there are greater advantages in Europe than in this country. It is not that I like the foreign land the best, for I do not. The love for my own native land is the strongest attribute of my soul. But let me explain to you the advantages we there obtain. The Medical College of Leipsic, besides having the best professors on the continent, have also the finest and choicest specimens and philosophical experiments that the centuries which have gone by afford. We are a younger nation, and therefore have not the advantages of time in the development of the sciences and in the achievement of perfection in art. Now, there are perhaps other advantages to which I might refer if you so desire it."

"Nay," she replied, softly, "you have said enough. I see now how thoughtlessly I spoke. The idea came into my mind, and I thought I would ask why it was. Your answer is sufficient. Time makes us masters of all things."

There was but little more said. The evening was growing late, and they knew it was time to go in. While they had been walking along the river-side, each had plucked a few flowers that by chance met their eyes. They had not culled them at the time for any purpose, but seeing them looking so lonely, they plucked them as they walked along. As they arose to go into the house, Dewitt said, in a soft, mournful voice, as he touched her arm lightly with his finger, "I have told you, Marian, how sorry I am at this parting, and how gladly I would remain longer if such a thing were possible. I have told you further that my greatest sorrow is the stern and incontrovertible fact that we will not meet again for years; and as this life at best is so uncertain, it is difficult to tell whether we will ever meet again or not. But that which I wish to impress upon your mind is, the strong and living hope which fills my soul that we will meet again, though long years may intervene between this parting now and our meeting in the future. Somehow or another, and I cannot now tell you the reason why, the fact is so irrevocably impressed on my mind that when I, in two or three years from now, return resplendent with a finished education, we will then meet under more auspicious circumstances, and when no clouds gather around our pathway, but when all will be sunshine and joy. And I may say further, that this hope of meeting again is the guiding star of my existence. And now, as a token of my kind regard and lofty admiration for you, let me present you this delicate little bouquet of flowers, with the fond hope when in the future your eyes may by chance rest upon it, you will think kindly of me and will look forward with joy to the time when we will meet again."

She took the proffered gift, and said, as she looked lovingly into his face, "I will take this token of kind remembrance with pleasure; and I do not hesitate to say that it will be the sweetest recollection of my life to know that it was your wish that I might remember you whenever I by chance may see it. And may I hope that in return you will accept these few flowers of mine, which were culled without any motive, but now seem to answer a suitable purpose? and can I also hope that when you see them, faded and all decayed as they may be, that they will instill in your heart one kind remembrance of me?"

"Oh, Marian!" Dewitt passionately exclaimed, "this is the

happiest moment of my life! Need I tell you that I will carry this sacred remembrance next my heart, and that your own dear self will be in my mind wherever I roam in foreign lands? and that, with longing eyes and a throbbing heart, I will look forward to the time when we meet again?"

These were the last words spoken, and they opened the door and passed into the parlor. Each knew that the other loved, and that each of their loves was reciprocated, though its very suppression made it the more sweet and transporting.

The next morning very early Walter and Dewitt were both up and went to the depot. Walter made the remark that he was in some doubt where to commence the study of his profession,—whether in some law school or in the office of some attorney.

Dewitt enthusiastically replied that he could recommend him to a most excellent attorney and very particular friend of his; and that if he desired he would write to him at once, on his return home, and ascertain whether he would take a student at law or not.

Walter thanked him, and said he would be glad if he would do so.

"I will do so, and put this provision in,—that you will visit me before I go to Europe, which will be in about three weeks. After you commence your profession, your visiting days will be over, and I need not then ever think of receiving one from you."

"I will do so, Dewitt, for I must commence my profession next month; and you will by that time have heard from your lawyer friend, and I will then know what to do."

## CHAPTER XV.

"She hath tied  
Sharp-toothed unkindness like a vulture here."  
SHAKESPEARE.

His eyebrow dark and eye of fire  
Showed spirit proud and prompt to ire;  
Yet lines of thought upon his cheek  
Did deep design and counsel speak.

SCOTT.

AND now comes a change—one of those transcendent changes for which we can scarcely give a reason—in the relation between Walter Ludwick and Eva Drayton. It will be too long and a too difficult task to enter into the minutiae of this change or estrangement between these two devoted friends. It will only be necessary to say that through the earnest persuasion of Cordelia, Eva was induced to carry on a flirtation with Walter and Willie Montague at the same time, to the end that Eva might obtain Will for a husband. Cordelia, though she often expressed herself otherwise, really believed that every young lady should endeavor to gain for herself a suitable husband before she was at least twenty years old. She now looked back over her own life and saw how many mistakes, in this particular respect, she had made, and she was therefore determined not to let Eva make the same mistakes. She was convinced that Walter would never marry Eva, and therefore she considered it time lost in allowing him to be her only gallant. She was not willing, however, for Eva to dismiss him at once, as that might look as though he had abandoned her, and thus it would frustrate all her designs. Knowing that he would be probably leaving town in the autumn, she desired Eva to continue his attentions until that time by carrying a flirtation with both of them.

Eva persistently refused to do so, but was finally overcome, and consented, and commenced flirting with both. Walter noticed it in a very short time, but he was still thinking that she would tell him that she desired the attentions of Willie.

He purposed speaking to her about it one time himself, thinking probably that it was through modesty that she did not mention it; but she gave him no opportunity to do so. Finally the matter ran on until one day she treated Walter shamefully, and then he resolved to speak to her when the proper time came. By her actions the revolution in his feelings for her was entire and complete. The admiration and high regard which he had for her in times passed were now turned into that of deadly anger and hate, which a deep wrong and ingratitude produce. There is no wrong, be it ever so great,—no crime, be it ever so deep and black,—which so strikes the imagination, and so grates upon the sensibilities of the soul to that transcendent degree, as does ingratitude. Yes, how truly our great master in poetry portrayed the passions of the soul when he said,

"This was the most unkindest cut of all;  
For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,  
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,  
Quite vanquished him."

There was nothing that Eva Drayton could have done that would have stung Walter so acutely as this duplicity and indifference which she had practiced upon him. Any other way that would have showed that she was true and candid would have been music in his ears compared to this black, damning ingratitude, which burned into his very heart's core, and made him almost curse the very ground on which she walked. If there had been no confidence between them; if they had been just common friends; or if that friendship which we every day see around us had only existed between them, he would have dismissed the matter from his mind at once, as being unworthy of a serious reflection. But when he considered how confidential the friendship between them had been; when he estimated the favors he had conferred upon them, and how he had stood by them in their hours of adversity, and above and beyond all, when he considered how true he had been to her, how solicitous he was that she would not misunderstand him, and to such an extent that he himself requested her to mention the fact to him if she desired a change, and how faithfully she had promised all this,—I say when all these past scenes and incidents rushed full upon his



mind in contrast with her treatment of him during the last month,—it was more than his proud and indignant spirit could stand, and it made his very brain burn like fire.

Before he reached his home he made the firm resolve that he would give her his mind of the whole affair,—and shook the dust from off his feet as a testimony against her,—and never darken their door again.

The next morning he called. Cordelia was as friendly and pleasant as usual. Eva soon came in and bid good-morning in her usual manner, and took a seat near the window. Conversation progressed slowly. Walter wanted the subject introduced, but he found it a difficult matter without some present pretext on which to commence. Time wore away, and Walter said or did something to Eva,—trifling and of no account in itself,—but sufficient to arouse her ire, and she angrily said, "If you do not quit teasing me, Walter, I will instantly leave the room. I will put up with it no longer, and I wish you to distinctly understand that I mean what I say."

Her manner was very undignified and unlady-like, a surprising trait of her character to Walter. It seemed like a vision,—he could hardly believe his own eyes,—but in his heart he thanked her for the words. They nerved his heart and filled his soul with that supreme indignation which burns for expression in words. He looked at her for a moment in silence, and then, with a voice firm and strong with anger, with a face flushed with rage and insult, he passionately exclaimed, "Leave the room this instant if you desire it! I care not how soon you quit my presence, nor how soon I quit yours! Duplicity, deceit, and a perversion of the truth are not characteristics which I admire in any young lady."

If a thunderbolt from Jove had been shot from the heavens and had pierced the earth beside them neither could have been more surprised than at this outburst of anger and indignation from Walter. Consternation and amazement sat upon their faces; and for a time neither one spoke a word. Presently, Cordelia mildly said, incidentally, without being directed to any one, "I just knew when Walter came in this morning that he was bound to pick a quarrel; I saw it written in his face."

This was followed by a remark from Eva, in a very kind and conciliatory tone: "I just thought as much myself. It seems

to me that he has been wanting a quarrel for some time, and, indeed, I cannot tell what it is about."

Walter listened to these remarks, but made no reply. Cordelia, seeing that there was bound to be a quarrel, thought it best to leave the room and let them settle it themselves. After she had gone, Walter looked at Eva with frowning eyes that pierced her very soul, as he said, "You talk so childish and nonsensical that I can scarcely endure it. Do you suppose that I am blind to that degree of courtesy which should exist between a lady and gentleman? Do you suppose that I have not marked the change in your manner toward me during the last month? You must think I am an idiot, or else you are one yourself, if you do not know that I have observed your indifference, and in many respects insults, for the last month past. Look at your treatment towards me last night, and I might refer you to many other occasions, but what is the use in my doing so? It is enough to say that I have noticed it all this long time."

She was very much surprised at this plain statement of the case,—so plain that she could not gainsay it. She studied for a few moments, and then candidly and arrogantly enough said, "Well, I do not care; I did not want to come in last night because I did not want to be everlastingly teased about you. There is never a day passes over my head but what Will and Dr. Patterson and Cordelia are plaguing me about you, and I have determined to give them no chance hereafter to do so. So if you have a mind to get angry I cannot help it."

If an earthquake had suddenly occurred and they had been left on the verge of the fearful abyss below, Walter could not have been more surprised. He would no doubt have been wonderfully frightened, but that profound amazement which comes from some revelation of which we never dreamed could not have been greater than that which electrified his whole soul as these words fell from her lips. He looked at her for some time in wondering amazement, unable to utter a word. As the reality of all around him began to dawn full upon his mind, his soul became infused with that supreme anger and indignation which knows no bounds, and his face became white with rage as he arose and stamped his foot firmly, as he breathed forth his fearful condemnation of her actions. "This meeting ends our intercourse. If an angel from heaven had told me that

you had a soul so narrow and sordid and mean, a mind so weak and childish and changeable, I would not have believed the tale; but when it comes from your own lips, I have no cause whatever now to doubt it. Now we part, and part forever."

"But," she said, in a confident and earnest manner, "you do not know, Walter, how much I have endured on your account."

This only enraged him the more. He looked at her with that supreme contempt and disgust which rarely finds expression in words. "Endured on my account!" he replied, contemptuously. And then, after another emphatic pause, he said, in a scornful and angry tone, "You must be insane, else have lost all the good sense you ever had. *Endured on my account!* In answer to that I might ask, What have *I* not endured on your account? I suppose you refer to being teased by Will Montague and Dr. Patterson,—something that is done every day in the year among young people, and should, and generally is, all taken as a joke. Do you suppose they mean what they may say to you concerning me? They are my friends,—my life-long friends,—and if they say anything against me in order to tease you, do you suppose for an instant that they mean it? Why, where is your former good common sense that I always attributed to you?"

Seeing the ridiculous position in which she had placed herself, she excitedly said, "Well, I do not like it at any rate, and I will not put up with it any longer."

"Is that any reason, then," he indignantly asked, "why you should treat a friend in an unlady-like and discourteous manner? Because you have allowed these gentlemen the familiarity of teasing you without instantly resenting it, is that any reason why you should treat me with indifference and insult? By your manner and dignity you should have taught them at once that such familiarity was not desired, and that would have been the end of it. Because there is no gentleman will persist in this vulgar habit of teasing a young lady about any one if she takes the proper steps to prevent it, by adhering to that dignity of manner which is her life protector."

She said nothing in reply to this, but sat there nervously folding and refolding a piece of paper, and her face was sometimes pale, and then would become suddenly flushed and red. After a silence, Walter resumed, in the same angry and indig-

nant tone, slightly modified, "But, on the other hand, what have I not endured for you? These are my friends who, you say, have been teasing *you*; but where is this long train of *your enemies*—but once *my friends*—who had just cause to be angry at me for endeavoring to prevent them from obtaining their just due? What remarks of derision did I not receive from them when I was shielding the very chair on which you sit from the strong arm of the law, which had been raised for the collection of a debt contracted for the very bread that went into your mouths? Do you suppose they sat idly by and said nothing? Do you suppose they would leave one word unspoken which would hold you up in a ridiculous light to every one? My being your gallant at the time made it worse for me, because whenever they had an opportunity they were sure to make the remark that I was protecting my 'pauper friend,' and was endeavoring to prevent them from collecting a debt which was contracted perhaps for the very bread that went in her mouth! Do you suppose these remarks were not annoying to me, when in one sense they could not be rebutted or retorted to from the very truth they contained?"

"Well," she nervously and excitedly replied, "I do not think that I was the cause of this. I did not ask you to do it. You did it for the family. I know we owe you a debt of gratitude, which I fear we can never pay, and I am always sorry that we were so unfortunate as to incur it."

"You owe me no debt," he indignantly replied. "I have told you this as much as a hundred times. You are always free to say so in words, and yet your acts speak differently. What I did for you was done as your friend, and which, under like circumstances, I would do again; but I only refer to it now by way of contrast to your remarks a few moments ago for your course in treating me with such disrespect and indifference. Did these sneers and snarls and jibes of your enemies make any difference in my treatment towards you? No, no. If I had a mind so shallow and narrow, and a soul so callous and fickle and sordid and changeable, as to go back on a friend by reason of such nonsensical whims coming from their enemies, I would rather have my existence blotted out from the face of the earth than live among civilized and intelligent beings with the consciousness of having such an ignoble mind and heart."

As he finished the sentence, he sat down for a few moments,

and then arose again and paced the room several times. Stopping in front of her again, he said, in rather a full, sonorous, regretful tone, "I thought you had a mind too refined, a heart too pure, and a disposition too amiable to allow yourself to go back—as you have often said—on the best friend you ever had. Why, it seems to me that you have degenerated so that you have fallen from that high position of honor on which my imagination had enthroned you. What is the cause of your fall? What was your reason for practicing this most unmitigated deception on me? What have I ever done to forfeit your confidence? When by the river-side a long time ago, did I not tell you that the most I admired in you were your truthfulness and candor? And there, beneath the stars, and where the pale, beautiful moon was shining full upon us, did you not promise by all that was dear and sacred to candidly tell me at any time when you desired any other gallant? Oh, why did you disregard that sacred, solemn promise, which by doing so would rob you of all that is angelic and glorious in woman's nature? Oh, why did you not preserve that heretofore almost immaculate character which I always attributed to you? Why, all you would have had to do was merely to mention the fact to me, and gladly and cheerfully would I have done anything honorable to have aided you. Oh, why did you ever depart from the flowery path of candor and truth and honor?"

With a pale face and trembling voice, she replied, "Well, I had thought to have done so, but was overpersuaded not to do so by reason of your going away soon. I had thought to carry on the intercourse that existed between us until that time, and then when you would go away, people would never know that there was anything between us."

"And thus you thought to play a deceitful game with me? Could you not have foreseen that you could not play any such game with me? Cordelia played such a game with George Langton; but did you suppose that I would not comprehend the whole thing in an instant? I did see through your whole game long ago,—saw your duplicity from the very first, but thought perhaps that you were waiting for an opportunity to tell me all about it. When I saw that you seemed to hesitate, I thought to speak of it myself, but you evaded every opportunity in which I tried to speak with you. I thought to speak of it last night, for I supposed perhaps that you were delicate

about mentioning the matter. But now you tell me, with cool indifference and sublime impudence, that it was your settled purpose to play a deceitful game with me until I would leave. 'O shame, where is thy blush?' 'O consistency, thou art a jewel much to be admired but rarely to be found!' From this moment we part forever,—part not as friends, but as enemies. And if in the future we should meet, no recognition will ever come from me that I ever knew you. There is now a gulf betwixt you and me that never can be crossed; and it is my purpose to banish from my mind your image and every vestige of remembrance that there ever was such a being as you in existence."

As he had taken his hat, and had his hand on the door-knob, she said, with a pale face and trembling voice, "There is only one request that I would like to make, and that is that when we meet in the future, there be a recognition, and that we meet and speak as friends. This crushing silence would be torturing to my soul."

He studied a few moments, and then sternly said, "What I have spoken I have spoken; but I will give your request due consideration."

With this he opened the door and took his departure. These were the very last words that Walter Ludwick ever spoke to Eva Drayton.

When he left, she uttered a piteous cry and sank down on the sofa; and when Cordelia came in, she faintly said, "I told you that he would see through it all; and, sure enough, he has."

## CHAPTER XVI.

Exalted souls  
Have passions in proportion violent,  
Resistless and tormenting; they're a tax  
Imposed by nature on pre-eminence,  
And fortitude and wisdom must support them.  
LILLO: *Elmerick*.

THERE are incidents and events in the life of almost every human being upon which the more he reflects and broods over, the more incensed and enraged he becomes. In highly-

exalted and passionate souls, there is no wrong so great as that which is practiced on their generosity and kindness of heart, nothing so exasperating and burning as ingratitude. Had Walter loved Eva devotedly, and had that day been refused, the disappointment he would have thus experienced would have been nothing to this. Because love, at best, is selfish, and we seek for that which we monopolize ourselves; but in the latter case, that regard which is nourished out of pure friendship aspires no higher than the continuance of the same affection thus formed. So there was nothing to be gained from this intercourse of his with her, more than that companionship which every one experiences with a true friend. But when that friend turns traitor and deceives, then all the passions of the soul are aroused, and a deep hate, in proportion as the friendship was strong, instills itself into the heart against the traitor.

So the more Walter Ludwick reflected on the events that had just transpired, the more exasperated he became. When he considered what a true friend he had been, how much he had done for her,—how he had taken gentlemen there and introduced them, and had taken every pains in his power to make life pleasant for them; when he recalled the sneers and taunts and jibes he had received from his former friends, many of whom had since become his enemies on their account, and that he had still stood by them unto the end,—I say, when all these facts came rushing into his mind with lightning speed, it was more than his proud spirit could stand. When he left the house he had been inclined to grant her wish, but now his mind was changed, and the last spark of sympathy in his soul for her had died out, and he resolved never to speak to her again.

The next morning he sat down and wrote her a letter,—and such a letter it was!—yes, such a letter as none but Walter Ludwick could write. He recalled their first acquaintance; the many happy hours they had passed together; the twilight evenings and moonlight walks they had enjoyed; the confidence he had reposed in her; the high estimation in which he held her for honor, truth, and candor; their confidential conversation in the moonlight by the river-side; how she had solemnly promised always to be true and candid with him, and the mutual vows of friendship that they had then plighted

to each other. Then in contrast to all this, he portrayed her acts during the last month; her deception, as spoken by her own lips; her treachery in trying to play a deceitful game with him; her lack of truth and candor and that amiable disposition which makes the true lady, and many other things he said in his usual forcible and artistic style of writing. In fact, he left nothing unsaid that would express his deep indignation and hate, and then closed with the thrilling and burning words, "I am no longer your friend, but your enemy with a bitter hate. Never throw yourself in my way, for it is my strong desire and firm purpose to blot out every vestige of your image from my mind."

When the letter was sealed and addressed, he hesitated to send it. The letter he thought was still too severe to send to a lonely female; and he was about to tear it in two when another thought entered his mind. In spite of her treachery and deceit, he had still some regard for her, and he soliloquized: "She will do one of two things,—either return the letter unopened, else, if opened and read, return it with the indorsement, *A very cruel and uncalled-for letter, far beneath my dignity as a lady for a reply, and which I would have considered far beneath your dignity as a gentleman to write.*" Any other course than this he never dreamed of her taking, and he called a servant and directed him to mail the letter at once.

And thus the letter was written and sent,—the only act of his in this whole drama which is much to be regretted, and which does not deserve a too severe rebuke. Not that there was anything really wrong or untrue in the letter, but for any gentleman, I care not who he is, to condescend to write a lady a letter with whom he has had a quarrel, is not only ungenerous, but it is undignified and unkind, I care not what the offense is that she has committed. When a man commences to fight with a woman, it is like quarreling with boys—he is always sure to get the worst of it.

But it is due to say that when the passion left Walter, and he had had time to cool and reflect over some severe things he said in the letter, he very much regretted that he had written it. But it was done now, and he dismissed the matter from his mind.

In the evening he saw Will Montague, and he told him all about their quarrel, of which Will had yet heard nothing, as

he had not seen them for near a week. Walter also told him that he had written her a letter, at which he was very much surprised. "You will always regret that," he said, "for I never knew any one write a letter in a passion yet who did not regret it afterwards. Had you waited until your passion had been off, then there perhaps would have been no harm in your writing it."

Walter replied, with a laugh, "that if he had waited until his passion had cooled, he would not have written a letter at all."

"I have no doubt of that," Will replied, "and that is the reason you will always regret it. However," he continued, "her dignity and self-respect will probably compel her to return it, and that will be the end of it. It is a pity of them that they are so delicate. They should never get married, because of their hereditary infirmities."

## CHAPTER XVII.

I see as from a tower the end of all.

ANON.

For pleasures past I do not grieve,  
Nor perils gathering near;  
My greatest grief is that I leave  
Nothing that claims a tear.

BYRON.

THE quarrel between Walter Ludwick and Eva Drayton was the topic of conversation for the gossips in Riverbank for many an evening after it occurred. Cordelia made every effort to create the impression that he loved Eva, and that it was not reciprocated on her part. There were few, if any, believed the report, for they all knew that he was her superior in many respects; and there were not a few who often wondered why he paid any attention to her at all. But of these latter persons, we might infer that they belonged to that class who can see nothing good in any young lady if she is proud and poor.

Walter preserved a calm and dignified silence in the whole affair; and if any one mentioned anything to him about

them, he was particular to say nothing in the least respect disparaging to their character or habits. He had said to her, in person and in the letter, all he desired to say; and now his mouth was forever sealed as to uttering anything for or against them.

But the most remarkable feature in the whole drama was the course Cordelia pursued when she perceived that they had lost the friendship of all the Ludwicks; for, strange to say, none of them ever visited the Draytons again, or even spoke to them. Marian never looked the course of their house. This was perhaps uncalled for and not altogether right; but it is a well-known trait of human nature, and when the facts of this separation were all considered, there was nothing strange or ungenerous in their cutting the friendships of the Draytons at once. But as soon as Cordelia saw this, she made several desperate efforts to form *new* friendships with the very persons whom she had heretofore despised. She actually stopped one Sabbath after church at Mrs. Frothingham's seat, and spoke to her very kindly, and shook her by the hand, at the same time asking her why she never called on them. At the church gate she encountered Mrs. Climax,—the deadliest and most bitter enemy they had and whom they most despised,—to whom she extended her hand and made a great ado over, and also asked her why she did not call on them. And many other persons did she approach and solicit their friendship in the same manner, which was generally accepted by them. These people had nothing really against the Draytons, except that they were poor and proud; they thought that pride smiling on poverty was too ridiculous for any earthly use, and therefore they hated the very ground on which they walked. Should the Draytons at first have spoken to them as familiarly and obsequiously as Cordelia did now, they would have thought they were all right, and would have praised them up wonderfully.

But nothing was so undignified as the manner in which they disposed of the letter written to Eva. No sooner had they both read it, than that they were so enraged that they did not know what to do. Cordelia said she had never read such a sharp and cutting and uncalled-for letter in her life. When the matter came up for final consideration as to what they would do with it, both were of the opinion that they would

show it to Will and Dr. Patterson. The thought of returning it in the dignified manner that Walter had supposed never entered their minds. And the first time that both of them called, they handed the letter to them for its perusal.

In a conversation with Will Montague, Walter learned all these facts, and he turned away with silent contempt as he said, "The last lingering spark of esteem I ever had for them is now gone out, and they have fallen so low in my estimation that there is no hope of a redemption."

"I must confess," Will replied, reflectively, "that I was surprised myself, as also was Dr. Patterson, when they showed us the letter, and asked what they should do with it; I do not, and did not at the time, like the idea of them bringing their troubles and throwing them down at my feet. I like friendship very well, but when it has to be bought, or when we have to keep it up by favors and services, then I think the time has come when it should be severed. I hope that such an occurrence as this will not be repeated, else I will cease calling on them entirely."

And thus the end of the friendship between them terminated. When Walter looked on all these facts,—their conduct with those who had heretofore slandered them, and their undignified manner and acts in showing a private letter,—he was so utterly disgusted with the whole proceeding that he had not a word to say to any one. It was indeed a gala day for Tom Ludwick. He pointed his finger at Walter with a great deal of exultation as he looked out from under his heavy eyebrows, and said contemptuously and sarcastically, "I told you long ago that there was nothing in her or any of them. Hereafter when you want to estimate the qualities of a young lady, ask me about it, or never take a lady for a friend who is proud and poor and a dreamer. I never mind rich people being proud, but when it comes to paupers turning up their noses, it will not do. There is no true nobility of soul about them, else they would work day and night rather than run in debt, and thus endure the sneers and jibes of the meanest peasant in the field. True nobility never runs in debt, remember that as you pass through life. Pay as you go, and you will never come to want."

Walter laughed, and remarked something about his sarcasm, but said nothing more. Tom, however, was very much pleased

with the termination of affairs, for he thought that Walter would now move forward in the course that he had long since marked out, and that he would throw aside the idealities and dreamy moods of his boyhood days and become a real man.

In the beautiful days of autumn, when the ground was covered with leaves brown and sear, Walter received a letter from Dewitt stating that every arrangement had been made for the commencement of his studies with Mr. Belmont at any time he might desire, and that he intended to sail for Europe in a few days, and desired him to come on immediately to New York, where he would take a steamer for Liverpool.

Walter was only too glad when he received the letter, and at once commenced to pack his trunk. He ransacked every corner, and anything that he saw—any letter that tended to, or would tend to revert his mind to the past, was instantly committed to the flames. In packing up Eva's letters, he accidentally mislaid one, and he also committed it to the flames, not even deigning to return it. Every other social letter he ever received from any one, either lady or gentleman, he destroyed. Everything that tended to increase or cultivate the poetic sentiment he banished from his mind as an enemy to his future career. No more twilight reveries; no more dreaming over beautiful and magnificent sunsets; no more moonlight walks with confidential friends; no more quaffing in the beauties of nature; no more of anything that tended at times to make him sad and lonely. All these inspiring sentiments he banished with a tremendous effort from his mind, as being an enemy to his future career.

Even the angel face, with her soft, languid, dark eyes, which seemed to speak to his very soul, and with whom he had roamed in fancy the green fields and garden lands of the ideal world, was now banished from his mind, and was no more the morning star of his memory.

He had now but one impulse or wish in his heart. In his youthful days he had dreamed of fame, and now his very soul yearned for that repentance which he thought nothing else could give. Oh, how his young heart throbbed with bright hopes, as, on this last evening at home, he sat contemplating the shining course that loomed up before his enraptured imagination! He was now strong and vigorous, his eyes were bright

with the glowing ambition within, and he felt like a conqueror going forth to conquer.

But the only regret that filled his heart was, that there was nothing he left behind for which he could shed a tear. There was not an hour of his past life that he would care to live over again, for,

"As from a tower he saw the end of all."

There now seemed to him a veil raised betwixt him and the past, which he never wished to see drawn aside. There was nothing in the past which joined or linked him either to the present or the future. Yes, the past was to him a dark shadow, which it was a solace to shun, and his purpose was to improve the present and turn his eyes to the future, until he would finally plant his feet upon the sun-crowned heights of victory.

When he arrived at New York, he met the only friend on earth he loved with that passion of soul that was so much his nature. Dewitt gave him his letter of introduction to Mr. Belmont, and said at the same time that he knew he would be pleased with him by reason of his transcendent ability. And after an affectionate farewell, he saw his old friend and school-mate roll away in the distance to a foreign land until the ship faded from sight, and then, with tearful eyes and trembling steps, he returned to the hotel.

That same evening he took the cars for Claremont. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon of the day he arrived, and after ordering his baggage to the hotel, he proceeded immediately to Mr. Belmont's office, and presented his letter of introduction from Dewitt. They were, no doubt, if one could have read their hearts, surprised with each other,—Belmont at the bright, intellectual, and promising appearance of his student, Walter with the amazing grandeur and towering mien and evidently eminent ability of his preceptor.

After their first cordial greetings were over, Mr. Belmont asked him when he wanted to commence, and was surprised when he received the reply, "Immediately. I would like to see," he continued, "some of the first books I am to read, and with your permission I will take one with me to the hotel to read this evening."

Mr. Belmont complied with his request, and showed him the first book he desired him to read, and said at the same time

that he could return to the office after tea and read, or take it with him, just as he desired. "I got you a key to-day," he said, "so that you can come in and go out whenever you please. If I am not in this evening, just sit down and make yourself at home. When you have finished this book, then I will examine you as to its contents, and will then give you another one to read."

These kind and consoling words were a balm to Walter's sore heart, and they instilled into his soul that deep and sincere regard and affection for his preceptor which never could be effaced.

He came back in the evening again, and read until midnight in the book Mr. Belmont had given him; and then he returned to the hotel with his mind filled with, and his soul electrified by, his future career.

## BOOK IV.

## CHAPTER I.

She loves, but knows not whom she loves,  
 Nor what his race, nor whence he came:—  
 Like one who meets in Indian groves  
 Some beauteous bird without a name,  
 Brought by the last ambrosial breeze  
 From isles in th' undiscovered seas,  
 To show his plumage for a day  
 To wondering eyes, then wing away.

MOORE.

FOR two long years Judge Alpen and his family roamed at leisure in foreign climes. In England they wandered with pleasure amid those scenes that have now become almost relics of the past, and around which travelers gather from almost every land beneath the sun. It was with pleasure and admiration they visited Paris, with its great thoroughfare of fashion, and also the vine-clad hills and flowery vales and fertile fields of that delightful country. In the Holy Land they trod with trembling steps the places where our Saviour taught redemption to a lost and sinful world, and then turned their faces towards the land of birds and song and of art. Yes, in sunny Italy, with its blue skies and soft, balmy zephyrs, they passed a year with all the pleasure and enjoyment that this life can afford.

When in Washington City, Judge Alpen obtained letters of introduction, which enabled him to find friends wherever he went. In London they were admitted into the best society, and in Paris they experienced all the grandeur and novelty of the great centre of fashion of the world. Wherever they went they were received with that due deference and respect which is accorded to every true American citizen.

But wearied with wandering in strange lands, they at last turned their faces homeward, yearning for but a glimpse of their own dear native land. They were happy and well pleased with

their tour, and turned their steps homewards with joyful hearts,—except, perhaps, one.

It was a joyous day to Blanche Alpen when her father announced his intention of taking a tour to the Old World. She was not so much pleased with the novelty of such a tour, and with the brilliant time she would have generally, as she was with the bright anticipation of seeing new and strange faces, mingled with the secret hope that among them all she might see the face of one who was ever in her waking dreams by day, and in her slumbers by night. She loved, but she did not know whom she loved. She had an ideal pictured by her vivid imagination, around which all the affections of the soul lingered. It is true that in her tour she met many gentlemen of a prepossessing appearance and of eminent ability,—elements of character which she, in one sense, very much admired,—but then there were other requisites of character which she prized, but in which they were sadly deficient. She admired talent, coupled with firmness and ambition and a warm and affectionate heart; but a gentleman's personal appearance was a very secondary consideration to her. She had seen many gentlemen in her travels with whose appearance she was very much pleased, but upon a more intimate acquaintance with them, by which she learned their sentiments and their characteristics, she turned languidly away, for there was no congeniality of soul between them. She was for a time pleased and fascinated with the display and pageantry of the fashionable world; but she soon wearied of it all, and sought the solitude of her own chamber to commune with her own ideal thoughts.

It was at such times as these—at twilight evenings, when the bright stars were about resuming their places in the azure skies, and at such times when heaven seemed very near—that she longed for a congenial spirit, a companion with whom her soul would be in harmony. Many a fond admirer listened with seeming delight as her soul found expression in the ecstasy of song; but she too soon observed, with a sad heart, that their attention was not real, and that their souls were not in harmony with her own.

She was so pleased at the prospect of her voyage, and her enthusiastic imagination had all kinds of pictures drawn as to how, and where, and when, she would meet the ideal of her



girlish dreams. There was never a day passed but that she was still hopeful and buoyant in spirit, until the hour they embarked for New York; and then the last hope died away, and she felt weary and careworn, and longed for that indescribable something she knew not what. That solitary languor which so steals over the human soul when some cherished scheme has failed, was transparent in her face and her every movement during their voyage to New York.

And now when she was at home again—the sacred spot she always loved so well—there was little of joy filled her heart. When all the kind friends who had loved them so much had come and gone, and when she had returned to her own chamber and was alone again, she felt that strange and expressionless feeling which steals over one at a quiet midnight hour, and she felt in her soul a dreary aching void, which nothing, it seemed, could fill. She sank down in her arm-chair and rested her cheek on her hand,—her favorite position when sad and melancholy,—and seemed to look vacantly into space, as though her mind was roaming away amid some ethereal realm.

Long she sat there, perhaps longer than she knew or even dreamed of. When she arose, she went to her secretary and touched the secret spring which opened the secret drawer we have seen her open a long time ago, out of which she took the same faded bouquet as before, and pressed it to her lips. She took several other little mementos of the past, and resumed her seat in the arm-chair near the fire. For a long time she looked at these little treasures, and as she was sitting there gazing intuitively upon them, a change came over her face, and there was a peculiar brightness in her tearful, dark eyes, which seemed to indicate that she was forming, or had formed, a resolution which she meant to be inflexible. The appearance in her face was that stern, cold, and callous nature which indicated the pain which such a resolution caused her. And thus she sat, pale and motionless, with her eyes fixed intently on the fire.

When it was very late, and when all without was as motionless as the tomb, and the only rustle within was that caused by the beating of her own heart, she reached forward and was about to cast the faded flowers and the other little mementos into the fire, when something seemed to whisper to her heart, "Not yet, not yet," and she drew back, as if frightened, and

tears gushed from her eyes, and she covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly.

When she had dried her tears, she took the flowers and mementos and placed them in the drawer again, and then turned away to seek nature's sweet restorer—balmy sleep. That cold, callous look in her face had now gone, and in its stead there came a soft, sweet, and amiable expression, which indicates a heart warm with gentleness and love.

Morn came again, but with it came not that sweet, refreshing rest which sleep gives to the weary body and sorrowful heart. After partaking of a light breakfast, she went out to breathe the pure air; but the scared and yellow leaves and the mournful songs of some lingering birds only filled her soul with that strange, melancholy feeling which seemed to make her faint and weak, and she returned to the parlor, where she sought to find relief in the ecstasies of song. But it was in vain. Her sweetest melodies seemed but a strange mockery of her grief. She turned to poetry, and sought to find a balm in some of her most interesting authors, but their words fell dead on her ears and found no expression in her soul, and she laid them sorrowfully away.

Thus passed a month away after her return home. She was in society but little, and scarcely returned any of the many calls that were made by her lady friends. In twilight evenings she seemed to enjoy herself most in the solitude of her own room, where she could see the last faint, glimmering rays of the setting sun tinge with a rare grandeur the western landscape. She moved around the house like a ministering angel, and her step was soft and light, and her voice was low and sweet, and her dark eyes shone with that soft, lambent light which portrayed the deep and priceless soul within.

She was sitting one evening in the parlor alone, about a month after they had returned, gazing intently into the fire, as if her mind were deeply riveted on some painful subject, when Charles Spencer was announced. And after she had resumed her seat, her face looked sad and careworn, as over which a something of grief had gone.

## CHAPTER II.

And then that hope, that fairy hope:  
 Oh! she wak'd such happy dreams,  
 And gave my soul such tempting scope  
 For all its dearest, fondest schemes.

MOORE.

OH, how fruitless and vain the attempt to solve the problems or disclose the mysteries of the future! Yet how dull and stupid we oftentimes are, not to see the shadows that coming events not unfrequently cast before them! And how many times, through the force of circumstances, have we obligated ourselves, because we could not give a sound reason, though our own best judgment silently warned us to the contrary!

During the long space of time that had intervened since Charles Spencer told the story of his love to Blanche Alpen, he had never since intimated to her a desire to re-open the subject; yet, is it necessary to say that the hope some time of marrying her was still as strong within him as ever? Oh, how often is the whole tenor of one's life changed by the songs of that siren which never sings out of tune! The very time she told him that there was no other gentleman in the city for whom she cared anything more than she did for him, the fond hope leaped into his heart "that she would yet learn to love" him, and that she would yet be his own dear wife.

He was noble in soul, as he was kind and generous in heart; and he never had the remotest idea of marrying her except of her own free will and accord. His mind had long been made up never to mention the subject unless he plainly saw that she wished to have him do so. And when he called on her this evening, there were two motives in his mind,—one, to ascertain if she had yet met a gentleman for whom she cared more than she did for him; the other, to ascertain if he could still be her gallant.

In the first case, he wanted to relieve his mind of that crushing uncertainty which so harassed him, as to whether she

loved any one or not; and in the second place, he was too honorable to want to force his attentions upon her if she did not desire them. After a few general remarks which were made when he took his seat, he said, "How long the time has been, Blanche, since you went away! Did it seem long to you?"

His voice was low and sad, though he endeavored to appear cheerful.

"No, I cannot say that the time appeared long; it rather passed quickly and pleasantly away."

Her elbow was resting on the cushioned arm of the chair, and her cheek was resting on the palm of her hand at the time Charles addressed her his question. She answered him without changing her position; and then, after a pause, she leaned back in her chair, and drew a deep sigh, as she clasped her hands across her breast and continued, "The wonders of the Old World are so numerous, the scenes so varied and beautiful, that, taken with the historical incidents, my mind was so fully occupied that I took no note of time; and I was almost surprised when I considered the fact that we had been wandering two years in foreign lands."

"I cannot tell you how much I would have enjoyed the time with you. If you remember, when we were children together, in studying our geography-lessons we used to say how delighted we would be to take a voyage to the Old World; you perhaps never dreamed then the reality of our childish talk."

She looked towards him in a kind of a surprised manner, as she said, "I know you could not have done otherwise than enjoy yourself;" and then she resumed her favorite position and gazed intently into the fire.

They sat in silence for some time, when Charles again spoke: "There is one question, Blanche, I would like to ask you. It grows out of the last conversation we had about three years or more ago. You told me then that there was no one here for whom you cared anything more than you did for me. I wish to know now if there is any change? Perhaps I ought not to ask the question, but then you are so kind and candid, that if you think it too inquisitive, I know you will kindly tell me so. You were so kind then in allowing me the pleasure of still being your gallant, that I do not feel like imposing

on that kindness of heart if there is any other one whom you should desire more."

She was surprised at the question and the manner in which it was asked. Once she looked toward him, and then resumed her usual position in deep thought. She could not but admire the candor with which he spoke, but then when she thought as to what her answer would be, she feared a repetition of that which happened before. But reason as she would, she could find no cause, however trivial, for not answering the question, and remembering, too, that he had faithfully promised her never to mention the subject of their marriage again, she knew he was too honorable to disregard his word.

"There is no change one way or another in my mind since we last talked together at the time you mention," she said, softly and languidly, without lifting or raising her eyes.

A new hope, something which was transparent in his face, shot into his heart, and he felt himself a happier and better man. He was stronger now, and felt more confident as he asked her another question, "Can I still be your friend and gallant? I thought it best to ask you this question now, so as to avoid any unpleasantness you might feel in regard to having my company forced upon you."

She was surprised again at this question, and by the easy manner in which it was asked. She studied in her same position for a long time, and then turning her dark, tender eyes, full of sympathy and kindness of heart, toward him, she said, in a low, soft, sweet voice, "I cannot say that I have any objections to your being my gallant or escort; I am sure I have no objections to your friendship; I have always considered you one of the best and truest friends I have ever had. But my better judgment now tells me, as it did before, that this intercourse between us, or that attention which you have so long given me, should cease now, and should never be renewed again. The opportunity now, after this long absence, of ending this troublesome affair so quietly, is such a good one, that it seems to me it should not be lost. Though I cannot now give you any good reason why you should not continue to be my gallant, yet my own better judgment—that silent intuitive judgment which dictates to my soul, as it were, without giving a reason—tells me now that we should be friends, and that you cease that intimate attention to me, which will, and does, induce

people to say that we are engaged. You wrong yourself in doing so, for you thus hinder yourself from finding a lady more worthy of your good, kind, and noble heart than I am."

Charles was surprised, but not disheartened. He sat for some time in silence, and then, as if a new idea had entered his mind, he raised his head, which had become bowed by her answer, and said, "You seem to forget, Blanche, the promise I made you a long time ago. You remember when we last talked together that I told you I would never mention the subject of our marriage again. Now, have I done so by either word or deed? As for my wasting my time in regard to finding a wife, I have no disposition to look after one here. You know that there is not a lady in all Claremont whom I care anything for. I am not surprised that you can find or give no reason why I should not continue as your gallant, because there is none. Why, just think, Blanche, how long we have known each other,—how we were children together, and thus grew up to manhood and womanhood together,—that we never, in all these long years, had even a little quarrel, as so many children do,—how, if one received a present, the other shared it,—yes, how we have been almost brother and sister together. And remember still that you and I are still in the same society; you have no brother to take you out anywhere, and you say there is no one here for whom you care more than you do for me. Now, why cannot I be your friend? Why cannot I supply the place of a brother, and call you sister? Why, consider the long, long years that we have known each other, and then try to recall to your mind any time that I tried to deceive you,—if I ever—ever once—misrepresented anything to you, of the most trivial character. I know full well the doubt on your mind which causes you to hesitate. You think that some time in the future I may renew the subject. But, oh, Blanche, for what cause, at this late day, have you reason to doubt me? If you can recall one little act of mine by which I have wronged or slighted you in the least manner possible, then I will leave and say no more. But, oh, do not let me think that you have no confidence in me without showing or giving me the reason for your so thinking!"

He spoke feelingly. His voice was low and pathetic, and there was truth in every word he uttered. Yes, he spoke the truth as God was his witness. It is true that he hoped she would yet

learn to love him, but he wanted the change to come of her own free will. And in the mean time he wanted to be her friend and companion. He thought in this way that he might serve her. As long as there was no one to pay any attention to her, he could not endure the idea of leaving her alone. To be near her, to be her friend, was all he desired.

"After the long silence that followed, she raised her tearful eyes, and, in a low, soft, and trembling voice, said, "Are you sure that you understand your own heart? Have you dismissed all thought of the subject we were talking of three years ago?"

"Yes, yes, Blanche, I am sure. Tell me the moment you see any one you love, and I will instantly relinquish all my attention to you, and will consider you as my friend and sister, and call him my friend and brother. Oh, believe me, when I say that I speak the truth from my heart, as Heaven is my judge!"

Again she was in deep thought, with her face covered with her hands. Her mind went back to their childhood's days, and she remembered how kind and affectionate he had always been to her. There never was a time, as he truthfully said, in all their childhood's plays, when he got angry with her; and thus they had grown to almost adult years without a word to mar the even tenor of their way, until three years ago, when she was so surprised to hear that he loved her. She told him that his love was not reciprocated, and he was content to be her friend, and promised never to speak of it again. And then when she reflected again how true he had always been to her,—that he had never in the slightest respect deceived her,—where could be her consistency in refusing him a request which he so desired, and to which she could not possibly have any displeasure? Of all her gentlemen friends, she admired him the most. And when she reflected on her lonely position,—no brother, no cousin, no relative of her own age for a companion,—why should she refuse his request?

Tired and careworn in body and soul, and discontented and unhappy as she was when all these sad and conflicting thoughts passed through her mind and harassed her soul, she was almost ready to burst into tears. She took one hand from her face and held it toward him as she faintly—scarcely above a whisper—said, "*Your request is granted.*"

He clasped her hand in both of his as he passionately exclaimed, "Heaven bless you!"

Soon after, he took his departure, and she returned to the parlor; and finding herself alone, again burst into a passionate fit of tears.

And thus thou, O priceless Blanche! hast again committed the fatal mistake of thy life! Oh, why didst thou not hearken unto that silent voice—that never-failing monitor within—which told him "nay," without giving him a reason? Oh, hadst thou but arisen to the true grandeur of thy position, thou wouldst have said at once, "Depart from me forever!" Oh, how propitious, how fortunate, the moment would have been to thee! Alas, poor Blanche, this act—though not wrong in itself—will cost thee bitter tears of sorrow, and sleepless nights, and a fevered brain! and sooner or later it will come. Oh, Blanche! priceless and glorious as thou art!—so true, so good, so kind, so affectionate,—even to thee, the wild, ghastly steps of grief will find their way to sap—yes, slowly to sap—the blood from out thy veins, and as slowly, but surely, to take the bloom from off thy lovely cheeks! Alas! Oh, Blanche! may Heaven's ministering angels watch over and protect thee from the cares and miseries of this sometimes dark and heartless world!

### CHAPTER III.

Great souls,  
By nature half divine, soar to the stars  
And hold near acquaintance with the gods.  
Rowe: *Royal Convert.*

THERE are times in our lives when the past is so blended with the present that, from the reflection of the former, and by the joys of the latter, we live a happy and contented life. There are other times when a dark cloud hovers over the past, and from its dim realms there is not one glimmering ray of sunlight to give joy to the present, and we look forward to the future for any further pleasure or happiness that we may desire.

This was the position of Walter Ludwick when he commenced the study of his profession in Claremont. As then remarked, there was nothing in the past which claimed a fond recollection of his heart in the slightest degree, outside of his own home. Having burned every letter, every scrap of paper, and, in fact, every vestige of everything that might have a tendency to draw or entice his mind into the dusky corridors of the past, he studiously improved the present, and where his vivid imagination longed to roam, he gave it free scope amid the green fields and garden lands of the future. Having once turned away from the past, he never once allowed himself to look back; but with a strong will and noble purpose, he kept his eyes on the shining course which loomed up before him.

As we saw him on that first evening, when he came back to Mr. Belmont's office, he read in the first book given him by his preceptor, so ever afterwards he burned the midnight lamp in order to store his mind with a thorough knowledge of that science to which his ambition aspired. His great soul soared higher and higher, and if he were tired and weary at night, he arose refreshed in the morning, and went to his studies with that renewed energy which sweet sleep instills into the weary mind and body.

And thus passed the first year of his study of the law. The sere and yellow leaves were again falling around him as he took his morning and evening walks, in order to give his mind and body the advantages of vigorous exercise. Autumn passed away, and winter with its mournful winds and scattering blasts came, with no cessation of his studies. Spring with its singing birds and blooming flowers and fragrant and balmy breeze came again and fanned his soul, still blazing with the fire of the unreined ambition that inspired him. This was the season of the year above all the others that he loved the most. As he walked out on a bright, clear morning, when the air was soft and balmy, and when the young grass was growing, and the sweet birds were singing, and all nature seemed awakening from a deep sleep, and was putting on her garments of rich foliage of green, he felt his own soul glow with the harmony and enthusiasm which the natural scenes around him inspired.

And thus time passed on. Day after day and night after night he diligently pursued his studies, until falling and faded leaves marked two years of hard and unremitting study. Al-

though he took regular and vigorous exercise, yet this close application to his books began to tell on his heretofore strong and vigorous constitution. His face was not so full, nor did his cheek glow with health, nor was his step so firm and elastic as when we first saw him enter Claremont. But the same fire was in his eyes, and the same inspiration of soul still glowed in his cheek, notwithstanding the paleness so visible there. But he had only six months more to read until he would be admitted to the bar,—the goal to which his ambition aspired. He longed to take his station on the active and busy stage of life. There was never a moment since the dawn of reason entered his mind when he did not look forward to that great epoch in the existence of every human being when he would be a man. And now he wanted to be a man in reality as well as in name.

So complete was the course of his study, that Mr. Belmont made the remark to a friend that he could stand a most searching and thorough examination at the end of two years, but he thought it best to have him read the full time required by law. "I never saw," he said, "so young a man with so old a head. The original constitution of his mind seems to be of that high order which eminently fits him for occupying any position in life. Having a brilliant intellect and thorough education, he can concentrate all the powers of his mind on any subject under consideration, and is therefore singularly fitted for a fine discrimination between the right and the wrong, thus giving him what we lawyers call 'a fine legal mind.' He has that peculiar faculty which certifies his claim to an eminent mind or having clear ideas. So few public men, even, have what we may call a clear idea on any subject, and thus their minds are so clouded that it is impossible for them to elucidate any subject where it requires a fine discrimination of thought. Having naturally, as I said before, a good mind, and being a good scholar, a close reader, a sound thinker, and a hard and laborious student, he will be eminently fitted, at some not far-distant day, for reaching the height of the profession which he has chosen."

It will thus be seen the high estimation in which Walter Ludwick was held by the most eminent lawyer of the bar in Claremont. When Mr. Belmont expressed an opinion on almost any subject, his authority was considered almost as

good as though it had come from some of the State Reports. He was truly making rapid progress in the march to true greatness.

But with all Walter's success and progress in his studies, he was discontented and unhappy with his present position and everything around him. The man we see absorbed in his studies at the midnight lamp is not the same man we see at some twilight hour, when his exalted soul seems to leave the things of earth, to hold sweet communion with ethereal spirits. It had been his effort to subdue and crush this impulse of his soul, and for the first year he partially succeeded; but he finally discovered how foolish and absurd the idea or effort to chain the immortal part of his being. As well might he bid the winds to cease their moanings as try to restrain his soul, at congenial moments, from leaving the tabernacle of earth, to wend its way to the green fields and garden-lands of ideal world. And thus at twilight hours he felt himself soar away, on the wings of fame, to the ambrosial realms of fairy-land, where the flowers were in perpetual bloom and the birds sang their sweetest songs forever.

During the first year he studiously avoided being introduced to any of the young ladies of Claremont; and thus he knew nothing about their society,—neither did he care to know anything about it. In the second year he had become acquainted with Fannie Murdoch and the other ladies with whom the reader is already acquainted, but none of them produced the slightest impression on his mind. He was pleased with the beautiful accomplishments of Grace Murdoch, but there was no opportunity presented for him to cultivate her acquaintance; and thus he always felt, when in her presence, a chilling atmosphere around her which crushed all the regard and admiration that she otherwise inspired. Fannie did not produce the slightest impression on him, for he seemed intuitively to read the barrenness of her mind and the littleness of her soul. With Lizzie Marlan he soon tired, as he also did with Ophelia Brandon; but Nancy Spriggins he never could endure for a moment, and on every occasion avoided having any conversation with her. Thus his intercourse in society was not congenial, and therefore not pleasant. He was in every sense a domestic man, and longed for domestic happiness when he would be in that position in life in which it were pos-

sible. He longed for a congenial spirit,—a companion with whom his own soul would be in harmony. The only congenial and faithful friend he ever had was Dewitt Lu-Guere, and he was many miles away,—and whom he would probably never see again. Should he have had the companionship of him in his morning walks, and in his leisure moments, and twilight hours, he would have been supremely happy, and would have enjoyed his stay in Claremont most exquisitely. But as it was, he was always unhappy and discontented, and longed to complete his studies, in order that he might cast himself upon the great thoroughfare of life, where he could absorb his whole soul and mind in its active and busy scenes.

All great men with noble minds, deep feelings, and fine sensibilities have their dark hours and despondent days, notwithstanding the fact that the outward world is clear and bright and prosperous. There are times when the soul seems, as it were, thrown back on itself, and all the agonies and torments and horrors that a vivid imagination can picture loom up in such terrible realities, that it longs to fly away and be at rest.

This was so with Walter Ludwick. There were dark hours and despondent days for him, and he felt in those hours and days that life was a burden too grievous to be borne. But when these thoughts were dispelled and he had again resumed his studies, he was contented and happy. His mind was clear and vivid, and he made rapid progress. At the midnight lamp he toiled incessantly to master every intricate question that presented itself to him. But then these dark hours would come again when he would quit the office and return to his solitary room at the hotel. He did not come here to study,—he came to find rest, to find contentment, to find happiness. But did he find it? Ah, no, no! There was no congenial companion there,—no one to whom he could pour out in confidence the burdens of his soul,—no one in whose sweet companionship he could bask in the sunshine of domestic bliss. From this aching void sprang all the bitterness of his inner life,—I mean that life outside of one's business or public life,—and which sometimes bowed his heart down in hopeless despair.

But once at his studies again, his whole mind and soul were concentrated thereon, and thus step by step he was carving his way to the goal to which his ambition aspired.

## CHAPTER IV.

She had grown  
In her unstrained seclusion bright and pure,  
As a first opening filae, when it spreads  
Its clear leaves to the sweetest dawn of May.

PERCIVAL.

THE large and beautiful mansion of Colonel John Brandon was brilliantly illuminated, and his spacious and well-furnished parlors were thrown open, and the very air was resonant with sweet music and the hum of merry voices; the beauty and fashion and wealth and talent of Claremont were there in all their splendor and magnificence.

The occasion was a reception given by Colonel Brandon to his old and particular friend Judge Alpen and his family. Before the judge went on the bench, he had been vice-president of the bank of which Colonel Brandon was president; and had transacted all its legal business, as well as the legal business of Colonel Brandon's private affairs, by which a very strong and intimate and lasting friendship sprung up between them.

Walter Ludwick had no inclination to go to the reception, and had his regrets written; but through the persuasion of Mr. Belmont, who thought he needed some recreation, he concluded to go. Being very fond of dancing, he enjoyed himself very much; and when he had become tired, he sat down at a table near the east end of the parlor, and was looking at some of the albums. He was soon joined by Colonel Brandon, with whom he became engaged in conversation. Walter was sitting with his back towards the entrance, and thus could see no one entering, and soon quite a number of ladies and gentlemen came in from the dancing-hall.

While he was thus sitting engaged in conversation with Colonel Brandon, a lady and gentleman entered and took seats on a sofa behind them, and continued their conversation. The gentleman had just finished asking a question, when they sat down, which the lady repeated, "You ask me how I liked Italy? Oh, I can scarcely tell you how much! The skies

there are so beautifully blue, and the landscape so fair and picturesque, that I think I would never tire living there; and then when every interesting scene is associated with the thrilling events of the past, one's imagination is so vivid that you could not help but think you were there at the very time such almost incredible events transpired. I was so imbued with this feeling or sensation, when I visited Rome, I felt an awe—a solemnity—creep over my soul, which I could not resist. My imagination was then so vivid, that methought I could hear the eloquent voice of Cicero, and see him point his finger of scorn at the traitor who would betray and destroy his country. Oh, I was so delighted with everything I saw there, and the scenes are so indelibly impressed on my memory, that I believe, were I to live forever, they could never be effaced!"

"There is another question I would like to ask; you perhaps have heard me speak of it before. You know we have some very beautiful scenes in our own country, and yet you do not hear half the enthusiasm expressed over them that you do over scenes in Europe, though they may be perhaps not half so grand and magnificent. Perhaps you can tell me the cause of this from your own experience."

Both Colonel Brandon and Walter had ceased their conversation, and were now intently interested in the answer about to be given to the question addressed to her. Walter could not imagine who the lady was whose voice he heard. Such a voice!—so soft, so sweet, so musical,—it seemed like the last strain of exquisite music. Breathlessly he awaited her answer, and never stirred through fear that he might break the sweet charm that was thrown around him.

Her answer came softer and sweeter still. "Ah, Mr. Belmont, you ask me a question which was a query in my own mind before I sailed for Europe! I had frequently admired the majestic scenery in our own land, and often wondered how it were possible in any manner to be excelled. And when I gazed upon those scenes in the Old World, which are so much admired by every American traveler, I asked my own heart the question, 'whether they were any more beautiful than our own,' and almost involuntarily the answer came, that they were not. Yet why, I thought, did my soul kindle with enthusiasm as I stood at the foot of the Alps, and looked up to its towering heights that almost reached the skies? Why did I

feel a strange thrill creep over me as I stood amid the hills and mountains of Switzerland, which are not half so beautiful as our own? And as we wandered along the banks of the Nile and the blue Danube, why did I feel the same enthusiasm and inspiration fill my soul? When I reflected a moment, the answer was very clear—these have all a history connected with them, which time can never efface. Take away the historical interest, and you will hear but little said of European travel. And there are many other places—in fact, all the places that an American delights to visit—which are only admired by reason of their historical associations. When we see them and meditate upon the events connected with them, we study history anew, and thus it is more permanently impressed upon our memories."

About the time she ceased speaking, Judge Alpen came up, and joined in conversation with Colonel Brandon, which gave Walter an opportunity of changing his position. He moved to the far end of the parlor, and took a seat near a table, where he had an excellent view of the lady whose voice affected and interested him so much. And when he first glanced his eyes towards her, he was thrilled by the striking features of her face that involuntarily induced him to look again, after perhaps he had turned away several times. She had grown by these months of seclusion since she came home bright and pure; notwithstanding the paleness of her face when alone. But now, with the gaslights streaming over her, he could see the steady glow in her cheeks, and the enthusiasm of her soul in her dark, fascinating eyes, as she continued the conversation with Mr. Belmont.

While he was thus intently—unconsciously—gazing upon her, Charles Spencer came in and requested Mr. Belmont to excuse her, as he had an engagement for the next dance. If he were surprised at the classic beauty of her face and eyes, he was much more surprised when he saw the gracefulness of her form and the queenly bearing of her movements. Yes, his soul was filled with admiration, mingled with amazement, as he saw the almost angelic being glide to her place in the dance.

After they had gone, Mr. Belmont, in looking around, saw Walter sitting alone; and thinking perhaps that he was not enjoying himself, approached and took a seat beside him, as he said, "How have you been enjoying yourself, Mr. Ludwick?"

Is there anything I can do to make the evening pleasant for you? Are you acquainted with all the young ladies?"

"You are very kind, Mr. Belmont," Walter said; "but there is nothing you can do for me that I know of, as I have been enjoying myself very well,—much more so than I anticipated. You know at best that I mingle but little in society. I believe I am acquainted with most of the ladies here, except, perhaps, the one with whom you have just been conversing."

"Are you not acquainted with her?" he asked, in great surprise.

"No, I am not. I never remember of seeing her until to-night."

"Then I must introduce you to her. She is the cousin of Mr. Lu-Guere, your very particular friend."

"Impossible!" Walter exclaimed, in blank amazement. "I never knew he had a cousin here!"

After the dance was over, Mr. Belmont hooked his arm through Walter's, and forced their way through the dense throng to the place where Blanche was sitting, and introduced his law student to her. After the usual compliments of the occasion had been passed, Mr. Belmont said, as he was taking his leave, "I may further add, Miss Alpen, that my young friend, Mr. Ludwick, is the college-mate and confidential friend of your cousin, Dewitt Lu-Guere."

"Is it possible!" she exclaimed, in the utmost surprise and amazement, while her dark, lustrous eyes shone with supreme brilliancy and glory, and her face was mantled with a rich gorgeous hue that made her sublimely beautiful. "And how long have you known him?" she continued.

"How long have I known him?" he repeated, meditatively. "So long that I can scarcely tell,—more than seven years, I believe. We met the first week we were at college, and a mutual friendship having sprung up between us, we took rooms together, and have continued very warm and sincere friends ever since. Though I have seen but little of him since we left college, yet when we were together then, one was only happy when the other was with him."

"When have you heard last from him? I did not know he was in Europe until I came home, or we should certainly have gone to see him."

"It is more than one year and a half since I had a letter



from him. He was then on a visit with a party of students from the University to Paris. He was enjoying himself, he said, and was making rapid progress in his studies. Since that letter I had heard nothing from him, though I have written several times. I can give no reason for his silence, though I am sure it is no fault of his."

She was silent for a few moments, as if meditating upon something of the past, and then said, without raising her eyes, in an absent-minded kind of a manner, "Oh, I am *so* glad to have met you! I admired my cousin *so* much that I cannot express to you my delight in hearing of his welfare, and that he was making rapid progress in his studies."

She was about going to say something more, when a number of ladies and gentlemen waited on her, with the request that she would sing their favorite song and play some of her instrumental music on the piano. Just before she took her leave, Walter requested the honor of her assistance in the first disengaged dance, which was courteously granted.

If Walter Ludwick were surprised when he first heard her soft, sweet voice in conversation,—if he were surprised when he first saw her graceful figure and queenly bearing and elegant gait,—he was profoundly amazed, and his soul was filled with admiration, when he heard the exquisite strains of her voice in music and felt the exquisite harmony and expression in her instrumental selections. Every touch of the piano showed that of a master-hand. Being an enthusiastic admirer of music, the admiration and supreme delight which filled his soul was simply beyond description. When the last strain died away, a breathless silence reigned supreme,—that emphatic applause which is more to be appreciated than any other.

When the dancing was resumed he approached Blanche, and, upon her taking his arm, they promenaded until the music commenced, which to their infinite delight was a very exquisite waltz, and they were soon gliding away in its bewildering mazes. She was a most graceful and unostentatious waltzer, as also was Walter, and they enjoyed its mutual pleasure and delight exceedingly.

When the dancing was over, they returned to the parlor. After being seated, Walter, in a very candid and easy manner, said, "I cannot refrain complimenting you, Miss Alpen, upon your very rare musical accomplishments. Your song was most

exquisite, as also were your instrumental selections. Indeed, the taste which your instrumental selections of music portray is exceedingly fine, and the inspiration with which you play renders them unexceptionable."

"I thank you very much, Mr. Ludwick, for your compliment, and will further say that it is fully appreciated. I find so very few gentlemen who really love music, that I find it a rare treat when I meet them on almost any occasion. I am right in the inference, then, that you are very fond of music."

She expressed these thoughts with that natural simplicity of manner and sweetness of voice, which made a deep impression on Walter's mind. "I am free to say," he replied, in an earnest manner, "that your inference is right. I am indeed passionately fond of music, and yet I do not give expression to the words with any feelings of pleasure, but, on the contrary,—regret. I attribute more than half the unhappiness and discontentedness of my life, and the errors into which I have sometimes fallen, to this same spirit which makes me love music. I am pleased and infatuated with harmony, and am rendered miserable and unhappy by discord. These two extremes in my character, you will clearly perceive, require a great effort to control."

After some reflection, she said, "The thought never occurred to me in that light before. It seems to me, however, that this same spirit which causes you to love harmony and to be averse to discord would shield you from the errors of life into which you otherwise would fall."

"That may be true, Miss Alpen, in one sense. Though the profession or vocation one pursues may be in the main congenial, and would thus prevent him from falling into error, yet you know that in all our duties, which indeed make up the sum of life, there are those to be performed which are not in harmony with our own feelings, and we thus perceive an element in the composition of our natures which, though it does not disqualify us for our profession or vocation, yet gives us pain and displeasure, and sometimes leads us into errors which otherwise probably would be avoided. Have I spoken intelligibly enough for you to understand what I wish to express?"

"Yes, I think I understand you. You mean that in the performance of the main duties of your profession, whatever it may be, and which is of course congenial with your own senti-

ments and feelings, yet you find in its pursuit minor duties which do not properly belong to it, but are difficulties growing out of the same, which must be overcome before you can be successful. Now, then, in surmounting these barriers, whatever they may be, you are sometimes thrown out of the harmonious tenor of your way by your great aversion to discord; and you will thus find yourself taking a very extreme view of your position, by which you may say or do something on the impulse of the moment which you will probably ever afterwards very much regret."

"I see you are very quick of apprehension, and therefore understand my position remarkably well. For instance, in our profession, which I love very much, and in the study of which I experience great pleasure, for the reason that it opens up all the avenues of science and literature and history, and, in fact, compels one, if he would reach its sun-crowned heights, to make knowledge his province, and to become thoroughly acquainted with the history of all ages; and their laws and customs and habits. Yet there are duties—for I may call them such—connected with its practice which I know will sometimes but too harshly grate upon my too sensitive and susceptible feelings; and I will thus find myself so incensed and enraged, that I may, as you very correctly remarked, say or do something which I will afterwards very much regret. However, I know this defect in the composition of my character, and I have always endeavored to avoid the errors into which it would often lead me. Now, I think all these difficulties arise out of this same spirit which is intoxicated with the strains of sweet music."

"But, then, do you not think," she said, as her face kindled with enthusiasm and her eyes shone with a peculiar brilliancy, "that this same spirit brightens your intellect and fans all the noble impulses of your soul into glorious action and crystallizes your every expression into a power that you otherwise would not have?"

After some reflection, caused by the surprise which her remarks created, he said, in a slow and meditative manner, "Perhaps you are right. There is a spirit within us which sometimes fertilizes, as it were, the brain, and we find it no difficulty to overcome whatever may be in our pathway. I sometimes characterize it as a kind of a pathetic attribute of

the soul which fans the intellect into an unquenchable flame of enthusiasm and ambition."

"That, Mr. Ludwick, answers me. That is akin to this same spirit of music, and if it were blotted out from your existence, you would find yourself void of that spirit which, as our immortal Webster said, tended to raise us mortals to the skies. It is that spirit which makes a man great,—yes, the same spirit which makes him sublime. Our great master in poetry is not wrong when he tells us that no man should be trusted who has not music in his soul."

About the time she ceased speaking, Milton Marlan came up and requested her to assist him in a mazourka, and, when she had excused herself and taken his arm to go to the dancing-parlors, Walter Ludwick sat almost like a statue, and never turned his face away until she had disappeared among the gaudy throng of dancers. It was his intention to take an early "French leave" of the party, but now his mind was changed, and he had no little anxiety to see the end of it all. His mind and soul were filled with the strange lady whom he had just met, and he could think of nothing else.

When the guests were taking their departure, he lingered until he saw Blanche depart with Mr. Spencer. Then, with that strange feeling in his heart which is too difficult to portray, but which all feel at that very important period of their lives when, almost involuntarily, the words, "Too late, too late!" escape from their lips, he returned to his hotel, sadder and more unhappy and discontented than ever before.

From the very moment, almost, that Walter was introduced to Blanche, Charles Spencer's heart throbbed, and when he saw their interesting *tête-à-tête*,—how her cheek glowed with enthusiasm,—his very soul seemed to quake from fear. Having heard of his brilliant mind, and knowing that this was their first meeting, he seemed to realize at once, from her very appearance, that she had now met a congenial spirit.

And he was convinced that his worst suspicions were true when she took his arm on their way to the barouche. He felt that she was changed; yes, madly as he loved her, he felt in the very touch of her hand that she was changed; and a cold chill ran through his whole being.

## CHAPTER V.

Thy words had such a melting flow,  
And spoke of truth so sweetly well,  
They dropp'd like Heaven's sereneest snow,  
And all was brightness where they fell.

MOORE.

SEVERAL weeks had passed since the party at Colonel Brandon's before Walter Ludwick and Blanche Alpen met again. It was on an occasion of a dinner at Mr. Marlan's, after there had been an election of the directors by the stockholders in the bank. Mr. Belmont was to have been present, but owing to a pressing official engagement he was obliged to be away, and gave Walter Ludwick a "power of attorney" to act and vote for him. Among those present were Judge and Mrs. Alpen and daughter, Colonel and Mrs. Brandon and daughter, Theodore Thompson, and Walter Ludwick, and some other directors.

When dinner was announced, Mr. Marlan requested Mr. Ludwick to escort Miss Alpen, and Mr. Thompson Miss Brandon, to dinner,—an honor which both gentlemen very much appreciated.

Only a few words passed between Walter and Blanche until the conversation became general. The campaign for the election of President having become very exciting, politics was the important theme of conversation at the table, in the clubs, in the hotels, and, in fact, everywhere. Judge Alpen was a very warm supporter of the Administration when he went away; but since his return he had not yet sufficiently investigated the President's policy, and therefore said but little in the way of politics. There was no little anxiety to know the position of Walter Ludwick, as they saw by his suggestions in the meeting of the stockholders that he had some excellent ideas, and that he was a young man of very extraordinary abilities. Some supposed him to be opposed to the Administration on account that Mr. Belmont was very strong against it. But he soon relieved their minds by expressing himself very forcibly in favor of the President's policy, and believed that he was labor-

ing for the best interests of his country. As Judge Alpen had but little to say, Walter perceived that he was in the minority, and that it devolved upon him to lead in the conversation, as no one seemed willing to reply to the very able remarks of Colonel Brandon, who was well posted in politics, and was never so happy as when discussing them. Thus Walter found in his opponent a man of ability, as well as having a thorough knowledge of politics and the political history of his country. But wherein Walter excelled him were in his superior intellect, his fine and thorough education, and in his elegant gift of language. When he became interested in his theme, his cheek glowed, and his eyes brightened, and his voice become full and sonorous, all of which combined made his arguments strong and convincing, by which he soon gained the profound attention and appreciation of all his hearers.

But the happiest and most attentive listener was the beautiful dark-eyed lady by his side. She drank in every word that came from his lips with eager draughts. She caught the spirit which animated his own soul, and her cheek glowed with enthusiasm as his glowed, and her eyes brightened as his brightened, when he became more and more interested in the theme of their conversation. And when they arose from the table, and she had taken his arm, she felt in his very touch the magnetic chord which thrilled her own heart with delight.

They seated themselves at the bay-window of the parlor, where there were clusters of very beautiful flowers, some of which had been presented to Miss Marlan as Christmas presents. As they were both admiring them, Blanche said, "I perceive from your conversation that you are quite an enthusiastic supporter of the Administration. I should think that you were very fond of politics."

"I am not so much of a politician as I am interested in the welfare of my country; I do not think I would even care to be a politician. There is so much in the vocation so revolting to that same spirit of which I told you the first time we met. But my first thought—that which inspires my soul more than anything else—is the welfare and prosperity of my country. And I am so firmly convinced that the Administration is so right, and all its aims are for the whole country's good,—that it and the country are all one. I may be wrong, but if I am, it is an error of the head and not of the heart."

He saw how interested she was in his remarks, how her face glowed with enthusiasm, and he continued: "And why should not our first impressions be for our country? There is no nation beneath the broad circuit of the sun where liberty flourishes to so great an extent as here. Many a poor father in far-off climes, as he closes his eyes in death, uttered faintly the wish that his children might, at some day not far distant, be permitted to breathe the pure air of America. Where do the down-trodden and oppressed of every land think of going? Is it to England, that boasts of the best laws beneath the sun? Is it to Russia, that has so recently lifted itself up to a high standard of freedom among the nations of the earth? Is it to Prussia, that has now become one of the most powerful and best-educated nations in the Old World? Oh, no! their hopes and their joys, their eyes and their hearts, are all turned to this free and glorious country of ours! Here is the Mecca around which all the purest thoughts of their hearts centre. Yes, wherever the sun shines, this starry banner of our country is hailed as the harbinger of peace and liberty and prosperity."

As he ceased speaking, Blanche clasped her hands across her breast and drew a deep sigh. After a brief silence, she leaned her elbow on the table, and rested her cheek upon the palm of her hand, and said, dreamily, as she looked out on the piazza, "Oh, how often I have wished that I were a man, so that I could do something, or give expression to the thoughts and sentiments which fill my restless and enthusiastic soul! But you see woman's sphere is so narrow."

As she ceased speaking, she leaned back in her chair again in her usual position, and did not notice the shadow pass over his face at the remarks she had made.

After some reflection, he said, in his full and sonorous tone, slightly softened by the regret he felt at the words she had spoken, "I cannot join in your wish, Miss Alpen. Heaven designed us all for some purpose, and I sincerely think that every human being will have to answer for the manner in which this mission is performed. 'To whom much is given much will be required.' We cannot change our respective spheres in life; and—believe me, Miss Alpen—we should not desire to. Those who fulfill the mission assigned them do well,—none can do better. Your mission is an exalted, a heavenly one. It

is true that you are not required to take the outer posts of life,—you are not to bear the heat and burden of the day,—but you can smooth the way for others in such a way as no one else can. Like the tender vine that gently and softly winds itself around the giant oak and holds it there amid the wildest storms, so you, with that peculiar grace and influence which is only given to woman, can work your way into the hearts of men while engaged in their varied scenes and duties of life, and thus wield a power which none on earth can resist. Oh, Miss Alpen! it is needless for me to recount the achievements which are in your power to accomplish, for they are as numerous as the grains of sand upon the shore. Yes, your position is a noble one,—it is a godlike one:—never wish to change it, for—believe me again—you will never better it,—you cannot better it."

A silence followed when he ceased speaking; Blanche was looking, as it were, into space, and was engaged in deep thought. Presently she raised her eyes, and placed her finger lightly on his arm,—so lightly that he would not have felt it had he not been looking at her,—as she said, softly, tenderly, "You told me, I believe, that you were the confidential friend and school-mate of my cousin Dewitt. You must, then, remember, when he graduated, how he seemed to lose all his ambition, and made no choice of any profession; how his mother so grieved over it, and how the hopes and lofty anticipations of his friends were about to be frustrated."

"Yes, I remember all you say as though it were a yesterday, and many a time, with tears in my eyes, have sought to direct his mind onward and upward, so that when he would leave college, he could grasp the helm which would guide him in safety o'er the stormy and tempestuous sea of life."

"Now, about five or six months before we sailed for Europe, he paid us a visit,—remained nearly three months. We were all delighted with him: he was so pleasant, so lively, so gay; and there did not seem to be a cloud resting upon his young and joyous heart. But I soon observed what an aimless young man he was. I saw he had nothing in view beyond the present. Oh, I longed for an opportunity by which I might strike the match that would set his whole soul in a flame of enthusiasm, and urge him on to deeds of noble action and glorious achievements! The opportunity came. I told him

how fruitless and barren was his life; I endeavored to point out and show him what a brilliant career there was before him, and the many advantages he had of making himself a great man, if he would but put forth the effort. I said 'it was a shame that he, with his brilliant mind and thorough education, should stand all the day idle, while others with not half the advantages were marching manfully along with that long and illustrious train of noble and ingenious youth which throng the great thoroughfares of life.' When I finished and had taken my seat, exhausted almost with the effort I had made, he suddenly and as quickly as he could left the room. The next day he returned home, and I have not seen him since."

"I am so glad you have mentioned this occurrence, for now that is all made plain to me which was before so much of a mystery. About the time you say he left you he visited me, and remained several months. I noticed the change in his manner, and when I inquired the cause, he only replied 'that he was tired doing nothing.' He told me of his intention to finish his education in Europe; and I tried to prevail on his finishing it here, but he would not adhere to it at all. Nothing else would do but go to Europe. I have heard from him since, and he said he was progressing rapidly in his studies; and I have not the least doubt but that he will come home with a most thorough knowledge of his profession."

"Oh, I am so glad to hear it! I was so sorry when he left, for I thought perhaps he would always remain angry with me. But now when you assure me that he has so changed, and is making rapid progress in his studies, what I said to him must have done him some good."

"I have not the least doubt but that you were the means of infusing into his mind a noble purpose and a worthy ambition, which will in the end make him, as you said, a great man."

"Oh, I am so glad you tell me that you think so! I loved my cousin so much, and I would like to hear of his succeeding in life, if I should never see him again."

The conversation now turned on other subjects. This little circumstance about Dewitt had the effect of gaining the confidence of each other, and they felt that their meeting was like that of old friends who had long been estranged from each other. Literature had been introduced, and Blanche had commenced to tell him that she liked poetry better than prose,

when the colonel's little daughter came to them and said that Mr. Alpen was ready to go home.

They had arisen to go, when, in reply to what she had spoken, he said, "When I am tired of reading everything else, and I can find nothing that will satisfy the longings of my heart, I take Shakspeare and reperuse him with renewed pleasure. I never read an extract or a play but I find something new therein."

There was such a bewildering grandeur in her face, and her eyes shone with a peculiar brilliancy, as she replied, "I cannot tell you how much I echo your own sentiments concerning this great master in poetry. The world will never see him again."

As they were about parting, she said, "Now, Mr. Ludwick, could you not find time enough from your studies to call and spend an evening with me? Remember I am always at home, and will be always pleased to meet you at any time it may suit your convenience to call."

Pleased with this kind and cordial invitation, he said, "I cannot express to you the pleasure it would afford me to pass an evening with you at your own home; and I take pleasure in saying that I will embrace the first opportunity I have to avail myself of the kind invitation you have so generously extended me."

A few more words passed, and she had gone; in a few more minutes he had gone, with strange emotions in his heart,—emotions which he could scarcely realize,—emotions never felt before.

## CHAPTER VI.

That strain again! It had a dying fall;  
Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,  
That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving odor.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE dark shadow that heretofore had hung over Blanche Alpen had disappeared. That utter longing which comes from a disappointment of something which we do not care to express in words to any one, had passed away, and her heart was light

and gay, and her joyous soul found expression in the ecstasies of song. Wherever she went about the house, her step was light and elastic, and her laugh was gay and musical. She arranged her literary works in the parlor,—placing the poetical in the most prominent place, and her favorite prose authors next. She placed her own very beautiful illustrated copy of Shakspeare, which she had brought with her from England, on the parlor table. She arranged her music. Exquisite pieces that had long remained untouched were now brought forth and played over and over with enhanced delight, for she well knew who would ere long hear them. Some of her old, favorite songs, which had slumbered for years gone by, were brought forth too, and sung with a new pathos, heretofore unknown. Oh, there was a sweet, enthusiastic joy in her heart never felt before!

And she watched for him evening after evening, since they had last met. Every footfall she heard, every ring at the bell, she thought was his, but he came not.

A fortnight passed, and on an evening of a cold, blustering day in January, when the winds had subsided, and all was calm and still, the bell rang, and in a few moments Walter Ludwick was announced.

The mention of his name filled her heart with delight; she met him at the threshold with a light step, and, extending her hand to him, said, "I felt sure, Mr. Ludwick, that you would come this evening. Yet, when I think of it, I felt sure you were coming every evening since we last met. Why did you defer your call so long? Take this arm-chair. I believe I heard you say the last time we met that you were partial to them."

There was a candor, a truthfulness of expression about Blanche Alpen that few ladies possessed. There was not one spark of deception in her whole being. The idea of concealing her admiration for any one or anything never for a moment entered her mind. She was pleased to meet him, and she expressed that pleasure in the words she had spoken. To some it may seem that she, by her words, too much portrayed her admiration and delight at meeting him; and that, had it been their opportunity, they would have endeavored to conceal their delight as much as possible. But to such narrow-minded and little-souled creatures I would say, that her noble and gen-

cious heart and her lofty and refined sense of honor and brilliant intellect could never for one moment harbor such a low, mean, and contemptible and unlady-like thought. Deception in its remotest form was as foreign to her nature as night is from day. She was delighted to meet this congenial spirit of hers, and her happy, joyous heart prompted the expression.

He pressed her hand gently as he thanked her earnestly for her cordial words of welcome, and then, after he was seated, said, "But how shall I answer your question as to why I deferred my call so long? I was going to say that business in the office, and a diligent pursuit of my studies. But how futile and vain, I have always thought, such excuses must be to ladies. Who of us cannot spend an evening one time just as well as another, unless on some particular occasion? So, as I cannot give you any substantial reason, I will say that I cannot tell. It was not because I did not desire to come, for I did most earnestly; and was on the eve of coming for several evenings until this evening, when I now find myself in your presence."

There was an easy and affable manner so transparent in this rather circumambulating answer to her question, that fascinated and pleased her. There was an earnestness in his voice and a candor in his expression that gained her confidence and esteem. The conversation was genial and commonplace, and when an opportunity presented itself, Walter said, in a low and earnest tone, "If I remember rightly, Miss Alpen, I think you promised me some music when an opportunity presented itself. You cannot guess how much I would be delighted to hear you now."

"Yes," she said, rising, "I believe you told me you were passionately fond of music. But I become so wrapt up in the melodies of song, when listened to by any one who I think appreciates it, that you will have to tell me when you are wearied."

She sang some of her sweetest and soul-stirring songs, in which she threw all the animation and pathos of her soul. Her voice was clear and soft and sweet, and she gave the piano such a touch that she had never given before. After she had played some of her own favorites, he named some of his own, which she joyfully played. Then she played some of her sweetest instrumental selections from the most classical com-

posers. The greatest feature about her playing was the great expression portrayed in its execution. I have heard some ladies tear a beautiful and exquisite waltz to pieces by the expressionless manner in which they played it. But, oh, the expression with which she played it! It filled his soul with rapture and seemed to transport him to some more congenial clime.

After they had been seated and engaged in conversation, Walter remarked, as he approached the table and took up her copy of Shakspeare, "What a beautiful copy of our 'great master in poetry,'—the finest I ever saw!"

He was looking at the illustrations as she replied, "That is a present which my mother gave me when we were in London. It was the finest one she could obtain. She is a very enthusiastic admirer of his writings, and perhaps it was owing to her that I admire Shakspeare so much. I never remember the time in my life when I did not see her occasionally reading him over and over again. I sometimes doubt whether my admiration results from a natural taste or not, and sometimes I am induced to think that it is the result of association and cultivation."

"It matters very little which it is, so you appreciate him; but if I were to venture an opinion, I would say that your taste was natural. I never scarcely saw any one who admired Shakspeare from cultivation. Unless under perhaps circumstances like your own, of continual association with one who does admire him, none is apt to appreciate him, except they have a natural taste for poetry of this kind. With your impulsive and enthusiastic soul, I do not see how it were possible for you not to admire him."

"I thank you very much," she replied, "for your compliment. And now I must show you some of my other poetical works," she said, as she arose and brought from another table an armful of books and laid them down before him. "These are also favorite authors of mine," she said. "There is a beauty and simplicity of expression in Tennyson's works that I very much admire. This copy of him is a present from my father. He is a great admirer of all the classical poets, and even yet I see him read them over and over again. And here is a copy of Scott's poems. I am amused every time I read him, for it makes me think that I could just sit down and write as well

as he does. Every line seems to come without any effort, and his poems are so clear and refreshing that I sometimes think it no labor at all. But here," she said, enthusiastically, "is a copy of poor, unhappy Byron, whose mysterious and tempestuous life fills the hearts of his many admirers with sorrow. The most I admire in his works is the enthusiasm and animation that is so transparent in every line. He seems to breathe out every word from his soul. I think if there ever were a born poet, he was one."

And thus she went on with many other of her favorite authors. "Of course," she said, in a kind of girlish manner that was very fascinating indeed, "this must seem to you as being very pedantic in me to be thus speaking of these works when you know more about them than I do myself. But then I find it such a sweet pleasure to talk with one who appreciates them as I do myself, that I cannot help but give expression to whatever thoughts come into my mind."

Walter was imbued with a peculiar feeling which her presence inspired. He was delighted with her soft, musical voice, the animation and enthusiasm of her face, and the brilliancy and grandeur of her eyes, which shone with a lustre heretofore unobserved. He drank in every word she said, and when she had ceased, it seemed for a reply, he said, in a low, kind, and amiable voice, "Do not misunderstand me, Miss Alpen. The happiest moments I have almost ever experienced in my life are at this very moment, when the very words you utter find so full an expression in my own heart. I have longed to meet some one who appreciated these thrilling works as I did myself, and now you cannot imagine my delight when I am in the presence of one whose thoughts and sentiments are the counterpart of my own."

She thanked him cordially, and then proceeded to show him all her favorite works of poetry. She said softly, as she showed him some of her prose authors, "I sometimes like to read prose the best. There are moods in which I like poetry, and there are moods in which I like prose better. I cannot account for this. Do you ever have any such moods yourself? It may be peculiar to me."

With a low and earnest voice, he replied, "I have often asked myself the very question you desire me to answer. Poetry, as I told you one time before, is my favorite literature;

but there are times when I relish prose the most. Yes, there are times, too, when for amusement I delight to peruse some deep philosophical or scientific work in preference to either. I can only answer you by saying that the human mind is so varied and complex, that it requires a vast field of literature and science of all kinds to satisfy and fill all its channels."

When he had finished, she concluded her description of her favorite authors, and then said, "But I must show you a very beautiful volume of *Harper's Weeklies*. I had them bound in compliance with my own instructions before I went to Europe." And as she laid the volume down before him, she continued: "I think there is nothing so refreshing as of a Saturday evening to pick up *Harper's Weekly*, to admire its engravings, and to read its interesting editorials and the many other interesting sketches with which its columns are filled. Did you ever experience the pleasure of which I speak?"

"Ah, yes," he said, softly. "I think its editorials are the finest in the world. I should feel as though something had gone wrong were I deprived of the pleasure of sitting down, as you say, of a Saturday evening, to read and admire it."

And so they talked until Walter was surprised at the lateness of the hour. And as he arose to go, he said, "I would be so pleased, Miss Alpen, were you to play that first piece you played from Strauss. I have never heard it before, and the strain still rings in my ears."

"Certainly, I shall be happy to do so," she said, as she seated herself at the piano. She played with pathos and soul-like pleasure never experienced before.

"Now," he said, when she had finished, "would you think me too tedious were I to ask you to sing that song,—I think it was the second one you sang this evening? I am sure I never heard anything to equal it. Perhaps it is the manner in which you sing it, but it is most exquisite music."

She sang the song with that expression in which she threw her whole soul; and when she had finished, she noticed the impression it produced on her auditor, and it filled her heart with delight.

When he was about to leave the parlor, she said, "Now, Mr. Ludwick, since you have found the way once, can you not find it so as to return frequently? You must not consume all your time in study. Let others share some of it."

After some hesitation, he said, "It would be delightful for me to come frequently and pass an evening with such a congenial companion; but, oh, Miss Alpen, it would not do for me to come often! With your musical and literary accomplishments, you take me too far from the real world—that stormy and stony world in which I am compelled to walk—and transport me, as it were, into the green fields and garden-lands of that ideal world where the flowers are in perpetual bloom and the birds sing their sweet songs forever. No, no, I dare not come often. I believe I told you one time before that I wished that I did not care anything for music. I think so yet, unless I was where I could have excess of it, and then it would render me unfit for the great duties of life."

She listened very attentively to what he said, and then, with her eyes cast on the floor, she said, in a slow and thoughtful manner, "I think, Mr. Ludwick, you are wrong. You should not wish anything of the kind. I have somewhere read, and I cannot now recall the place, that the real and the ideal world go side by side. I do think it is so true." And then straightening herself up and looking him in the face, her eyes full of that loving tenderness, and her voice soft and sweet, continued: "I know, Mr. Ludwick, that you would not be satisfied were your wish granted. This restless and unhappy spirit of which you speak is one element in your soul which should make you great. Yes, it ought to make every man great, if he has the corresponding degree of intellect. If you study life aright, you will observe that if there were no sorrows there would be no joys, and that in proportion to the pain we experience it is followed by an exquisite sense of joy, which thrills the heart with delight. Why should you make your vocation the thorny and stony way through life? There are times when the soul would delight to wing its way to the green fields and garden-lands of the ideal world; and it would come back damp with the dews of inspiration, and would be stronger and more fortified for the active and hurried duties of life. And another thing: you must not lose sight of the fact that this life is, as it were, of a few days, and then all is over. Now, tell me if I do not speak truly when I say that in your business pursuits,—when your mind is monopolized in your business or centred on the goal to which your ambition aspires,—tell me if I am not right when I say that in this haste to be rich or great the



mind is never directed upwards,—that you never stop to reflect that beyond the realms of time there is an all-eternity which will claim your existence forever? I say it is only when this spirit, which you say you wish you did not possess, recalls your mind and checks its disastrous course, that you are reminded of the higher and nobler purpose of your life. I might possibly agree with you, if this life were the end of our existence; but, oh! did you never pause for a moment and reflect how small a portion is this life of our existence? Oh, that incomprehensible eternity! Our great master in poetry spoke truly when he said that "no man should be trusted who had not music in his soul." Crush out the spirit of music from your being, and at the same moment you extinguish all that is noble, all that is grand, all that is godlike in mankind."

When she ceased speaking there was a refulgence and sweetness in her face that was beyond expression, and which filled his soul with admiration and delight. He pressed her hand affectionately, as he enthusiastically said, "Oh, what a true guide to all that leads to true greatness! You teach me a lesson that I never dreamed of before. I do not wonder that your cousin was inspired to deeds of noble action by your impressive and persuasive words."

He approached the door as he ceased speaking. She thanked him cordially, and in a few more moments and he was gone.

## CHAPTER VII.

Thou hast prevaricated with thy friend,  
By underhand contrivance undone me;  
And while my open nature trusted in thee,  
Thou hast stepped in between me and my hopes,  
And ravished from me all my soul held dear;  
Thou hast betrayed me.

ROWE: *Lady Jane Grey.*

As was mentioned in a former chapter, Charles Spencer felt in the very touch of Blanche that she was changed. Perhaps it was more in his imagination than in her manner, for he had seen how her cheek glowed as they progressed in their conver-

sation at the party where she first met Walter Ludwick. But he had called on her frequently afterwards, and found that his first impressions were verified. He plainly saw that her manner was changed, but he dared not let her know that he suspected the cause. He studiously avoided anything of the kind that would lead her to suspect that he noticed it. He never even mentioned the name of Mr. Ludwick in her presence.

There was no doubt at all that when he gained the promise from Blanche to allow him to pay his attentions to her, that he was truthful in what he said. He was in real earnest when he said that he would relinquish every claim as soon as he had the least impression that she loved any one else better than himself. But he did not know his own heart when he thought this; he did not fully comprehend the strong hold she had on his affections. The strong, impassioned love he bore her was not so easily crushed when he came to realize the dread reality that she would be lost to him forever. He had thought that he would be contented and satisfied when he knew that she was happy in the love and affections of another; but he had never fully comprehended her in the light of being forever estranged from him; neither had he fully given thought to the fact of her being the wife of another. But now, when the glaring truth flashed full upon his mind that she loved another, it was more than he could endure. For weeks he studied what he could or would do to prevent it. There was a cold, hard, and set purpose in his face which showed that his mind was deeply set upon some purpose. Of late he had been reading a great many of those hairbreadth-escape novels, where they tell of frustrating the plans and hopes of lovers, and how the hero succeeded in stealing the one he loved away, and finally forced her to marry him. His mind was now fully made up to this purpose, after every other effort had failed.

He called Harry Wasson into his private room one evening, and, after cautioning profound secrecy, instructed him the first time he met Mr. Ludwick, to endeavor to create the impression, or to say in so many words, that he (Spencer) and Miss Alpen were engaged, and would be married about next autumn. Harry assured him that he would be faithful, and would attend to the matter as dextrously as he could. Mr. Spencer knew that he would do so, and that he would follow implicitly his

instructions. He now directed his mind to another point to be gained.

One evening he was going down street, and Nancy Spriggins was sitting at the door-steps as he approached the house. She arose and extended her hand very cordially, as she said, "Indeed, Mr. Spencer, I am glad to see you. Where have you been keeping yourself for so long a time back? Won't you come in?"

"Certainly," Mr. Spencer replied; and, after he had taken his seat, continued: "I have been East, and only returned the other day. What has transpired since I have been gone? You always know the news and can tell me everything."

"Oh, Mr. Spencer, you give me credit for too much! But I believe I can tell you some news. But you must promise me upon your word of honor that you will not tell anything I have said to you to any living soul upon earth."

"Why, certainly, Miss Nancy; you would not suppose that I was such a tell-tale as to reveal anything you had cautioned me to conceal? I promise you profound secrecy if you require it."

"I would take your word, Mr. Spencer, for anything, and therefore I will say no more on that point. But what I was going to say is this—Of course I know that you and Miss Alpen are engaged, and so does every one; but I saw something the other evening that I did not like very much. Miss Fannie Murdoch—my particular friend—and myself called on her, and who do you suppose we found there? Why, you will no doubt be surprised when I tell you that it was Mr. Ludwick, the law-student of that hateful Mr. Belmont. You know any person that Miss Fannie does not like, you know I don't; and that is a sufficient explanation for my antipathy towards him. But, indeed, Mr. Ludwick is a most agreeable and fine-looking young man. Fannie thought so, too; and you know she is a most splendid judge. And Miss Alpen,—oh, she was the most charming creature on that evening I ever saw! She seemed so happy and so gay. There did not seem to be the slightest cloud resting on her mind. She played and sang some of her sweetest songs, and then played some most exquisite instrumental pieces. Then she and Mr. Ludwick played some beautiful duets, after which they read some selections from Shakspeare. Oh, Mr. Lud-

wick is so elegant and interesting! We had a most delightful evening. Fannie said to me as we were going home, that 'they just seemed as though they were made for each other; for they were so congenial in their tastes and sentiments.' And I just thought so myself. I never saw two more alike in their aspirations and sentiments than they are."

Every word that she uttered pierced Mr. Spencer's heart as though they had been so many knives. If Nancy had been a close observer of the impressions made on any one by the appearance of their face, she would have seen the almost blank despair that was written on his whole countenance as she continued speaking. But with one desperate effort he broke out with a forced laugh, as he said,—

"Why, Miss Nancy, I thank you for your information; but that does not interfere in any manner with Blanche and myself. Of course there is no use in concealing the fact from you that we are engaged. You know that as well as I do. But now I can tell you something that I believe you do not know,—that Mr. Ludwick has been engaged for the last three or four years to a very beautiful blonde."

"Why, is it possible!" Nancy exclaimed, in the utmost surprise and consternation. "I never thought of anything of the kind before. How did you find it out?"

"Well, that was not difficult. I ascertained the fact when I was in New York, where I saw some of the friends of Dewitt La-Guere, who is the confidential friend and school-mate of Mr. Ludwick. Then, could you not see as much from his manner and actions since he came here? I am so surprised that you, who are so sharp in other things, could not see at a glance that he has hardly ever taken a lady here out in public. You never saw him even take Miss Alpen out to any public entertainment, and you see he has been here even two years. So you see that is evidence enough, for I believe Mr. Ludwick is a gentleman; and however well he may desire the company of young ladies, yet he does not so far forget his honor as to be gallanting ladies in public when he is already engaged. Now, do you not see how right I am, and how insipid—parlous the expression—you have been for once only——"

"Oh, Mr. Spencer! now since I think of it, I never was so blind in anything in my life. I wonder I did not think of this before. I see now how clearly correct you are. Since I think

of it, I have never known of Mr. Ludwick's gallanting a lady in public since he came to the city, and the most attention I have seen him give any lady is that to Miss Alpen. And as you say, the intimacy that has grown up between them is owing, I suppose in the main, to the fact that Mr. Ludwick is a friend of her cousin?"

"Just so," Mr. Spencer replied. "They were very intimate friends, and it is very natural for his cousin and his bosom friend to be attached to each other. But now I know you are a young lady who delights to have some fun; and if you will join with me in what I am going to tell you, we can have a good joke on Blanche. Now, will you promise me profound secrecy if I will tell you how we can have some fun?"

"Oh, certainly, certainly! You know I never reveal anything I promise to keep a secret. Upon my word and honor I will do just as you tell me. Do tell me your secret quick: and I will do all I can to help you."

Mr. Spencer felt sure now that she would believe anything he said, and would never stop to consider the inconsistency of it, unless some keener mind would first fathom it. He thought the plot a little shallow as being a joke on Blanche when the engagement of her to him was considered as a fixed fact, between him and Nancy. But he had enough judgment of human nature to know that Nancy would never stop to think anything about it, and would do just as he bade her without inquiring the cause, or without calculating the bare suspicion of it being a failure. So he came right down to the point and said, "Now, the joke I want to play on Blanche is this,—I want to make her believe that Mr. Ludwick is engaged, and you see, then, that she will always be teasing him to find out who it is to. Should it happen to turn out that he was not engaged, then we would have such a good joke on her for not knowing whether the confidential friend of her cousin was engaged or not. Oh, how we can tease her about it, and laugh over it! Now, I want you candidly to tell me what you think of the plot."

"Oh, a most capital one!" she exclaimed. "I think it will be so good, and then she will always be asking him about it; and should it turn out, as you say, that there was nothing of his engagement, then we can have such a good joke on her."

"I knew you would join in with me, for there is no danger of her becoming angry at you, for I can, with one word, fix that all up, and she will then laugh over it herself. Now, you call on her some evening this week, and in an indirect manner ask her if she ever saw Mr. Ludwick's future bride. Of course she will say no. Then you exclaim, in that most exquisite ejaculation of yours, 'Oh, she is so beautiful! so beautiful!' They say she is a perfect blonde, and almost approaches the bewildering beauty of Fannie Murdoch. Then you can say anything else that comes in your mind."

"Oh, it will just be 'perfectly elegant!' You may depend I will fix the matter up just as you say, and I know we will have such good fun over it. I have a novel here, and I will just commit a piece to say to her."

A few more words and he was gone. Nancy was profoundly impressed with the gravity of her mission; and she never felt prouder in her life than when bearing a commission or doing services for Charles Spencer,—the richest man in the city. The poor, as a general thing, despise the rich, and yet the loudest and most notable defamers of them are the very ones who, with a smile or a little condescension on their part, will stoop to do almost anything for them. Charles Spencer never gave Miss Nancy Spriggins any attention worth mentioning in his life, and yet she would now be duped into performing any act that he might desire, just because he was rich and condescended to speak to her.

As for Charles Spencer—the man who was always considered honorable and upright in heart—thus debasing himself, it is nothing more than that degradation to which fallen man will stoop to accomplish some cherished object or purpose. His actions in this case, after the solemn promise he had made to Blanche that midnight hour, when he almost made her promise to let him be her gallant, speak for themselves, as did the dispatch sent to some of his friends by Victor Hugo when he wrote, in answer to the news of the Plebiscitum in France, "Rotten Humanity." Yes, when we see honorable men, or men whom the world calls honorable, stooping to such debasing means as those which Charles Spencer is now doing to accomplish his ends, well may we exclaim, "Rotten Humanity!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

O love! O glory! What are ye? Who fly  
 Around us ever rarely to alight;  
 There's not a meteor in the polar sky  
 Of such transcendent and more fleeting flight.

BYRON.

THERE are two cardinal elements of the human soul which are so intimately associated and identified with each other that, so far as earthly happiness is concerned, they are almost one and inseparable. In this busy and active world, I allude to one's domestic life and that other life which is occupied by the pursuit of his business or profession, whatever it may be. These are so intimately connected, that a cloud which hangs over one reflects its dark shadow over the other. If one of these two lives, as it were, is more affected by one than the other, it is a man's business or public life. For it is indeed true that when the domestic or social faculties are once disorganized they embitter every other pleasure of life. A man may be unfortunate in his worldly pursuits, and yet with the kind words and loving smiles that are showered upon him in his domestic relations, he may be really happy and contented, notwithstanding the pecuniary reverses he may have sustained. But if he be unfortunate in his domestic relations; if the social faculties have once become disorganized, no amount of success or unprecedented prosperity will clear away the dark shadows that may cross his pathway through life. He will always be an unhappy and discontented man, and will grow old before his time.

We have a good example of this in the character of Mr. Belmont. There are few men in this world who are or have been favored with such unprecedented success as was vouchsafed to him. Being poor when he commenced the practice of his profession, he arose step by step until, through his own industry and ability, he has reached the sun-crowned heights of his profession. His life is one of those shining marks which gives proof to the maxim that every man is the archi-

tect of his own fortune. And yet, is he happy now? Is it not folly in my attempting to answer the question? Every one knows he is not. His social relations have been blighted, and thus we find him, too, growing old before his time.

And could we but behold, in one vast, panoramic view, the different phases of human life, or could we but raise the curtain and get but one brief glimpse behind the scenes, what a world of heart-burnings and sorrows and misery would meet our bewildered and astonished eyes! Yes, many a brilliant life has been wasted by reason of this domestic part of his existence being shrouded in gloom. Though the man may have had a good mind and a disposition to succeed in life, yet he may have been so utterly disheartened and vexed by the dark shadows that were reflected upon his pathway from the disorganization of his social faculties that he has sunk down, broken in spirit, and utterly failed. Who can tell but that the vagabond wandering in the streets, or the felon dragging out a miserable existence in his cell, or the maniac raving in his iron chains, would never have fallen, or if fallen, might have been reclaimed by the loving care, the sweet solace, the unbounded influence which the faithful wife, or loving sister, or affectionate mother could have wielded over him in his happy home? In his dark hours of adversity the loving wife would be standing near, ever ready and willing to help him, and thus by her refreshing sympathy and sincere love would clear away the clouds that may have gathered around him.

Some have stronger minds than others, and will bear it all while life remains; but there will always be in their social relations a dreary, aching void that nothing can fill. They never give up, and, with an iron will, they toil on and overcome every barrier that may loom up before them by steadfastly turning their eyes from the dark picture and keeping them on the pursuits of their lives. Such men will seem to the world, perhaps, happy and contented, but if we could see their inner or domestic life, we would not see one moment of pure, unalloyed bliss.

Something similar to this was the life of Walter Ludwick, since he met the dark-eyed lady at the Springs; but who in these two last years of his life has entirely faded from his memory, by reason of his firm resolution when he commenced the study of his profession with Mr. Belmont. I do not mean

to say, however, that any disappointment or disarrangement in his social faculties would so utterly crush him as to render him unfit for the duties of life. No, not in the slightest degree, for there was within him that inherent pride which would enable him to rise above anything of the kind, although the effort would be a fearful one and would destroy all his earthly happiness. But though outwardly he now seemed happy, yet if one could have seen him when away from his studies and away from his earthly pursuits, and should have scanned his face closely during his lonely twilight hours, he could have seen written therein a restless, uneasy, and unhappy life. As has been mentioned in a previous chapter, Walter Ludwick was eminently a social man. He longed to have a home of his own, adorned with green trees and flowers, and musical with the songs of birds, where he could live with a sweet, loving, and congenial companion, amid books and pictures and music and noble and exalted friendships. Oh, this was a picture which he had painted for himself during his whole life, but which, alas! he oftentimes thought was almost doomed to everlasting destruction. His discontented, unhappy, and aspiring soul only found relief when engaged in deep, profound, and logical study. Social as he was, yet his sociability was different from most young men of his age. It was no pleasure for him to spend an evening with jovial companions over glasses of wine and games of cards; no pleasure for him to join a fireman's company, or a base-ball club, or a boat club. To all such amusements as these he turned languidly away, as if beneath his dignity to engage in them. But to the debating club or the literary society, or any social gathering where any scientific, historical, or literary topic was the theme of discussion, he turned with that impulsive delight which knew no bounds. And strange to say, if there were any other amusement that he delighted in more than any other, it was the dance. Here, if there were sweet and exquisite music, he experienced that exquisite pleasure which nothing else in the lonely and quiet life he led could give. And thus it was that a dark shadow, as it were, seemed to hang over his domestic or social life. While others were happy with their jovial companions, he would be in his own room, poring over some ancient history, or reading the lives of some of the great men who had gone before him. And thus it was that in his face there was a

solemn, thoughtful expression, that induced Judge Alpen to remark one time to Mr. Belmont that he seemed to him like a young man on whom there was an old man's head. There was great truth in the remark, for there were few young men of his age who possessed an equal degree of learning and knowledge. The career which he had marked out for himself was a great and noble one, and there was none who doubted his success, should he be blessed with the continuance of that health of body without which any one must fail.

This was the portrait of Walter Ludwick before he met Blanche Alpen. If that channel of his soul in which his business pursuits ran was heretofore something darkened by the clouds which hung over his social life, it was now lighted up with one brilliant flame of enthusiastic joy. The dark shadows had all dispersed, and his heart was filled with that alluring hope which makes everything in the outer world look brighter and more beautiful. His room at the hotel, which always looked so dusky and uninviting, was now filled with a flood of glorious sunshine; and if there were times when he would draw down the blinds to engage in deep study, so that the scenes around him would be in harmony with the darkness and gloom of his own soul, so now, when engaged in the deepest study, he raised them high, so that the clear sunlight of day might light up his room, as the heretofore dark channels of his soul were lighted up by this new and sudden glory which filled his heart. Oh, with what supreme delight he renewed his studies the next day after the last interview recorded between him and Blanche! No darkness, no gloom, no sorrow, filled his soul, for all was joy and sunshine. And if his thoughts were not on his studies, no one would doubt where they would be. As from a brilliant light shining from afar, all the faculties of his mind were made brighter and clearer, and he grasped the most complex and difficult questions with an avidity and intuitive perception heretofore unknown.

But alas for the frailty of human hopes! This picture, this joy, was doomed to last not long! Harry Wasson had long been watching for an opportunity to poison the cup of Walter's happiness, and at last he found it. As he was passing Mr. Belmont's office one day in Charles Spencer's gay rig, he invited Walter, who was standing at the door about to leave for his hotel, to take a drive with him, which was accepted. It

was during this buggy ride that he conveyed to Walter the terrible news of Blanche Alpen's engagement with Charles Spencer. Though he had heard as much and guessed as much before, yet he did not believe it; but now when he heard the news, or the fact, from Mr. Spencer's own friend and employé, he was convinced that it must be true. His only reply was, that "he had heard as much before," and added, "that Mr. Spencer was very much of a gentleman."

They took several whirls around different parts of the city, and then Harry stopped in front of Walter's hotel, where he alighted and went immediately to his room. Harry was not a close observer of men, else he would have noticed the change that came over Walter's face when he revealed the fact of the engagement. Oh, how it utterly crushed his new-born hopes, and almost checked the life-blood in his veins! How dark and cold the outer world seemed to what it was a few moments before he received this fatal revelation! and what an impenetrable cloud of gloom enveloped his soul when the astounding word "engaged" escaped from his lips! He knew now that he loved her,—yes, loved her with all the power and enthusiasm of his soul. And sadder still—he knew and felt in his very heart of hearts that his love was reciprocated, but that in an evil hour, when she did not know her own heart truly, she had bestowed the priceless affections of her soul upon another.

Yes, Walter Ludwick loved Blanche Alpen with his whole soul. There was not a fibre in her heart which, when touched, did not find a sweet response in his own. The ideal that for years filled his thoughts by day and his dreams by night had now assumed human shape in her form. She was to him the very embodiment of all that was pure and good and heavenly, and his brightest thoughts and loftiest expressions were inspired by her. Yes, she was the motive-power which gave his mind a new impetus, and filled his soul with that sweet and exquisite joy which knows no bounds.

But when the excitement and deep impression which this revelation or report produced had to some extent abated, he came to view it—as he did everything else—in a common-sense and matter-of-fact way, as much as his animative and impulsive spirit would admit. What he most admired in a lady was truth and candor; and if she did at some past time pledge her sacred honor to be another's, could he blame her? And

still further than this: if she were not engaged, and did not reciprocate his love, could he blame her?

There is a trait in the character of Walter Ludwick which it would be well enough to notice here. Notwithstanding his deep, impassioned love for Blanche, inspired by her congenial tastes and sentiments, and though he had loved her ten times as well, if yet he could just have ascertained to a certainty that she did not reciprocate his love in an equal or greater degree, from that very moment he would have banished all thoughts of her from his mind, hard and torturing as the task would have been. There is honor in love as well as in anything else; and how could any man with the pride and spirit of Walter Ludwick love where he knew his love was not reciprocated? Such a thing as hanging on to a lady and endeavoring to have her learn to love him was so utterly ridiculous and revolting to Walter Ludwick's proud spirit, that he would have torn his very heart-strings out of him before he would have let the thought of it enter his mind. I know there are those who will doubt his love, but it is because they do not know him. There was born in him a spirit of pride which no misfortune, however severe, no grief, however torturing, no downfall, however humiliating, could ever crush out. If by the force of circumstances he was reduced to absolute want, and there was an opportunity presented him by which he could be relieved from this embarrassment by an acknowledgment that he was poor and poverty-stricken and needed help, he would die rather than do it. Yes, devotedly as he loved Blanche Alpen, yet he could not have cherished that love with honor when he knew it was not reciprocated.

I cannot say that I can praise this spirit, nor yet can I condemn it; but will only say, happy is the man who does not possess it. Many a joyous and blithesome day he will experience which otherwise would have been shrouded in disappointment and gloom. Many a joyous and blithesome day Walter Ludwick would have seen but for this same spirit of pride of which I have spoken. But crush out this spirit, and you have not the Walter Ludwick whom you see before you. You may see the form of the outer man, but the inner man will be as different as day from night.

With this explanation of Walter Ludwick's character, one can easily imagine the feelings which filled his soul after he

had contemplated this engagement. If he were weak and undecided, it was because of the uncertainty and doubt which overshadowed him. Could he but have dispelled that uncertainty and removed that doubt, his future course would have been as clear to him as the noonday sun. Yes, he loved her devotedly. His feelings for her were as different from those he had for Eva Drayton as anything on earth could be. The latter he called and believed his friend, but the bare thought of Blanche Alpen being only his friend,—it was madness to think of it. Weeks after this, when he would leave her presence, he would passionately say to himself, "Oh, if I could relieve myself of this doubt, then I would be strong and resolute; then I would know what course to pursue." And this was true. Sincerely as he loved her, yet once when he learned from her own lips, in a truthful and candid manner, that she did not love him, from that very moment this same spirit of pride or sense of honor would assert its sway, and he would leave her forever, though heart-rending and torturing the effort would be. For anything like begging her love or imploring her to love him was so foreign to his nature, that one who knew him would have thought him mad beyond the possibility of a doubt.

Still he hesitated. One evening he was alone with her, and the opportunity to tell the story of his love was a great one; but still he delayed the auspicious moment which would have poured balm into her own weary soul, as well as his. Many a time he desired to take her out to public entertainments, but he let every opportunity go by, for some cause for which he could give no reason. Many were the evenings he passed with her, many were the times the words were on his lips, but his voice failed to utter them. Oh, Walter, why did you not act like your former self, and tear away this veil, and remove the doubt which for months overshadowed you? Oh, echo answers why? He could himself give no reason for his unprecedented actions.

## CHAPTER IX.

It is a fearful thing  
To love as I love thee: to feel the world,—  
The bright, the beautiful, joy-giving world,—  
A blank without thee. Never more to me  
Can hope, joy, fear, wear different seeming. Now  
I have no hope that does not dream for thee;  
I have no joy that is not shared by thee;  
I have no fear that does not dread for thee.  
All that I once took pleasure in,—my life,  
Is only sweet when it repeats thy name;  
My flowers, I only gather them for thee;  
The book drops listless down, I cannot read.  
Unless it is to thee: my lonely hours  
Are spent in shaping forth our future lives,  
After my own romantic fantasies.  
He is the star around which my thoughts revolve  
Like satellites.

MISS LONDON: *Poems*.

THE stormy blasts of winter had all passed away, and these delightful and soul-inspiring days of spring had come again. It was the first of June, and the flowers were in full bloom, and the air was resonant with the sweet songs of birds, and all nature seemed joyful at the advent of that season of the year when our hopes are brighter, and we seem to begin life with new impulses and stronger motives.

This was the season of the year that Blanche Alpen, above all others, loved the most. Her impulsive and enthusiastic soul seemed to blend with everything else of nature in which there was infused a new life; and if she were ever happy, it was at this inspiring season, when listening to the songs of many birds and inhaling the sweet fragrance of the flowers wafted to her by the gentle breeze.

But this spring no such happy and joyous inspirations filled her soul. That which had delighted her most, and enraptured her with the sweet strains of music in days gone by, was now fraught with sorrow, and enveloped her in deepest gloom. If she arose in the morning seemingly refreshed by a tempestuous night's slumber, it was only to sink back on her pillow

again exhausted and broken in spirit, as she realized that all nature was so gay and happy, while she was so sad and almost heart-broken. Many a time at the dead hours of midnight, when all the world was rapt in slumber, she would arise from her couch and sit by the window, where she could gaze at the smiling stars and endeavor to find some solace, some relief, from them; but, alas! in vain. There she would sit for hours at a time, and would then lie down again, but not until some few streaks of coming morn shone in upon her would she sink into a quiet sleep.

And thus passed her life away for three long and dreary months, ever since the time that Nancy Spriggins told her of Mr. Ludwick's engagement. That was a fearful blow to her, though, with a wondrous will of her own, she succeeded in preventing Nancy from noticing the shadow that crossed her face while she was telling her all the facts concerning the engagement. In speaking of this, she said, "I hear that it is not surprising at all that Mr. Ludwick should fall in love with this young lady, for she is so beautiful and fascinating that no gentleman could help loving her. She is as beautiful a blonde as ever you saw, and Mr. Wasson says that Mr. Ludwick admires blondes very much. She is poor, it is true, but then I hear it said that he cares nothing for wealth in selecting a wife. He looks to the mind and soul of the lady more than to anything else, for he is talented and brilliant, and Mr. Belmont says he will make a shining star in the galaxy of his profession."

Where or how Nancy Spriggins got or read this tasty little speech, in speaking of this matter, remained ever afterwards, as it did then, a profound mystery to Blanche and every one else who ever knew anything about it. When she repeated to Charles Spencer what she had said, he replied that the best speaker or debater in the world could not have done better. "You have imposed on me," he continued, solemnly, "a debt of gratitude which I fear I never shall be able to pay. But we will trust to the future for all things, and all I require of you now is to remain faithful, and in due time we will have a general good time over the plot we have formed."

Whether Nancy would have done all this if she had known the real cause for which Charles Spencer desired it, is uncertain. In this world now there is so much deceit and prevari-

cation among those—especially of women—who are fascinated and flattered by the rich, that they would stoop to almost anything if they thought thereby to gain an approving smile from them. It is a sufficient excuse for Nancy, however, to say that she engaged in this affair solely with the understanding that Charles and Blanche were engaged, and that for some reason—she never inquired why—he desired to play this joke on her, and that then they would, some time, have a good time over it. Where the joke would come in, under these circumstances, almost any one, except Nancy Spriggins, would certainly have stopped to inquire. But she took everything he said for granted, and thus his purpose being accomplished most dextrously, he was supremely happy at his success, and really meant what he said when he told her that he should always remember her.

But, if it were amusement and pleasure to them, it was a source of deep grief and sorrow to Blanche Alpen. Never before in her life had she loved. The power of this mysterious passion one finds a difficult task to portray. Yes, she had read of it herself,—how it made the cheek grow pale, the eyes languid, the body weak and careworn,—and how it made life itself a blank when one realized that her love was not returned, or that some dreary, disappointment would rise up between them. Oh, the effect this passion has on the happiness of the human heart of one whose affections are as strong as hers! I believe that, to some, there will come a sickly kind of love, as often as there is a person on whom to bestow it; but true, genuine love, to such a priceless being as Blanche Alpen, comes but once in a lifetime. It is the very magnet of her existence. Never before had she loved, never until now had that ideal, which for years existed in her imagination, found human shape. No wonder, then, that her poor heart, which, but a short time before, had been so light and joyous and happy, was now filled with deepest gloom, when she learned that all her new-born and cherished hopes were blighted and crushed forever. It was a dark and dreary afternoon to her, when Nancy Spriggins had left after imparting the dreadful information which dealt such a deadly blow to her happiness.

One evening she was sitting up in her own room, where she had a fine view of the setting sun. She was sad and lonely, and was thinking over the scenes through which she had



gone since she first made his acquaintance. She looked so beautiful, although her face was sad, as the last glimmering rays of the setting sun shone in upon her. She was leaning her cheek on her hand, as she softly said to herself, "That is now plain to me which was so intricate and obscure before. I can see now why he has never invited me out anywhere in public. Being engaged, he is too honorable to be flirting with me at the same time." Then she would lean back in her chair and cover her face with her hands. Although she now firmly believed him to be engaged, yet she felt no resentment against him. She considered it as one of those many unfortunate circumstances of which her life so abounded. "How can I blame him?" she would say to herself. "Perhaps at some early day, when his heart was undisciplined, he pledged his honor——" Here she could go no further; she could not say "his love," for she believed in her heart that he loved her as devotedly as she loved him, and that his conduct was a struggle between love and duty. If he had once pledged his truth and vows to love another, why should he break them? She could assign no reason, and she arose and took her guitar and went to the summer-house, which was now green and beautiful.

She sang a favorite of his, accompanied by the guitar, and then all was calm and still. She was sitting there, with her elbow resting on her guitar, and her beautiful cheek, as usual, resting on the palm of her hand, when a shadow flashed across the entrance, and she looked up, and Walter stood before her. With a sad, yet sweet smile, she reached out her hand as she gave him welcome. Notwithstanding the deep gloom that overshadowed her, yet when she was in his presence all was sunlight and joy. That sad, pale appearance in her face passed away, and in its stead there came a sweet, fascinating expression, by which Walter felt himself irresistibly drawn to her. As she turned towards him and looked him full in the face, there was a soft, lambent beauty in her dark, lustrous eyes, while in her cheeks there was a rich, effulgent hue, which seemed to throw around her a halo of glory that filled his soul with rapturous delight, and he felt like falling down and worshipping her. Yes, her manner and appearance on this evening—the last that he ever saw her under like circumstances—were so indelibly impressed on his memory, that

time—endless as eternity—could never efface. Oh, she was beautiful to him then, beyond any effort of the artist to portray!

After he had seated himself, she said, in her usual calm and inspiring way, that always pleased him so much, "I somehow knew or thought that you were coming this evening, and yet I cannot tell you why. Did you ever feel a kind of a presentiment of something or some event which happened afterwards? If so, perhaps you can tell me why I thought you were coming this evening."

There was no change in that candor and truthfulness of expression which always interested him so much; it had no less a hold on his affections now than any time previous, and with mingled feelings of joy and admiration, he replied, "I understand the presentiment of which you speak; I have often experienced the same myself. As I passed through the gate this evening, I came here first, thinking in this beautiful twilight to find you here, and you see I was not mistaken. Now, as you have your guitar here, I wish you would play me that little ballad you played one time last winter. I think it such a beautiful one."

She played the song of which he spoke, and then some lively instrumental pieces which were charming indeed. After she had finished, she sat there with her arms resting on the guitar, as she said, "At such times as these, I believe I like the guitar better than any other kind of music. Its notes are so soft and sweet that they seem to speak to the heart. I also believe I heard you say once that you at times liked the music of the guitar better than any other instrument."

"Yes," he replied, "there are moods of mine in which I think the music of the guitar is the sweetest I ever heard. Every strain seems to touch chords of my heart which seem to lift my soul up to the ideal world more than anything else I can imagine. But, before I forget it, I wish to tell you of a sentiment of which I was reading a few evenings since, and in which I cannot in any respect concur. It is this: That persons of opposite dispositions and impulses ought to marry. I just thought at the time that I would like to have an expression from you concerning it. To my mind, in one sense, there is nothing so ridiculous or absurd, and yet, when we go into the real and practical world, we find that where there is one marriage contracted where their tastes and impulses and

purposes of mind are the same, you perhaps find a thousand who probably have not one congenial thought; and yet they seem happy and contented, though not a day may pass over their heads but that they will have a little quarrel, as they call it. Did this sentiment ever occur to you before?"

She was listening very attentively, and when he had finished, she, with her arms resting on the guitar, and her eyes bent towards the ground in a reflective manner, said, in a slow, soft tone, "Yes, I have often thought of that before; and I am so glad you have spoken of it, since I may probably receive some light on the subject from you. I do not think I can answer you satisfactorily. I do not think *any* one can give you a demonstrative answer. The most I can say is that each human heart is a world of its own, and in this affair of love you cannot compare it with any other. Of all the strange and surprising and singular things that we see in this world, the strangest of all is that which is witnessed in the consummation of some marriages. Why they are attracted to each other no one can tell, and I doubt very much whether either of the parties themselves could give any satisfactory reason more than just a mutual liking for each other. Why two persons of opposite dispositions, who would be probably continually at variance with each other, could live happily together is more than I can understand. As for myself, I do not think I could imagine anything fraught with so much misery as living with any one with whom I would even once in awhile be at variance, and which probably would lead to hard and cruel words. I am fascinated and pleased so much with harmony, and am rendered so miserable and unhappy by discord, that I cannot for a moment imagine how any two could live happily together, if only once in awhile they would be at strife with each other. And yet you have probably observed yourself that some persons of these characteristics love each other devotedly. Ask them why it is that they quarrel, and they will tell you that they think the more of each other after it is over; that they could not live in perpetual harmony, for their lives would be too monotonous. I have no doubt there is great truth in what they say,—and you see my answer comes back to what I said before: 'Each human heart is a world of its own, and in this affair of love you cannot compare it with any other.' The history of the passions will scarcely admit

of any comparison with any other. Now I fear, Mr. Ludwick, that I have given you a very unsatisfactory answer, and yet I can give you no better; and it is something, I think, that will not admit of a demonstration, and my answer must be very unintelligible indeed."

After some reflection he said, in a slow and thoughtful manner, "No, your answer is not unsatisfactory: I think I see more clearly now than I did before. That one expression of yours—'the human heart is a world of its own'—answers me. I never thought of the subject in that light before. I can now see clearly that which was formerly so much of a mystery to me,—how two persons could live happily together who were continually warring with each other. I see, as you say, that it is their natures; and if it were otherwise, they would not be happy. The reason of such people living happily together is caused by their peculiar dispositions,—the different impulses and singular attributes of the human heart. As for myself, it is as you say. I can imagine nothing so fraught with an utter, indescribable woe as that of a wedded life with even occasional jars and differences, which would seem to me to crush out and extinguish all the happiness and pleasure there is in it. I have always thought that if two persons were rightly suited for each other, and would then study each other's dispositions, endeavoring at the same time to promote each other's happiness, and always remembering that they must both have some charity for each other, I do not think there would be any quarrels between them after they had pledged, before the God who made them, their solemn vows to love and cherish each other until separated by death. This seems to be an impression of mine, and I do not know whether I am right or not. It may be that it is all a dream that will never be realized in this real and practical world."

After a brief silence, she replied, in that same absent-minded, dreamy-like tone, as she raised her eyes and looked lovingly in his face, "I am so pleased that you agree with me. I thought I stood alone in the world with such—it sometimes seemed to me—ideal notions. But when you who strive so successfully to keep yourself within the real world think and believe the same, I know that I must be right. And I rejoice to know also that there is one whose sentiments are so in harmony with my own."

But little more was said. Silence, like a weeping angel, brooded over them, and they sat there for some time each drinking in the sweet, unalloyed bliss the other inspired, until he arose to go. As they were standing at the entrance of the summer-house, he said, "I am so sorry that in a very few more weeks I will be compelled to quit forever, perhaps, the fair and beautiful scenes of Claremont. Mr. Belmont tells me that I am far enough advanced to be admitted to the bar at the court that meets this month, and then I will have in part reached the goal to which my ambition aspires."

As he uttered these words, that effulgent expression which had all the evening been on her face disappeared, and in its stead came that languid look of despair, which showed the sharp pain that pierced her heart. Standing there in the bright moonlight—almost light as day—with her hands clasped tightly in each other, she looked up to him with that peculiar expression in her face which I never saw before, as she softly said, "I shall be very lonely, Mr. Ludwick, when you are gone."

He did not notice the expression of her face, and he scarcely heard the words she had spoken, for he was too deeply absorbed in his own thoughts, and in a few more moments he had gone again, leaving unspoken the words which would have decided the destinies of each.

Oh, how blind we are to the future, and how stupidly we act sometimes! Oh, Walter, why did you not dismiss these doubts and fears and act like your former self by drawing aside this veil, which would have enabled you to behold your fate? Oh, in this cool, pleasant, moonlight night in June, what a scene it was for love! How easy would have been the task, as those lustrous eyes were looking so lovingly into thine, to have spoken the words which would have poured a sweet balm into that priceless heart by thy side! How soon, if thou hadst but made the effort, would the flashes of thought have found expression in words to have told the story of thy love! But, alas! thou didst let the great opportunity of thy life pass without being improved; and sadder, far sadder still, an opportunity that is lost forever,—lost! ah, lost, never more to return!

## CHAPTER X.

Our glories float between the earth and heaven,  
Like clouds that seem pavilions of the sun,  
And are the playthings of the casual wind.

BULWER.

WALTER and Blanche had not seen each other since the interview in the summer-house, recorded in the last chapter, by reason of the former's time being fully occupied in his preparation for the examination previous to his admission to the bar. In speaking of this subject, Mr. Belmont said, "The legal time for your admission does not arrive until November; but, under a rule of court, I can easily certify to your competency for admission now, owing to the thoroughness and diligence with which you have pursued your studies. I have no doubt but that you will stand a most thorough and extended examination, which will hail your admission to the bar with honor. You will then have six months to look around for a place to settle down in business."

"I will leave the whole matter," Walter replied, "to you; and if you think it advisable, I will go before the committee at this court."

Having decided to apply for admission at the time before referred to, Mr. Belmont, as soon as the court convened, presented his petition for the same, which was immediately referred to the examining committee, composed of some of the ablest members of the bar. Mr. Belmont remarked to some of the committee that he did not care how searching and intricate they would be in the examination, he would insure his student could answer all their questions. For several months previous to his application for admission, Mr. Belmont had examined him in all the leading principles of the law, so that he was well posted on nearly all the questions addressed to him. From the report of the committee his honorable and excellent examination will more fully appear: "We find Mr. Ludwick well learned in the general and elementary principles of the law, which honorably entitle him to practice in the court

over which your honor presides. Besides this, his range of reading extends to those classic authors of the science of the law which enable him to form that thorough knowledge of its principles which eminently fit him for a fine discrimination between the right and the wrong. Under his thorough and efficient preceptor he has traced every legal question to its origin, and has thus ascertained the cause which induced the enactment of the law. In this manner he is thoroughly prepared for grasping all great questions that may in the future come before him; and if he is as thorough and active in the practice as he has been in the preparation of his profession, he will make one of those shining lights which cannot fail to merit the commendation of those with whom he may become associated."

After he had taken the usual oath of the attorney, the judge said, in his usual dignified and impressive manner, "You have just taken upon yourself, my young friend, the solemn oath of an attorney to practice the law in this court. The committee have just stated in your hearing that you have passed a most thorough and searching examination. I am glad to hear that it is so, for you have entered upon the practice of one of the noblest professions in our land. From the accuracy and thoroughness with which you have prepared yourself for entering upon its arduous duties, I assume that you have done so from a pure love for the profession. If so, you will find its practice as interesting and pleasant as you have found its study. But, if you have solely entered its temples—as so many of our lawyers do—with the sole purpose of gain and of dragging men into and harassing them with lawsuits in order to fill your own coffers with money, you will find its pursuit an unpleasant one; because you will never gain an honorable distinction, and will thus always be compelled to remain among those who crowd the lower walks of the profession. To be a great lawyer, you must have a legal, a noble mind. The successful advocate is not he who delights to take advantage of every little technical pretext in which he knows there is no merit nor anything else, and which is generally only done to harass the court and to gratify a little pedantic disposition, which of itself would prevent him from being a learned man in the law. Let your aim be onward and upward. Let your ambition be to rise to the true dignity and grandeur of your

profession, which will enable you to leave behind a name that will be remembered by your associates. And now let me impress on your mind one thing which so many young lawyers overlook. The flattering and very high recommendation that you have received from your committee may perhaps lead you to think that you have learned all the law that is necessary for you to know, but, if such be your thoughts, dismiss them at once. For, after you have practiced law five or more years, you will only then see how little you know, and you will also then realize the startling fact that you know nothing comparatively about the law now. So it would be well for you to commence a course of reading when you settle down to practice. Leave no stone unturned, be accurate in everything, have no uncertainties in your advice to clients; and above and beyond all, always keep a clear conscience. It is all nonsense and ridiculous in the extreme to say that a lawyer, in order to make money, must be dishonest. Experience and common sense must teach every man who knows anything about the practice of the law that there is nothing so fallacious and absurd. Believe me when I tell you, my young friend, that there is no business, no profession beneath the broad circuit of the sun, in which it pays so well to be honest as that of the practitioner of the law. Let your reputation be that you will give an honest exposition of the law to your clients, and every one that leaves your office with this impression will send back ten clients to your door, and thus your practice will grow larger and larger each day you live. For that day has gone by in which rascality was the price to be paid for a large and lucrative practice of your profession. Be true to yourself, live for the right, resist the wrong, and you will thus build up for yourself a reputation that will always be referred to with honor wherever your name is mentioned."

And thus the last of the ceremony of his admission to the bar was performed; and Walter Ludwick walked out of the court-house and into the streets, feeling that he was a lawyer. Many were the congratulations he received. Charles Spencer said that he had heard with delight of his success, as also did Colonel Marlan and many other of the business men with whom he was acquainted. But it is true to say that he never felt so lonely and disheartened in his whole life. When he returned from college, he felt that he knew more than he did

now. It was not with him as the judge perhaps imagined. He had taken a fair survey of the amount of reading he would have to do before he would have that thorough knowledge of the law which he so much desired; and when he compared this with what he had read, the latter sank almost into insignificance. And again, when he reflected upon the many years he would have to pass before he would probably have a practice that would pay his boarding, the prospect seemed to recede farther from him the more he thought it over. If there were ever a time in his life that the world seemed so dark and dreary that he could scarcely see one streak of day, it was now. Why he seemed depressed in spirits now he could scarcely tell himself, if one had asked him the question. But probably the cause was that it had always been a purpose of his to look into the future and endeavor to see his way through; but now, the more he looked therein, the darker and darker it grew, and he sank down in his own room exhausted and worn out with the effort he had made, and the anxiety he had endured during the last months of his life at Claremont, which had now drawn to a close. Mr. Belmont had offered to take him into his office, but he declined doing so, as it had always been his purpose to settle in a large city, where he thought there was a wider field than in small country-seats. His purpose now was first to try the city, and if that failed, he would seek some other location.

After he had his trunk packed, there was only one other on his mind,—the dark-eyed angel he would leave behind. Would he go without telling her the story of his love? This was a question he hesitated to answer, for Mr. Spencer had spoken so friendly that induced him to believe that they were surely engaged. But why should he go away, even if they were engaged, without telling her that she was the being above all others he most loved? Where would be the harm, when perhaps he would quit the place forever? He never dreamed of seeing her again in another's love. With such a nature as his, he could never think of only being a friend to her. His lips peremptorily refused to even call her by the name of—friend. Such deep, impassioned love as his would no more turn to friendship than day would to night. He loved her with all his heart, and the burden of his song was to tell her of that love, and yet he still hesitated.

But at last his better judgment prevailed, and he sat down and hastily wrote her a note, stating that he would call on the following evening, previous to his departure from Claremont, as he would like to pass his last evening with the one to whom he was so much indebted for that recreation of mind that was so essential to his student's life. Having sealed the letter, he gave it to a servant, with instructions to take it immediately to Judge Alpen's.

And thus the die is cast, and he had made up his mind to raise the veil which hung between himself and the dearest object of his life.

## CHAPTER XI.

When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions.

SHAKESPEARE.

Be not dismayed—fear nurses up a danger,  
And resolution kills it in the birth.

PHILLIPS: *Duke of Gloucester.*

It were in vain to attempt to portray the unalloyed bliss, the supreme, unbounded joy which filled Blanche Alpen's heart when she received Walter's letter stating that he desired to spend his last evening at Claremont with her. Again that sad, dreary look passed from her face, and she was in brighter and happier spirits than she had been for many a day. Perhaps there is another cause for this. Charles Spencer had called one evening and insisted on her marrying him, notwithstanding the solemn promise he had made to the contrary. After her infinite astonishment had passed away, there followed in its trail a deep, righteous indignation which denounced him in the strongest possible terms. In conclusion she said, "I never wish you to call me friend again, for you have ruthlessly betrayed me. Henceforth we must be as strangers to each other; I wish you to blot from your mind any remembrance of me."

She spoke in determined tones, and he left the house mut-

tering something she could not understand. This occurred some two weeks previous to Walter's admission to the bar. Perhaps the reason that Blanche felt so happy when she received the letter was that something had turned up, and that she on that evening would in some manner ascertain the fact that he loved her and was not engaged to another. Hope was ever the guiding star of her life.

Time passed slowly along until evening came. Walter wended his way to the Alpen mansion. Mrs. Alpen received him, and as they were seating themselves in the parlor, she said, "Blanche, but a short time ago, was sent for by Lizzie Marlan, who is very sick, and she thinks that no person can soothe her so much as Blanche. She ought to be here by this time." And she looked out of the window, but could see nothing of her. Mrs. Alpen was a very excellent conversationalist, for her range of reading extended to all the classical authors of ancient and modern times; so that a conversation with such an accomplished lady would be spicy and interesting indeed.

An hour passed, and still she came not. Walter arose to go, requesting her at the same time to extend his compliments to Miss Alpen, and also his regrets at not meeting her. "My intention is," he said, "to leave on the early train in the morning."

"Oh, no, no!" Mrs. Alpen nervously said; "you must not go. She will be here soon, I know; and if you are gone, she will be so disappointed. I heard her say to-day that she was so glad you were coming, for she wanted to congratulate you on your admission to the bar. Mr. Alpen heard the report of the committee, and he said they complimented you very highly."

Of course Walter could say nothing more, and reseated himself. He would willingly have remained there all night for the bare opportunity of seeing her, when he was convinced that her absence was not intentional. Mrs. Alpen excused herself, and said that she would send one of the servants with the barouche to bring her home. She returned, saying that she would certainly be back in half an hour, and they resumed their conversation as if nothing had happened.

The half-hour had passed away, and the servant returned, but not with Blanche. He said that she had not been at

Colonel Marlan's at all; that Lizzie was not sick, and was never healthier in her life.

At this dread announcement blank amazement sat upon their faces,—each looked at the other without uttering a word. When Mrs. Alpen recovered her presence of mind, she very excitedly said, "Mr. Ludwick, I fear there is something wrong. This is very unusual. If my daughter had been going any place to be away any length of time, she would have said so; but I cannot imagine what would have induced her to go away."

"It is not improbable that she may have called on Miss Ophelia Brandon instead of Miss Marlan. To make everything sure, I will walk down street and call on Miss Brandon and ascertain whether or not she has been there," Walter replied.

"You will be sure, then, to return this evening again, Mr. Ludwick, no matter how late the hour is? I know and feel certain that something has happened."

"I give you my word," he replied, "that I will return. She may have stopped to call on some of her friends and remained longer than she imagined."

He passed out, and was soon in the streets. Walter Ludwick was always over-sensitive to anything like neglect or indifference to him on the part of a lady; and he now felt greatly chagrined, as he walked down the street, at her apparent neglect in being absent from home when she knew it was his last evening in Claremont. But there was an agitation about Mrs. Alpen which he did not understand, and which therefore led him to believe that there *was* something wrong. Accordingly, he called on Ophelia mainly for the purpose of ascertaining something about the missing lady.

Of course Ophelia was delighted to see him, and they indulged in a very tasty little small-talk conversation, during which she said, "I had the particular pleasure of seeing your very interesting friend, Miss Alpen, this evening."

Walter could scarcely conceal his surprise when he, in something of an agitated manner, inquired, "Where?"

"In Colonel Marlan's barouche. She just called me at the gate and wished me to accompany her, stating that Lizzie was quite sick. I told her it was impossible for me to go, and she then directed the coachman to drive on."

"Were you quite sure that it was Colonel Marlan's barouche? And are you quite sure the coachman was his driver?"

"I am sure it must have been his barouche, but I am not so sure as to the coachman. He was not the same man that usually drives the barouche."

But little more was said on this subject, which was dextrously turned by Walter requesting her to play a favorite waltz of his, and in a few moments he took his departure. With quick and hasty steps he went direct to the livery-stable, and, after examining the different barouches, he ascertained the fact that there were many just like Colonel Marlan's. He further ascertained the startling fact that Harry Wasson had engaged a barouche in the morning, and that the driver had called for it about seven o'clock. This information confirmed his suspicions from the very moment he left Ophelia Brandon's. Why Mr. Spencer had been so friendly towards him for the last fortnight he could never imagine until now. Both his and Harry Wasson's peculiar conduct was now very clear to him. Acting on the spur of the moment, he hurried back to Judge Alpen's, where he found everything "topsy-turvy." Mrs. Alpen was crying dreadfully and the female servants were all fairly screaming, and Judge Alpen himself looked as pale as death. When he entered, they all rushed around him to hear what he had learned, and to their questioning looks he replied that he had ascertained nothing definitely. After a few moments' silence, he then stated that he wished to see the judge and Mrs. Alpen alone. The servants all retiring, he said, "Now, Mrs. Alpen, I agree with you that there is something wrong. I am so sensitive to any seeming neglect or slight by a lady, that I was apprehensive when I came here this evening that she had evaded me on purpose. But I am free to say that I have dismissed those sentiments, for I have my impressions as to what has happened. In the first place, will you be so kind to tell me if you know what was the relation existing between her and Mr. Spencer? Do you know whether she loved him, and were they engaged?"

To these hasty and candid questions Mrs. Alpen, after wiping her tears away, told him exactly the relation that existed between them, and also that about two weeks before this he called and insisted on her marrying him, which she indignantly refused, and peremptorily ordered him to leave the

house and never to speak to her again. "He went out angry, my daughter said, with the threat that she would yet retract the decision she made."

"Then," he said, emphatically, bringing down his hand in an excited manner, "my suspicions are correct. Charles Spencer has decoyed her away for the sole purpose of forcing her to marry him. Now, there is no time to be lost. Judge, what course do you propose to take?"

He studied for a few moments, and then looked up confusedly as he said, "Indeed, I cannot tell; I never was so much nonplused in my life. I will have to go and consult with the detective or chief of police."

"Then go quickly," Mrs. Alpen said, "for, as Mr. Ludwick says, there is no time to be lost."

The judge arose abruptly to go, but Walter cried out, impulsively, "Stop! stop! Suppose you leave this whole affair to me. I know as much about detective business as the police. Say that you give the whole matter into my hands, and I will find her if I should go to the end of the earth. I have not traveled so far and long and yet be ignorant of detective business. I will find her as sure as the sun shines in a noon-day!"

At these impulsive and hopeful words Mrs. Alpen burst again into tears, and threw her arms around his neck and implored him to find her daughter. Then she turned to her husband and said, "Leave all to him, Mr. Alpen. He is young and energetic, and can think and act quicker than you can."

With tears of gratitude in his eyes, the judge extended his hand and grasped Walter affectionately by the hand as he said, "I will leave all to you. Now, anything that you would have me or any one else to do, do not fail to command."

"Then," said Walter, "we must ascertain all the facts as near and as quickly as possible. It is four miles to the outer gates of the city on the eastern road,—get me a horse, and I will ride out there as fast as possible and ascertain if any person has gone that way since nine o'clock. In the mean time you go down and ascertain the fact, as near to a certainty as you can, where Charles Spencer is and what have been his habits for the last fortnight. Also ascertain whether Harry Wasson is with him or not. Then it would be well enough for you to make some inquiries of the policeman who is in the street lead-

ing to the bridge, and the one leading to the outer gates. By this time I will have returned, and then we will decide what to do next."

"But," exclaimed the judge, "there is a narrow strip of woodland between the suburbs of the city and the outer gates which is infested at this time with robbers of all kinds. It is really dangerous."

"Robbers or no robbers," Walter impulsively exclaimed, "the journey must be made, and I am bound to do it before I sleep a wink this night. I will take my navy revolver along, and will, if necessary, fight my way through."

By this time his horse was at the gate, and, after stopping at his hotel for his revolver, he went on his way at the top of his speed. The judge went to Mr. Spencer's, and finding him in his office, inquired, after a few commonplace remarks, for his son and Harry. He replied that his son had not been in the store all day, and had done but little business for the last week; that Harry Wasson had done but little too, and where they were this evening he could not tell; that the book-keeper had not seen them since dinner. After a few other commonplace remarks, the judge took his departure, and went around to the police, as directed, but gaining no information of any importance, returned home.

When Walter Ludwick reached the outer gates, he ascertained from the toll-keeper that a barouche had passed there about nine o'clock; that the toll had been paid by a man on foot, who walked through the gate, which he directed to be raised, in order that the coach might not be stopped; that he saw nothing more until after they had passed a short distance, when the coachman slackened his horses and this man got on the seat with him, without entirely stopping. Also, to the inquiry about the distance to Lincoln station, he said it was about six miles, and at the rate they were going he thought that they must be there now. That the eastern-bound express passed about this time, and that he supposed it was their intention to make that train.

Walter waited for nothing more, but put spurs to his horse and started back at the top of his speed. When he arrived, they all awaited in breathless silence until he had imparted his, and received the information of the judge. "Now," he said, "you see my suspicions are confirmed; as soon as they arrive

in New York he will take her to the dungeon which has, no doubt, already been prepared for her, where he will keep her until she finally consents to marry him. Now," after looking at his watch, "I see there is time enough for me to reach the depot, five miles from here, on the main Eastern line, in time to meet the mail train, which arrives six hours later than the train he has taken. You can telegraph immediately to the chief of police in New York to search for a dark-eyed lady on the Eastern express. Perhaps they can arrest him as he gets off the train, and in this manner our ends will be accomplished."

The judge requested him to write the dispatch, which was willingly done; but when the servant returned, he said all the telegraph-offices were closed and he could not send it. The horse being ready, Walter was about to start, when he told the judge to follow him in the early train in the morning, and to stop at the Grand Central. And then turning to Mrs. Alpen, he said, "Now, do not worry yourself over this calamity; for, believe me, we will find her just as sure as the sun will rise on to-morrow. It may be difficult, but that we will succeed I have not the least doubt."

Walter and one of the servants reached the station a few minutes before the train arrived, and after he entered the car, the servant returned home. In due time Walter arrived in the great metropolis; in eight hours later, Judge Alpen stepped into the Grand Central Hotel, where he was joined by Walter.

He immediately gave him all the information he had obtained, and also proceeded to explain his plans and specifications for their future course of action. The judge thought these most admirable, and complimented his presence of mind and ingenuity.



## CHAPTER XII.

His soul, like bark with rudder lost,  
On passion's changeful tide was tost;  
Nor vice nor virtue had the power,  
Beyond the impression of the hour.  
And oh, when passion rules, how rare  
The hours that fall to virtue's share!

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Yes, Walter Ludwick's suspicions were correct. Charles Spencer is the one of the many thousands who almost make us lose faith in mankind. We see men around us whom the world calls honorable who would not stoop to do a mean or dishonorable act, and whose hearts throb with noble and generous impulses; and yet when the opportunity comes, or through the force of circumstances, they fall,—yes, fall beyond even the hope of redemption.

There is no excuse for Charles Spencer performing the part he is now doing in this life drama, for there is no man who should allow his passions to run away with his brains. Reason, in all cases, should govern our actions through life. Yet, there are some extenuating circumstances in this case. As was observed in a previous chapter, all his life long Charles Spencer had looked upon her as being his wife, in whom he centred all his joys and hopes in this world. And even ever since the time the startling revelation was made to him that she did not love him, notwithstanding his promises he still cherished the secret hope that she would yet learn to love him. Reader, have you ever had some cherished object, on which you have set your whole heart,—some fond hope, the contemplation of which has almost made it a reality, the achievement of some object which has been the predominating ambition of your life,—suddenly frustrated and all crushed at your feet at some unlooked-for moment, when you anticipated a triumphant success? If so, you can then imagine the feelings of Charles Spencer when he saw all the fond hopes of his life utterly blighted and crushed forever. There was not a throb of his heart but beat in unison with hers; she was the motive-power

of every noble impulse of his heart,—the star of his existence which led him on to fortune,—and from the day that she said that she never loved him his sun went down, and from that time since he has been groping his way along in mental darkness. While she was near him, and with no prospect of an early marriage, he could stand it; but when he saw the devoted attention paid to her by the brilliant young lawyer he saw the angel form pass from his vision, and his mind to a certain extent became dethroned. He would wake up in his dreams and declare he could not give her up, that death were preferable without her.

After he had made a final demand of her to marry her, and stating also that he could not exist without her, but only received her peremptory refusal, he resolved to make one desperate effort to succeed, or die in the attempt. Accordingly, he went to New York and deposited ten thousand dollars in bank in the name of Gilbert Timmons, and then he found a landlord in a remote hotel who could be bribed to do almost anything, and had a room in the fifth story set apart for him. On returning home, he acquainted Harry with all the facts, and then set about arranging matters to steal her away. As luck would have it, the bridge a few days since had become or was pronounced not to be safe; and he instructed his coachman, whom he had also bribed, to say to Miss Alpen that the bridge was unsafe, and that he would have to go to the lower one, which was some distance around, before he would reach Colonel Marlan's. In this way all suspicion of a long drive would be avoided. The driver was very sharp and skillful, and managed the affair exceedingly well. He told Mr. Alpen that Colonel Marlan had sent his coach for Miss Alpen, with the request that she come down and see his daughter, who was very sick. And when he helped her into the coach, he said it would take him something longer than usual, on account of the bridge; but that he would be there in a very short time.

Never dreaming of anything being wrong except the illness of her friend, she made the remark that she wished to return not later than one hour. He replied that he would be there in the fourth of that time, as he would drive very rapidly. The pike was almost as level as the floor, and in the space of almost twenty-five minutes he was far past the outer gates, where he stopped and two men got in the coach, and the

driver closed the door after them. Blanche asked timidly if they would not reach Colonel Marlan's soon; and one of them replied that they would be there in a few moments. Nothing more was said until darkness darker than midnight gathered around them, and she wanted to know why they did not reach Colonel Marlan's. A peculiar and wondrous fear now began to creep over her, and she requested them to tell the driver to stop. They made no reply, and not until forbearance ceased to be a virtue did she attempt it herself; but all to no purpose. She could find no place to open the door.

The men said nothing until they came to a deep ravine with a dark and dreary appearance, when one of them said, in peremptory tones, "Bring forth a light; I cannot see to drive in the darkness."

The voice thrilled her to the very heart. It was familiar, yet so wild and demon-like. At this the other struck a match and lighted a lamp, which he drew from under his coat. Then the first speaker drew the mask from his face, and Charles Spencer sat before her. At the sight of him she uttered a piercing cry, and almost fell from her seat. Instantly she divined the whole plot. His threatening words rushed full upon her mind, and she dreadfully realized that she was betrayed. "Oh, you cruel, cruel wretch! you fiend in human shape, you have betrayed me!" And she covered her face with her hands and broke out in heart-rending and pitiable cries. Neither of the men said a word until she had cried herself calm, and then she inquired, in a conciliatory tone, "What does this mean, Mr. Spencer? I cannot understand it. You at one time promised to be my friend and brother. How does it come you have so changed?"

"I will explain the whole affair to you if you will but listen. I told you long ago that this world was a blank without you, but I still thought perhaps that I might learn to forget you. When I told you that I wanted to be your brother, there was truth in what I said. I only wanted to be near you and to gradually extinguish this deep affection for you, which burned into my bosom's core. When I ascertained the fact that there was no one whom you admired any more than myself I was inspired into a new hope, and gradually looked forward to the time when you would learn to love me. But when I saw the change that came over you since the very

first time you met Mr. Ludwick, I soon ascertained that you loved him, and also that he loved you devotedly in return. I know that he intended to declare his love to you before he would leave Claremont."

"Charles Spencer," she exclaimed, in wondering amazement, "you know not what you speak! Are you not aware that Mr. Ludwick is engaged?"

"No, I am not," he replied, in the same mournful tone. "Should that have been so, this event would not have happened. I know you were led to think he was engaged, and so was he told that you were engaged to me; but I can assure you that there was no truth in the report. He loves you devotedly."

Here she leaned back in the carriage and almost inaudibly exclaimed, "Thank heaven for this! I am content to die now, if need be, since I know that he loves me. His actions did not betray his feelings."

When she was calm again, he continued: "You see, then, I saw my last lingering hope die, and in my wild ravings I pictured you clasped lovingly in the arms of another, and it was more than my brain could stand. Hope again whispered in my ear, Why abandon her without a struggle, since in the end it is life or death with thee? I heard the sweet siren voice and obeyed. Thus you see me now with one purpose on my mind, —life with thee or death with thee; my decree is irrevocable. I wish to know now if you will marry me? Answer me quick."

She looked at him in that blank amazement which no tongue can tell nor pen portray. She was chilled to the heart at the cool, yet demopiac manner in which he spoke. They sat there in silence for a long time, and then the blood rushed to her face, and she exclaimed, "Oh, you miserable fiend in human shape! I would die a thousand torturing deaths ere I should marry you! Oh, you cruel wretch! I will have you arrested when we go to the city." And she again burst into a violent fit of weeping.

After she was calm again and had gained her attention, he said, "You see I have not come unprepared." And he reached his hand behind him and drew out a revolver. "Here is the avenger of all our ills in this life. I have sworn by the heaven that bends above us that you will never be the wife of another. When I look at this,—when I look at you,—I am reminded of my oath. Look in my face and convince yourself that I

am in earnest; for I solemnly swear now, at this almost midnight hour before high heaven, that if at the station or any place else, or, in fact, anywhere, or at any time, you say one word or do one act that would lead to us being detected, in that same instant I will blow out your brains, and in the next instant I will blow out my own, and thus we will both die as we have lived,—together. So choose ye this night which ye will prefer,—death, or life, with me, for there is no other alternative on this broad earth."

Almost exhausted, and in a faint voice, he said to the friend beside him, "Assure her of the truth of what I here say."

Here the unknown man took off his mask, and Harry Wasson sat before her. A chill ran through her whole soul as she looked upon him. "Yes," he said, "I can assure you of the truth of what he says. I was by him when he raised his voice to heaven and had the solemn oath recorded there,—that you must either live or die with him. I also took a solemn oath to aid him, and think'st thou we would lay perjury to our souls?"

Blanche did look, as he had told her, into his face, and she there saw the demon in his eyes and in every feature of his countenance. She knew he spoke the truth, and that he would hail death as a blessed harbinger of an imagined peace of mind. She realized now the perilous position in which she was placed, and how futile and nonsensical were her tears. The most remarkable feature about her was her clear, good common sense; and now having become reconciled to her fate, she was nerved with that peculiar strength which comes to the true woman in her hour of trial. She breathed a prayer to Him "who hears even the young ravens when they cry" to deliver her from the hands of her enemies in His own good time, and then she nerved herself for the coming ordeal.

Events march. Nothing new occurred; every time they were in public, Charles Spencer had his hand on his revolver, and not until she was securely locked in a room in the fifth story of a large hotel in that city of wonderful crimes and iniquities did he draw an easy breath. The room was dingy enough,—an old rag-carpet, a few chairs, an old arm-chair, and a table, were all that were there. Here he kept her for a week, and at the end of that time the two friends both came in and asked her if she had yet consented, but she gave

them no answer. Charles then said, "I will give you until to-morrow morning, and if you do not marry me, I will put you in a darker room and will give you nothing but bread and water until you consent. I wish you to understand now, once for all, that I am in earnest, and that you are in my power. I did not wish to be harsh with you, but you must and shall obey me."

She smelt liquor on his breath, and this, with the sight of him, almost sickened her, and she sank down in her chair without uttering a word. The next morning they came back, and she still refused. She declared she would die first before she would marry him. She was then removed to a darker and more horrid-looking room; a guard was placed at the door and no one was admitted, except the servant-girl, who took her bread and water. She was cautioned to secrecy upon penalty of dismissal from the hotel without a recommendation; and there is no girl in New York City but who would consider this threat equal to almost the penalty of starvation. They know too well what it is to be turned out in the streets without a recommendation. The landlord said the secret was safe enough with her, but to take every precaution, the guard at the door was instructed to watch that no conversation whatever occurred between them. The servant, however, observed the tears in her eyes when she would bring her bread and water, and she knew there was something wrong. One time when the guard's back was turned, examining the lock on the door, the servant girl whispered in her ear, "I'll save you." The words were music to her soul, but she knew that she dare not move hand nor foot, and only breathed a prayer to heaven that she might be delivered from this terrible torture of both mind and body.

Another week passed away, and she was now so faint and sick that she could scarcely raise her hand. I would like to portray, were it possible, the condition of her body and mind, but how inadequate must that portrait be at the best! Imagination can only picture the scene. What must have been the feelings of one whose every want had been anticipated by a kind and indulgent father and mother, and who had been raised up in luxury, with scarcely a wish that had not been gratified so far as it were possible, now confined, as it were, in a felon's cell, where the cobwebs and spiders' nets were

to be seen on every side! Yes, there in that lonely, dingy room, away from kind friends, and shut out from the clear sunlight of day and from all that makes life enjoyable, was that dear, sweet girl, who was the sunshine and joy of her happy home, imprisoned through the machinations of a fiend in human shape. It was no wonder that reason had almost now given way, for two weeks of such a terrible life were more than a man of a stronger constitution could endure, let alone such a delicate, sensitive, and tender girl as Blanche Alpen. She had endured now more than any one could have imagined.

Charles Spencer was becoming very nervous over the situation, and he said to the alderman, "Does it make any difference whether she consents or not? Will not silence be taken as a consent?"

"No; it will not, in legal parlance, be enough; but if you have money enough, I can make it do."

"I can give you all the money you want,—just name your sum."

"One thousand dollars; five hundred dollars now, and the balance when the ceremony is over."

Charles handed him a five-hundred-dollar bill, and they proceeded to the room with book in hand, to perform the ceremony. The two stood at the door, and Charles went in and asked her if she would consent, but she made no answer. He still questioned her, but still no answer. He then returned to the door and motioned them in, and then locked it and put the key in his pocket. As he turned around, the alderman said, "Where is the peasant you want married?"

Charles pointed towards her, and told him to approach and ask her if she would consent.

The alderman approached her and laid his hand lightly on her shoulder as he said, "Have you consented to marry this gentleman?"

Surprised by the strange voice she heard, she raised her dark eyes and looked him full in the face, and then closed them again and shook her head.

When she looked the alderman full in the face, he started! Such a face he had never before seen,—beautiful still, though sad and careworn. He turned around hastily as he excitedly exclaimed, "D—n me if I'll ever marry you to that angel

without she consents! Here is your five hundred dollars. I would not do such a fiendish act for all the money in the world. You said she was a peasant-girl you wanted to marry. By heavens, no! I'll never do such a thing unless she consents." And he threw the five-hundred-dollar bill at him and went to the door, but found it locked.

The alderman was a very corpulent man. He was the shape of a barrel around the waist, and his neck was so thick that his chin was emerged in it. He was very nervous and short of breath, and when he sat down it was with a great effort and a great grunt. But with all his coarse exterior, he had the heart and sympathies of a man.

Charles Spencer became white in the face and blue around the lips with rage as he exclaimed, through his clinched teeth, "Cease your d—d nonsense and proceed with the ceremony! Here's five hundred dollars more; now proceed immediately." The alderman again shook his head. "Take this, then, and proceed." And he handed him a thousand-dollar bill.

"May my right arm be paralyzed, and my very tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I ever marry you to that angel unless she consents!" The alderman was fierce with rage. "And now I say further," he continued, rising to his feet, "release her and release me this instant, or I will put you where the sun will not shine on you for many a day. Hear what I say, and obey. I am an officer of the law."

Charles Spencer looked at him, and laughed a sickly and sardonic laugh, as he said, in a supremely sarcastic manner, "You will, will you? Let me see you do it." And he reached his hand behind him and drew forth his revolver, and cocking it, pointed it straight at him, as he said, determinedly, "Now, d—n you, proceed with this ceremony, or the next warrant you will ever issue will be in heaven or in hell!"

At the sight of the revolver the fat alderman quailed. He sank down in a chair almost exhausted, while his face was as white as a sheet, and he was purple around the lips. "A h—l of a fix I'm in now," he said, in a reflective manner, as he sat looking on the floor nervously.

Charles Spencer continued: "I have sworn an oath that I will marry that girl or die in the attempt, and will you have me lay perjury to my soul? No, not for heaven or earth!

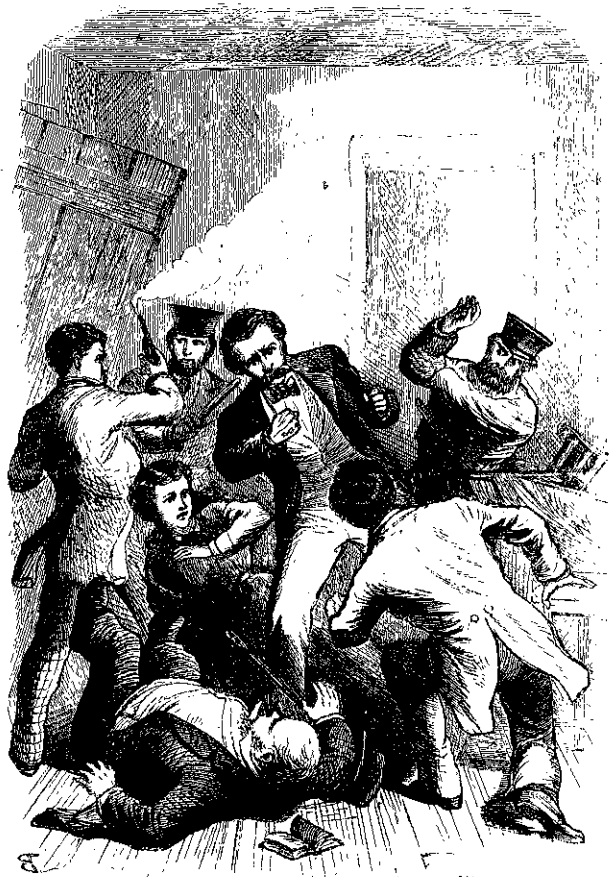
Proceed, I say, with the ceremony, or I will shoot you down like a dog!"

These sharp and angry words alarmed Blanche, and she motioned the alderman to her, and whispered, "He will shoot! Can nothing be done? I know he will shoot us all. I see it in his eyes."

After some more entreaties from the alderman, and some more threats from Charles, she motioned again to the alderman, and whispered, "Would this ceremony be legal under the circumstances?"

"No," the alderman said, aloud. "Why did I not think of that before? I will proceed with the ceremony. Fiend in human shape, come on. I will perform my duty. Put up your money. I want nothing for such a fiendish and iniquitous act." And then he whispered to her, "Don't give any consent; let silence be all the consent he can get."

Charles Spencer brightened up when the alderman said he would proceed, and he gave their whispering no attention. Blanche was sitting opposite the door, with her face turned towards it. She was too weak to stand, and hence the alderman and Charles had to kneel down before her. Mr. Spencer gave Harry Wasson his revolver, and stationed him in front of them and behind Blanche, with instructions to shoot the alderman right down if he faltered in his duty. This being done, he kneeled down, and the alderman did likewise. In this position they commenced to consummate this most fearful crime. Blanche was as pale as death, and her hand seemed as cold as ice. In her face one could scarcely have seen any sign of life; her eyes had that dead, peculiar look which showed that the cords of human life were stretched to their utmost. Charles Spencer had answered the question, "Do you take this lady to be your true and lawful wife?" and the same question had now been addressed to her, and they were waiting for her answer. Scarcely had the question been asked, when they heard a rustle at the door, and in the next instant it was broken open, and Blanche screamed at the top of her voice, "*Walter Ludwig!*" and fell fainting on the floor. As Walter ran towards them, Harry Wasson fired, and the ball missing him, pierced the arm of the policeman who followed; but before he could get time to fire again the second policeman, taking a surer aim, fired, and the ball



Walter, not heeding the shooting, caught the alderman, whom he met first and almost tumbled him heels over head backward; and just as Charles Spencer was in the act of rising to his feet, he took him one blow with his fist which sent him reeling to the floor.

Page 383.

piercing the brain of Harry Wasson, he fell senseless and lifeless to the floor.

Walter, not heeding the shooting, caught the alderman, whom he met first, and almost tumbled him heels over head backward; and just as Charles Spencer was in the act of rising to his feet, he took him one blow with his fist which sent him reeling to the floor. He then caught Blanche up in his arms, and sat her in the arm-chair, and immediately ordered some restoratives. The judge threw his arms almost frantically around her, as he piteously cried, "My poor, lost child; she is dead! she is dead! and I will never see her alive again!"

"Never fear," Walter exclaimed; "Heaven never meant that one so pure as she should die in such a place as this."

The policeman took charge of the alderman and Charles Spencer, and put them in the lock-up; and Walter and the judge removed Blanche to another hotel, and immediately summoned the best physicians in the city to attend her.

### CHAPTER XIII.

Oh insupportable! Oh heavy hour!  
Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse  
Of sun and moon: and that the affrighted globe  
Should yawn at alteration.

SHAKESPEARE.

True valour  
Lies in the mind, the never yielding purpose,  
Nor owns the blind award of giddy fortune.

THOMSON.

A DARK and almost impenetrable cloud of gloom overhung the usually quiet and peaceful city of Claremont. Consternation and amazement were written on every face, and the fearful tragedy was told around the family circle with throbbing hearts and quivering lips. On the street corners men congregated together and looked at each other in that anxious and inquisitive manner which showed that they wished some news or information of the unparalleled drama without asking the

question. It was one of those wonderful calamities in which more than the actors therein are the sufferers. When one upright and honorable man falls, he injures more than himself. Humanity suffers so much, for our faith in mankind is thereby weakened, and, to a certain extent, lost.

Charles Spencer had heretofore been an active and ardent Christian, and his fall was, in one sense, an injury and a calamity to the church, for it gave the children of the world an opportunity for a reproach. Society lost a genial and warm-hearted member, and the business community lost an active, efficient, and energetic worker. The day his father went to the city to bring him home he found him a raving maniac, and he was compelled to chain him before he dare let him in the cars. It took all the guards could do to keep him in his seat. His father entered bail for his appearance at court, and he kept him in his own room under a strong guard. He sent for some of the most eminent physicians to attend him, and they pronounced it a desperate case of insanity, and doubted very much whether he would ever be restored to his mind.

Poor Mrs. Wasson was in a pitiable condition. Harry was her only support, and thus she was left alone with her two little girls to provide for. The funeral of Harry was very large, and all his particular friends attended it. There was a report before his death that he and Nancy Spriggins were engaged; but how much truth there was in it no one could tell, for Nancy's say-so did not make it any more credible. She, however, made a great ado at the funeral; but this all girls of her nature and calibre would do whether they really felt so sorry or not. They liked ostentation, and if this were really her purpose in crying so loudly, she was eminently successful, for nearly every one was talking about it.

For nearly a month after Blanche Alpen was brought home she scarcely knew anything, for the brain fever had set in, and she was most of the time out of her mind. The wonderful scenes through which she had passed were too much for her delicate organization, and frequently she would start up and exclaim, "He'll shoot, he'll shoot! I know it, I know it! Give him his way." There were times when the doctor despaired of her recovery. If a nervous prostration of the brain sets in, he said, it would be impossible to save her life. Her sorrowing friends and almost frantic parents watched over

her with solicitous care, sometimes doubting whether they would ever see her well again and in her right mind.

There was no one but condemned the act of Mr. Spencer. Fannie Murdoch thought it was just dreadful; and so did all the other young ladies. Yet there were some who were disposed to have some charity for him, because they said she ought not to have permitted him to pay his attentions to her so long. But in reply to this it was said that two wrongs do not make a right. As soon as he found out that she did not love him, he should have dismissed her at once. There is no doubt but that Blanche did very wrong in thus allowing him to pay his attentions to her; but who of us are without our faults? Who of us cease to make mistakes? And who can pierce the future to see what is in store for him? It is easy for people to talk, and it is disgusting to hear them talk about some things of which they in a manner know nothing. There is not one kind-hearted girl in the land but who would have done likewise had the same circumstances been thrown around her.

But perhaps the most pitiable and distressing sight of the whole tragedy was that of poor old Mr. Spencer. He saw Judge Alpen pass his office, and he called him in, while tears rolled down his cheeks like a child. It was a sad and sorry sight to see that poor old white-haired man weep so bitterly. "Pity me! pity me!" he said, feelingly. "Gladly would I have followed my son to his grave in preference to hearing of his committing this most shameful and unmanly act. He may get well, but he will never be the same boy, and he will never outlive the shame that he has cast upon himself and his gray-headed old father!"

The judge was a very kind-hearted man, and expressed a great deal of sympathy for him. Also said that his daughter was not out of danger yet. The doctors had all pronounced her case doubtful.

"I pray heaven," Mr. Spencer exclaimed, "that she may soon recover, for should she die, I know it would kill me. Such an angel as she was, and then like a tender flower to be withered in its bloom! Oh, it's dreadful! it's dreadful! And, then what a fearful calamity to poor Mrs. Wasson! My son, I know, led that poor, weak-minded young man into this, for I know he would never have gone himself. Oh, I do not

think I can bear the burden of this grief!" and he wept bitterly.

The judge wiped the tears from his own eyes, and soon took his departure. When he returned home a letter was handed to him, and when he opened it, he was surprised to learn that it was from the fat alderman. In the letter he stated that an indictment was pending against him, and that he was willing to suffer the penalty of the law if his daughter said that he was to blame. He wanted the matter laid before her, and for him to send him her answer.

Blanche was now rapidly recovering, and in a week or so after the reception of this letter, the doctor permitted him to read it to her and ascertain her answer. As soon as the letter was read, she replied, impulsively, "Let him go free, father, for he has atoned for his crime. It was wrong for him to consent to do such a thing, but he repented as soon as he saw me, and refused to do anything until Mr. Spencer pointed his revolver at him and declared, with an oath, that he would shoot him down like a dog. I believed that he would shoot us all, and told the alderman to do something to release us from that miserable prison. The alderman refused the two thousand dollars he handed him, saying that he would not take a cent for consummating such a fearful crime. Yes, father, release him at once, and tell him that it was my wish that it should be done."

Her wishes were implicitly followed, and the fat alderman was accordingly released. Blanche now recovered rapidly, and one evening when they were all sitting on the veranda, the judge said he would now grant her often-repeated request,—to learn all the circumstances of her deliverance. After he had lighted his cigar, and Mrs. Alpen had taken her seat in her large arm-chair, and the servants were seated around so they could hear every word, he narrated all the circumstances as they have been recorded in the previous chapter, up to his meeting Walter in the hotel in the city. He then continued: "After we had a consultation with the chief of police, who was a sharp, dark-eyed-looking man, I saw how difficult our success must be, and what a small probability there was of finding you. Mr. Ludwick's idea all the time was that you were confined in the upper story of some large hotel, and you would be kept there until you consented to marry him. In answer

to the question where such a hotel might be found, the chief answered that they were legion, and that it would be a very difficult matter to find her if his version of the affair were correct. The chief of police was led to believe that you had taken a steamer for Europe, and hence a great deal of time was lost in getting as much information as we could about what steamers had left the city, and the names of the passengers.

"A week passed away with no definite results. Nothing, however, could get it out of Mr. Ludwick's head but that you were in the city; and as he seemed to know as much about the prospects of finding you as the policeman, I was inclined to follow his advice. He seemed to arrive at conclusions quicker than the chief of police himself. It was finally settled then that each one was to spend a day going to the different hotels where there would be a probability of bribing the landlord, and learn all that we could. Mr. Ludwick, when we met in the evening, said that he had consummated an arrangement with a certain landlord, by which, for a large sum of money, he was to furnish him a room for a friend of his, in which to keep a young lady until she formally consented to marry her lover. 'In this hotel,' he said, his eyes brightening, 'I'll wager my life they are confined. The landlord could be induced to believe there was nothing wrong in such an arrangement, and therefore willingly consented to let me have the room.' When the chief of police examined the place, he was led to believe that there were good grounds for his suspicions. After Walter had completely disguised himself, we all put up as strangers in the hotel. Mr. Ludwick was always wandering carelessly through the rooms and corridors of the hotel, and at one time he was almost becoming involved in an altercation with the superintendent; but he smoothed the matter over very politely. And so, one morning, at the end of two weeks since we first entered the city, he came downstairs, as white as a cloth, and signed us to meet him in his room, which we accordingly did. After the door was locked and bolted, he exclaimed, in such a manner that I never will forget unto the day of my death, 'I've found them! I've found them! They are in a room on the fifth story of the hotel. What will we do?'

"'Get a warrant,' cried the chief.

"'How long will it take?' inquired Mr. Ludwick, excitedly.



"About one half-hour."

"Too long! too long!" he impulsively exclaimed. "I will make a demand for admission, and if he refuse, follow me and I will burst open the door and rescue her."

"But the law?" cried the policeman.

"Law or no law," thundered Mr. Ludwick, "there is no time to be lost! Follow me!" And he unbolted the door and rushed down-stairs. I told the policeman that we must follow him; that I had a hundred thousand dollars to back him up and see us all out of the difficulty. When we came into the office, we saw Mr. Ludwick flushed with rage, as the landlord refused to give him the key of the room, and he then turned on his heel and cried to us to follow him. We did so at our utmost speed, but before I reached the door I heard you scream his name, and then the pistol-shots, and when I entered he was placing you in your chair senseless and apparently dead. As Mr. Ludwick entered, and almost simultaneous with the exclamation of his name by you, Harry Wasson fired at him, and the ball missing him, took effect in the arm of the policeman, and on the next instant the second policeman fired, and the ball pierced Harry's temple and he fell senseless to the floor. The policeman took charge of Mr. Spencer and the alderman; and we took you to another hotel, and as soon as time permitted we brought you home, and here you are now."

When he had finished, tears were streaming down her eyes, and old Mrs. Alpen was weeping, for gratitude, stronger than sorrow, was too much for them. When she had wiped her tears away, she said, "But, papa, you have not told me how Mr. Ludwick found us."

"Oh, yes; I had forgotten that. He told me just before he took the train for home, and when he told me to forward his trunk to Riverbank. As I said before, he was always wandering along the corridors of the hotel, and on this morning he met a servant carrying a tray, who was crying bitterly, and on approaching her, he asked who was sick. She would not answer, but wrung her hands and sobbed, 'It's awful! it's awful!' Then after some persuasion and a promise not to tell on her, she showed him the room, and added that two men and an alderman, or one that looked like an alderman, went into the room to marry a man to some sweet girl against her will, and

that they were now proceeding with the ceremony. He then summoned us to his room as before stated. I looked, and Mr. Ludwick looked, around for this servant afterwards, but we could not find her. I never saw a young man in my life who jumped at correct conclusions as quickly as Mr. Ludwick. The chief of police said he was the sharpest man in the business he had ever seen not to be an expert. I am firmly convinced that we never would have found you alive but for him. He scarcely slept day or night until we found you; and then he watched over you nearly the whole night, until I almost forced him to retire and refresh himself with sleep, to which he reluctantly consented."

When he ceased they were all in tears, and even the old judge drew out his pocket-handkerchief and wiped away some stray tears that would persist in rolling down his cheeks.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

Thy bright image  
Glass'd in my soul, took all the hues of glory,  
And lured me on to those inspiring toils  
By which man masters men.  
A midnight student o'er the dreams of sages,  
For thee I sought to borrow from each Grace,  
And every Muse, such attributes as lend  
Ideal charms to Love. I thought of thee,  
And passion taught me poesy,—of thee;  
And on the painter's canvas grew the life  
Of beauty,—Art became the shadow  
Of the dear starlight of thy haunting eyes.  
Men called me vain, some mad:—I heeded not,  
But still toiled on, hoped on, for it was sweet,  
If not to win, to feel more worthy of thee.

BULWER.

WHEN Walter Ludwick returned home, his brother Tom was about leaving for the West on important business, and he was very anxious that he should accompany him. He hesitated for a few moments, and then quickly said he would go. It would give a good opportunity, he thought, to look up a good location to commence the practice of his profession. It was

their intention only to be gone about three or four weeks, but it was two months before they returned. Walter looked and felt very much invigorated and refreshed by his tour, besides gaining a great deal of information concerning his business in the States through which they had passed.

He had only been at home a few days, when he returned to Claremont. The first place he went to was Mr. Belmont's office; and he found him as usual, behind his table with a multitude of books and papers before him. They were exceedingly glad to see each other, and talked about his Western tour until they were interrupted by Judge Alpen, who came to see Mr. Belmont on some business. He almost staggered back in surprise when he saw Walter before him. Then rushing toward him and grasping him by the hand, he exclaimed, "My dear Mr. Ludwick, I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you!" They shook hands very affectionately, and then, after a few general remarks, Walter excused himself and told Mr. Belmont that he would call again before he went away. As he went out the judge followed him, and taking him by the hand, said, "My dear sir, words are so useless to express to you my gratitude that I will not attempt it; but will you not wait here a few moments, and then accompany me home for tea? I know they will all be delighted to see you. Mrs. Alpen and my daughter were wondering the other day where in the world you were. Now, do not tell me that you will not go."

Walter hesitated for a few moments, and then said, "Indeed, judge, I should be pleased to do so, but there are some other matters that I would rather attend to at once. But present my compliments to Mrs. and Miss Alpen, and say that I will call this evening at eight o'clock, without fail."

The judge felt and looked sorry and disappointed, and said, "I regret exceedingly that you cannot come now; but I will bear your message with pleasure, and hope you will not disappoint us."

Walter assured him that he would call without fail, and they parted.

It was a beautiful evening in the quiet month of September, as Walter approached the Alpen mansion. His usually self-possessed manner was agitated, and his hand trembled as he rang the bell. He was showed into the large parlor by one of the servants, where everything was perfumed with

lovely flowers that still remained to grace the autumn year. Everything around him was strangely beautiful; and, as he sat himself down on the soft, velvet-covered arm-chair, with the soft gas-light streaming over everything, he felt that he was indeed in a paradise where he would be delighted to remain forever.

He sat there indulging in these sweet thoughts but for a few moments when he heard a rustle at the door, and, in looking around, he saw a fairy-like form with light foot-fall approaching him with extended hands, which were received by him in silence. She held his hand in both of hers as she said, "How deep a sense of gratitude I feel for you, Mr. Ludwick, I find it impossible to express in words. Dear papa has told me how much you have done for me, and I feel that I can never repay you."

He led her in silence to a seat near the large bay-window, which looked out on the beautiful lawn. After they were seated, he, in a voice something mournful, something joyful, but withal soft and inspiring, said, "I was just endeavoring to think how I might convey to your mind, in words, the fact that the great debt of gratitude you imagine you owe me has all been fully paid. The sweet remembrance of having rescued, or of even aiding in the rescue of one so fair as you from an abyss so fearful, is certainly enough of glory for one human being in this world to achieve. But if you will still insist that you owe me a debt of gratitude, I will tell you now how to pay it,—never mention the fact again to me,—let it be an interdicted topic between us."

She looked at him with that peculiar expression in which there were mingled doubt and uncertainty. The color for an instant left her face, then it became flushed again, and her eyes were infused with that lustre and brilliancy which made her look grand and sublime. "Oh, Mr. Ludwick!" she passionately exclaimed, "you have such a kind and generous heart, such a noble and exalted soul, that a favor which almost any one else would consider so great, you consider as nothing! But since it is your wish that I never speak of it again, I tell you now it is granted."

Nothing more was said, for scarcely had she ceased speaking when Mrs. Alpen entered, and in her warm and affectionate manner thanked him for the services he had rendered.

She was followed by the judge, who again shook him by the hand and bade him welcome to his house. After they had talked and cried and laughed together, Mrs. Alpen said, "Now, Mr. Ludwick, I have only one request to make,—the servants all want to see you so much,—will I bring them in? They say you are the one who saved her, and they are so eager to clasp you by the hand."

"Why, certainly," Walter said; "bring them in. You should have done so without asking me."

And at this the door was thrown open and they all came in and shook him by the hand, while tears of joy rolled down their cheeks. There was not one of them but who would have almost died for Blanche; and they wanted to see him so much who was so instrumental in bringing her home again. The ordeal was too much for Blanche, and she burst into tears of joy.

In a warm, impulsive, and affectionate heart joy works stranger emotions than sorrow. There is a chord in the heart which, when touched by the remembrance of some heroic deed, like the electric shock, vibrates through the soul, by which tears flow more freely than from sorrow. This impressive scene, fraught with so great a joy to all of them, was too much even for the old judge, and, with tears in his eyes, he bade them good-evening and left the room. Mrs. Alpen soon after followed, and, as she was standing at the door, said, "Now, Mr. Ludwick, remember you remain all night with us. Do not say nay, for you must. Blanche, you can show him to your Cousin Dewitt's room."

As she said these last words she closed the door behind her, and they were again left alone. Blanche was seated on the sofa, and he took his seat by her side. The story of his love, which he had longed to tell her, now seemed more difficult to him than ever before. To those who do not know him intimately, it may, perhaps, seem strange that he would remain away so long from the being he so devotedly loved, and who seemed so essential to his future happiness. But, if they only understood him thoroughly, they would not be surprised at all that he did not go to Claremont sooner. On this affair of love Walter Ludwick was the most sensitive man living. That which had always been the burden of his song, and about which he was the most particular, was its reciprocity.

The thought of marrying a lady who did not love him as much, or even more, than he did her, was too torturing for his contemplation. Friendship and gratitude were, in his conception, as different from love as day is from night. He could no more think of calling the one he loved a friend than he could think of accomplishing any impossibility in the material world. Not knowing the deep, impassioned love she bore him, he was fearful at this moment, when he told her the story of his love, that she might be induced to say that she loved him through the debt of gratitude she imagined that she owed him. It was this that made him pause; it was this that filled his soul with grave doubts, for he wanted her whole heart or none. For her even to doubt whether she loved him would be but to end the whole affair, notwithstanding the bright and cherished hopes she had infused into him. Yes, this sentiment or disposition was Walter Ludwick out and out.

After sitting there for some time in silence, he looked up to her face as he said, tenderly, "I was just thinking the other day how true your remark one time to me was, that ambition and success alone will not bring happiness. My ambitious dreams have in part been realized, and yet my soul longs for something more,—a something that success alone in this world, howsoever great, will not bring. Yes, I can now, methinks, get a foretaste of that sweet bliss which crowns and completes our happiness, as I remember even when the sunny hours of childhood were yet resting upon my blithesome heart, my boyish fancy, full of golden dreams, reared a sunbright castle in the upper air, and there enshrined the beau-ideal of all my budding hopes and all my fond desires. My soul dwelt in raptures on the image, and each day became enamored more and more, until the flight of years had borne me from these childish dreams and left me standing in that paradise which youth alone can find on earth. But still the image stood before my mind, and I fondly dwelt upon that face divine and felt the glow of heaven in the angel-smile that around it played. I would often gaze upon that form of light until a something, I could not tell what, would steal over my soul and disengage it from all thought of earth, and lift it gently up to dwell in Love's own dear enchanted world,—that little world of light—that lucid orb of purity where nothing is seen but what is beautiful—where not even one object in the outer world but

gets a tinge of heaven from the world within,—where every tree is hung with glossy diamonds, and every shrub is bright with golden gems, and not a sprig of grass but bends beneath a jewel's weight. But, alas! this golden dream was doomed to last not long, and, like all the dreams of youth, it passed away as manhood's sober gaze stole o'er the scene. But still the bright image stood before my mind, and I fondly gazed upon it,—disrobed, indeed, of the unearthly charms with which my young fancy had invested it, but still as lovely as before, and of a type more tangible and more in accordance with the scenes of this trite world. And thus time passed on. There was not a lofty thought of my soul but was inspired by this angel face. At the solemn midnight hour my dreams of greatness glowed brighter and brighter, as hope whispered to my soul that by hard and incessant toil I was fitting myself for being more worthy of my angel companion. At the midnight lamp I pored over the lore of ages, and if my soul were inspired by that spirit which is said to raise mortals to the skies to get a tinge of heaven, it filled me with a secret joy when I remembered that my fairy one would smile more lovingly upon me.

"But while bending down in holy worship at this idol shrine, those sweet lips did open, and from her tongue came these startling words, 'Blind, delusive dreamer, dost thou not know that thou art worshipping the shadow only, while the substance lives and breathes and walks the earth? Go, then, and linger at this airy shrine no more. Go mingle with the beauteous shapes which grace the earth, and when thine eyes behold in woman's form the glowing image thou see'st in mine, believe that heaven meant the boon for thee.' She spoke no more, and I undertook the bright pursuit. I traveled long and far; and once when I was mingling with the beauteous forms that adorn the earth, made brilliant by sparkling jewels and costly diamonds, I saw this same face divine in woman's form. Long I gazed upon her; soon I talked with her, pressed her by the hand, and thus convinced myself that she was indeed of earth. But, alas, my hopes were doomed again! She passed from that brilliant throng, and I never saw her more. Hope inspired me, and I still sought day after day, month after month, and year after year, for that hallowed form whose presence was to cheer my heart and shed a sunlight through my soul. And thus

time passed on until now, when I have truly met my idol's charms made palpable in woman's form. Oh, believe me, sweet girl, that the poet Tasso, or the glory of the Enchantress, could not draw a picture half so true to life as thy lovely self art true to the picture my fancy formed! Then tell me, oh, tell me, fair lady, if thou dost love me with thy whole soul, without gratitude or friendship or anything else! Oh, say that thou dost, and I will not exchange my blissful lot for ermine robes or kingly diadems!"

He ceased. All the passion of his soul, all the power of his mind, were imbued in this fairy-tale which sprung spontaneously from his heart. He did not notice the tears streaming down the angel face by his side. Languidly, and apparently unconsciously, he looked into her face; and not until she had folded her arms caressingly around his neck did he seem to realize where and who he was. But as he looked into her face as she leaned her head upon his bosom, exclaiming, "Oh, my dear Mr. Ludwick, I love you!" did he realize the full height of his glory. He pressed her to his heart, as he exclaimed, "Oh, my sweet girl, we will never be separated more!"

And they mingled their tears together,—tears not of sorrow, but that of deep, exquisite, rapturous joy,—the sweetest relief of which is in tears. Long he held her there,—longer perhaps than either one knew. Oh, they were so happy, so happy! They went out on the veranda where they could see the bright, shining stars, and pointed to those they loved the most. Long they remained there in the sweet bliss that filled their joyous hearts. "Ah, my dear Blanche," he exclaimed, as his arm encircled her slender waist, "what a blank in my life is now filled! That dark channel through which my soul has wandered these many years is now all bright, and beaming with streams of glorious sunlight, and my heart is filled with raptures, sweetest joys. Oh, I am sure we will never be parted again!" And he pressed a lingering kiss on her sweet rosy lips.

"Oh, I am so blessed! You cannot know the joy that fills my heart. I cannot tell you in words. The world seems so changed; and I feel like a new being, for all the clouds that used to hang over my pathway have been dispersed, and all is now bright and clear, and my soul quaffs the pure, sweet love that is showered upon me."

They went in again, and sat down. He was loth to leave. The sweet, inspiring influence and magnetism which were thrown around her dear self held him there, as it were, with bolts of steel. When he arose to go, she softly said, "I thought you were to remain with us all night. Mamma, I know, expects you to remain. She never dreams of your going away."

"Alas," he said, "I cannot! I promised to meet a gentleman at the hotel in the morning, if he come; and if not, I will then sleep the longer. These many months I have not slept soundly for the doubts that hung around my other life,—I mean this part of my being that I now press to my heart. Oh, I was not certain that you loved me, but now my slumbers will be all the sweeter, and if disturbed at all, it will be by dreams of thee, which will transport my soul to fairy-land."

"Oh, I am so happy, I can say nothing; but since you must go, will you not return the morrow at noon for dinner? I can show you no gratitude: mine is all love—has been all love the whole time. But mamma is so grateful,—they all feel so grateful toward you. Say you will come."

"I will call to-morrow evening for tea; till then, a sweet good-night and happy dreams."

One lingering kiss, one rapturous caress, and he is gone. Oh, happy, happy hearts! joy go with ye!

## CHAPTER XV.

Oh, magic of love! unembellished by you,  
Has the garden a blush, or the herbage a hue?  
Or blooms there a prospect in nature or art  
Like the vista that shines through the eye to the heart?

MOORE.

A NEW joy, a new glory, filled the soul of Blanche Alpen, heretofore never felt or realized. As she arose on the following morning when the rays of the beaming sun were shining in through her windows, she felt her soul lifted up and transported to realms of that Eden-land which none can find but youth and love. Oh, her joy was so sweet, so perfect, too

much so she sometimes thought to last! Perhaps, O reader! you have experienced something similar to hers in your own life, when everything around you seemed changed for the better,—so changed that there was infused within you a new life, and the every breath you breathed was fraught with some new glory,—a sweet ecstatic joy hitherto unknown? If you go about your daily vocation, everything you put your hand to, everything that used to be a burden, seems now a sweet, soul-stirring pleasure; if on a yesterday the world looked dark and gloomy, and your heart was heavy and sad, now the clouds have all dispersed, and you feel joyous and happy. And if you pick up a favorite book to read, its pages look brighter, the words have a sweeter sound, the expression a deeper feeling, and you feel the glow of heaven, as it were, stealing over your whole soul. If you have been imbued with these feelings, you can then know the perfect bliss that filled this young and priceless heart. If you have not, I am inadequate to the task to portray it to you; and you will only understand or know its breadth and depth, its boundless area, by bringing to bear your utmost imagination on the achievement of that which your own heart holds most dear.

We find her on this bright morn in her own room, standing before the same mirror that we saw her on the evening of her return from Europe, arranging some few glossy curls around her marble brow; but oh, how changed! Then a hidden and mysterious grief was stamped on her face, a deep sorrow enveloped her soul,—but now there was the impress of joy supreme,—the heraldings in her soul of heavenly glory.

Having arranged her silken tresses, she touched the secret spring which opened the drawer we have seen her open many times before,—but never since her acquaintance with Mr. Ludwick. If her own heart had been questioned why she opened it now, she could have given no answer. She looked over her school-days' mementos without looking at any one in particular, and came accidentally—for she was not looking at it—across the bouquet—faded and mouldered as they were—which the young student of Yale had given her many years ago at Saratoga Springs. As she took the bouquet in her hand, a strange, peculiar sensation stole over her soul, and she sunk down in her chair. She put her hand to her brow, as if to bring back some glimmering memory of the

past. The vision, for it seemed nothing else to her now, was in her mind, but the circumstances, the place, were so dim and indistinct. Slowly memory wandered back through the dim vistas of the past, to her once happy school-days,—and slowly, but surely, everything that transpired on that ever-memorable night at the Springs came to life again. By some strange, magic influence, that scene in the dancing-hall was again bright in her imagination. Then she recalled the words spoken by Walter the previous evening, which were still ringing in her ears like the last, dying strains of distant music,—“I traveled long and far; and once, when I was mingling with the beauteous forms that adorn the earth,—made brilliant with sparkling jewels and costly diamonds,—I saw this same face divine in woman's form. Long I gazed upon her,—soon I talked with her, pressed her by the hand, and thus convinced myself that she was indeed of earth. But, alas! my hopes were doomed again,—she passed from that brilliant throng and I saw her no more.” Softly she arose, noiselessly she replaced the faded memento in its little casket and laid it in the drawer. as she whispered, almost inaudibly, “He's the same; he's the same.” She closed the door, and as she laid her hand upon her throbbing heart to still its beating, she again whispered, “*My own soul tells me he is the same.*”

The sun was high in the heavens and his bright rays were streaming in through the transparent blinds of the windows, when Walter Ludwick arose from the sweetest sleep he had ever known. There was not a shadow resting on his heart, and he walked out on this beautiful September morn with his soul filled with exquisite joy. Every breeze wafted to his ears sweet music, which found a response in his own heart. He seemed now to have reached the height of earthly glory, for there was not a wish of his heart that was not gratified.

He called, as he promised, for tea. After partaking of a very sumptuous supper, they returned to the parlor and seated themselves on the same sofa they had occupied the previous evening. His arm encircled her waist, and she was looking lovingly into his face, with her arm gently resting on his shoulder. They were talking happily over scenes through which they had passed. In this position they were sitting and talking, when, without their noticing it, Judge and Mrs. Alpen entered the parlor arm in arm. Walter, flushed and abashed,

arose to speak, but was cut short by the terse remark of the judge, who said, in his usual bland and affable manner, “Don't blush or be confused. We were once young ourselves, and we are still young in our affections yet.” And he bent down and kissed his wife as lovingly as though they were young again. And then extending his hand, and taking Walter's in both of his, he feelingly said, “My wife here has told me all,—and I give you this fair jewel without your asking for it. Sorry as we are to have her leave us,—for indeed she has been our only solace and companion these many years, and too sadly will we miss her when she is gone,—yet I thank Heaven that I can resign her to a heart so pure and noble as thine. And may you never live to see the day when you will regret this, the happiest and saddest moment of my life, and so important an event in your own!”

He stopped here and wiped away some stray tears that would persist in rolling down his cheeks, and then kissing and pressing his daughter to his breast, he said, “Oh, my dear girl, you are fortunate in having for your life-protector one who is brave, who has noble and generous impulses, whose soul is above the sordid things of earth, and whose every heart-throb, I know, will be for your unalloyed happiness. I saw this when a dark cloud hovered over all of us, and therefore I say that aside from the deep, intense love I know you bear him, remember that you owe a debt of gratitude which you can never repay. And now, as I join your hands together on earth, and while I know that angels are looking down from their white-robed thrones in heaven in joy, and are singing hallelujahs over a union for life so congenial, so harmonious, let me, even at this happy moment,—even now when your hearts are too happy to dream that sorrow might enter therein,—I say, let me warn you now and remind you that you still are earthly beings, and that earthly troubles and vicissitudes of fortune will visit you. But, oh, whatever may be your fate, whatever of this world's bitterness may be in store for you,—for believe me there will be some more or less,—still always, even at the height of your anguish, and when the light of day seems to be drawn from your eyes and you are drinking the very dregs of your cup of sorrow and misery and grief, oh, then, even then, cling more closely and more lovingly to each other than you do now! For believe me, when I tell you that you do not

know now whether you love each other truly and sincerely as you will know then. And if when the world looks so dark and gloomy, you are sitting side by side, both intently gazing into the misty and uncertain future, to see your way out of the sorrows that surround you, and will thus go hand in hand together, until you emerge into the clear noonday of prosperity, then, and not till then, will you fully know the height and depth and breadth and glory of the love that exists in your hearts for each other. Then you may call yourselves happy and blessed indeed. Heaven watch over you, is all that I can say more."

Tears were in the eyes of all, and silence, like a weeping angel, brooded over them. Then Mrs. Alpen, wiping her tears away, scolded them for crying. "We ought not to cry," she said, "when we all are so happy. Now, as Mr. Alpen has made you his speech, I want to make mine." And joining their hands together, she said, in her usual impressive manner, "Never neglect to show your love for each other. I do not mean in public, for then nothing looks so silly and ridiculous, to my mind, as ostentatious and, in most such cases, assumed affection. And never be kissing each other in public either, for there is nothing that looks so silly as to see a husband and wife kissing each other in public, after a short absence. Nine times out of ten, when you see these same ostentatious affectionate persons around their own firesides, you will not see a smile on their faces. No person outside of our own family ever saw Mr. Alpen and myself kiss each other. But when you are in the sacred retreat of your own home, away from the gaze of the rude and callous world, then be as loving and as affectionate and as childlike for each other as you are now. And you, my dear Mr. Ludwick, never fail at such times to shower smiles and approbation upon your wife, for she will look for it, and will be greatly disappointed if you do not. You men will sometimes bestow all the costly gifts on your wives that your love dictates, and yet starve them for want of your smiles and caresses and loving words, on which they could almost live. And you, my dear child," kissing her, "never affect indifference of your love for your husband. Never try to make him think you care nothing for him, to gratify some little whim of your own. I only speak of this now because I have seen so much of it in this strange and curious world. Always, by your

every action, and by your smiles and caresses too, show him that your own heart beats only for him,—that your every thought is of him,—and that if there is a throb of your heart that pains you most, it will be by a frown from him. And, oh, if he does not then love you the more, and if he is not solicitous to grant every wish of your heart, to add pleasure to every moment of your life, then he must be a fiend indeed! All I have now to say in conclusion, and which I would wish you to carry through life, is to be true and faithful to one another, and then you cannot fail to be happy."

Oh, they were happy that evening! too happy for earth. The cup of their joy was full and running over, and it seemed too sudden, too rare, too last long; for in this life there is almost as much of sorrow as there is of joy.

Later in the evening she was sitting in her arm-chair and he was sitting on a divan, reclining, with his arm resting on her lap, and sometimes looking wistfully into her face, as she sat there silently looking on the floor, apparently lost in deep reverie. Something startled by his question as to what was on her mind, she said, "I was just thinking of the lady you spoke of meeting one time, who embodied the ideal of all your budding hopes and fond desires. Tell me something more about her. I do long to hear you."

Surprised at the question, he truthfully told her the facts as near as he could recollect them, without entering into detail.

"Often in my dreams," he said, "have I seen that face, and ever since the first time I met you I have felt in my heart that I had seen you somewhere, but I was so enraptured and fascinated with you that I never allowed any such ideal notions to enter my mind. But, my dear Blanche, never mention the affair again,—all those scenes, all those ideal fancies, have faded away before the approaching splendor of your own dear self. You are all the world to me now," he said, as he drew her face gently down to his and impressed on her sweet lips one long, lingering kiss.

After some silent breathings between them, she archly said, "Your words bring to my mind a little episode in my own life which I have told to no living being, but I am now going to tell it to you. It was several years ago, when a party of us school-girls left Vassar Seminary and stopped on our way home for one night at Saratoga Springs. During one of those

grand soirees at the hotel in the evening, I met a young student from Yale, with whom I was pleased and very much impressed by his, as I thought, brilliant mind and lofty ambition. The inspiring words he spoke, the animation and enthusiasm written in his face, and his earnest and enthusiastic manner, made such an impression as never faded from my memory. He spoke of the fond anticipation of some time visiting Europe; and as I never saw him again after that evening, I traveled with father for two years in a foreign land in the vain hope of meeting him. And now, after many years of weary waiting and longing, and at a time when I least expected it, I find myself—and my own soul tells me that I am right—seated in my own home again, while at my feet sits reclining, and with his arm resting on my lap, the beau-ideal of my fondest dreams, and—the very being whom I met years ago in the banquetting-hall at Saratoga Springs."

Walter sprang to his feet as he impulsively exclaimed, "Impossible! impossible! Where is the bouquet I gave you when you left the hall? That and the box you put it in will convince me beyond a doubt!"

She arose softly and smilingly, and brought the drawer containing her mementos, and then sat down on the same chair, and he drew up a chair and sat down by her side. She showed him the little paper box, just like the one the clerk of the hotel had pointed out to him that morning when he had inquired after her. Then she opened it and showed him the faded bouquet. He looked amazed. Then he asked her several questions that occurred to his mind to convince himself that it was indeed true, and to which she laughingly answered, "Why, yes, I remember it all now, as though it were a yesterday. Every little incident is now impressed as vividly on my memory as it was then."

He leaned back reflecting on his chair, as he said, just loud enough to be heard, "Yes; yes; it's true, it's true. You must be the same." And then bending forward and folding her to his heart, he passionately exclaimed, "Oh, we will never be parted any more! You are now mine forever!"

Oh, they were so happy! The ideals that had so long existed in their imaginations now were made perfect in human shape, and the two beings who seemed from all eternity to be made for one another were now clasped in the arms of

that pure, genuine love which knows no wakening until the resurrection morn! Yes, this is that pure, genuine platonic love which regards the mind and heart only and their excellencies, combined with that mystery surrounding and identified in the human passions which no poet, however naturally so born, no philosopher, however great and learned, has ever yet been able to solve; and which will ever remain a mystery while man remains mortal; and if solved at all, it will only be when he becomes immortal, and is clothed with the robes of the "just," purified and made perfect.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Yes, let the eagle change his plume,  
The leaf its hue, the flower its bloom;  
But ties around that heart were spun  
Which would not, could not, be undone.

CAMPBELL.

WHEN Walter was about to return home, he invited Mr. Belmont to accompany him; but the latter said he could not possibly spare the time. To this Walter replied, earnestly, "Why, my dear friend and benefactor, can you not spare the time? Do you not know that you are wearing yourself out with ceaseless toil and unremitting labor? It is now two years since I came here, and I have never seen you a day out of your office, except on business. The best mind and strongest constitution will not stand this, for I can notice a great change now in the appearance of your face, which, when I came, was thin and careworn, but now it is much more so. Come, now, for you must not refuse me. I have written home that you are coming, and they are all anxious to see you, since they know that you have done so much for me. I know that you will enjoy a roam over the hills, and we will go hunting and boat-riding and buggy-riding and horseback-riding, and we will roam along the meadows and brooks, and fish at our leisure. Oh, I know you will never regret it! And when you return, you will feel so much invigorated that you will feel as though you were commencing a new life."



This picture was too inviting and refreshing, and the invitation too cordial, for Mr. Belmont to refuse: and throwing down his books, said he would go without any further solicitation, as soon as he would arrange his affairs so that he could leave.

There is one fair face at Riverbank whom we have not seen for many a day. The last time we saw her there the glow of health was in her face, and there was joy in her mild gray eyes. The flush of love was on her cheek, and her heart was light and gay, and her song was sweet and inspiring, and she was all that the heart could wish or the soul desire. But now, as she extends her hand with a sister's deepest love to her brother, and bows gracefully to his preceptor and benefactor, there is a change in her whole being,—a change which, if you had seen her, would make your heart ache when you had learned the cause. Her eyes have still that native beauty which nothing in this world ordinarily destroys; but her face, once so beautiful, is now wan, careworn, and the glow that mantled her cheek has passed away, together with the smiles that played around her rosy lips. But notwithstanding all this, she was still probably to some lovelier than before. If her steps were not so light and elastic, and if her laugh were not so gay and musical, nor her face so sunny as heretofore, yet there were still that queenly bearing and womanly dignity and amiability of soul which made her more to be admired and loved.

The cause of her sorrow is easily told. For more than a year and a half she has heard not a word of Dewitt Lu-Guere. As soon as he arrived at Leipsic he wrote her a long letter, which closed as follows: "Now write to me often, and write long letters, and tell me about all the friends with whom I became acquainted when I was at Riverbank; especially tell me about yourself. I never tire of hearing anything of you." She answered this letter, and then came another, full of hopes and breathings of love. The following is an extract: "At the end of two years I will return; but, oh, the time seems so long until I again clasp you to my heart and claim you for my own dear wife! But why do you not tell me more about yourself? You are so modest and retiring that, perhaps, you would think it pedantic in thus speaking of yourself in your own letters. But, remember, it is a sweet treat to me. Do you roam the green

fields and meadows yet as we used to do when I was at Riverbank, where I passed the happiest moments of my life? And do you go down by the brook-side and wander along its moody banks, beautiful now, I suppose, with flowers, thinking of the happy days we passed there together? Do you remember the last time when we were there, when each of us culled a little bouquet and gave it to the other? I still retain mine as a cherished memory of the past. And still one more question: Do you still sing the song you used to sing? And also those that we sang together? Oh, how I would like to be back again and by your side! But when I think of the broad and wondrous deep that rolls between us I almost sink in hopeless despair."

She answered this letter, but never received a reply. Thinking it lost, she wrote again; but still no answer. And after a few months more of doubts and fears, and against a sense of honor and dignity, she wrote again, but with the same result. Tearfully she turned herself away, and endeavored to erase all thoughts of him from her memory.

And thus we see her now, as time passed away, sad and careworn, with a shadow over her that nothing, it seems, will ever erase.

She welcomed Mr. Belmont in that easy and accomplished manner so natural to her. "Although we have never seen you, Mr. Belmont, yet we have heard so much of you in Walter's letters that you seem like an old friend. In behalf of our family, I welcome you to Riverbank."

This welcome, the embodiment of gratitude and that strong trait of friendship that was so inherent in her nature, could not have been more cordial and appropriate, nor more pleasing to Mr. Belmont.

And more than this, when she sat down and was engaged in conversation with him, there were a radiance and flush in her face that were not there when she entered the parlor. The neatness and delicacy of her dress, unobserved before, and the plain but tasteful manner in which her hair was put up, gave her an appearance of rare beauty, mingled with a fascinating simplicity of manner.

Mr. Belmont was one of those jovial companions, when he was naturally himself, of whom one seldom tires. The warm reception he received made him feel quite at home, and

he threw off that hard, careworn look which always made him appear so sad and lonely, and he really entered into the sports of country life and enjoyment. He and Walter roamed the hills together in pursuit of game, and almost always brought home a good supply of that delicious nourishment to satisfy the cravings of hungry humanity. Then, on other occasions, they would take their hooks and lines, and pass the mornings in fishing and anything else they desired. Mr. Belmont had only intended remaining a week, but now two weeks had passed away, and part of the third, and still he lingered at Riverbank, and never seemed happier in his life. Tom Ludwick and he made friends almost instantly,—the former declaring that he was the finest man he had ever met. "He is all business, I warrant you," he said one day to Walter.

One morning as the horses were being saddled and brought out for Mr. Belmont and Marian to take a ride on horseback, Walter said "that he would amuse himself by writing some letters after he would see them depart."

"Write some letters!" Marian exclaimed, looking archly at Mr. Belmont; "say you are going to write a letter and then we will believe you, for I know when you commence one you will have no time to write another."

Mr. Belmont laughed heartily, and without giving Walter time to make any reply, they galloped away and were soon out of sight. Walter went into the library and commenced a letter to Blanche, in answer to one he had just received the day before. He wrote and wrote, until he had six sheets written as closely as the paper would admit. When he had at last finished the letter, Tom came in and took a chair quietly. Walter turned around, and a few commonplace remarks occurred between them, after which Walter said, "Well, what do you think of this man? You are always picking at my friends. Do you see anything wrong in him?"

Tom sat there, with his chin down close to his breast, as he looked out from under his prominent forehead and long heavy eyebrows.

Then, in a few minutes, he said, in an eccentric and laughable manner, "He's all right. For once in your life you have brought home with you a man. There are no boyish tricks about him, and I'll venture to say that you will not see him loitering around and looking at the stars, and dreaming about

the moon, and listening to the birds singing. I'll venture to say," he continued, pointing his finger at Walter in an odd and ludicrous manner, "that he has at all times, and everywhere, an eye to business and money-making. There is no discount on him. I'll bet you anything you have a mind to on that."

Walter laughed outright at the earnest and ludicrous manner in which he spoke, as he replied, "You, I am compelled to say, are right for once. He is a man, take him all in all, that you seldom, if ever, looked upon before. He will yet make one of the foremost and leading men in our country."

As he ceased, he turned around and commenced arranging the sheets of his letter.

Tom looked up in the greatest consternation and amazement, and rising slowly to his feet and approaching the desk cautiously, he exclaimed, in the greatest astonishment, "What! a love-letter? You don't mean it, do you? How many pages?"

Walter counted them over, and replied, "Twenty-four. That is a very small letter."

Amazement was written on Tom's face. He first got white, and then red. He walked several times across the room, and then stopping in front of him, he exclaimed, "What in the name of heaven and earth have you to say to her in a letter of that length? All that is necessary for you to say to her is that you are well, and when you expect to commence business. I hope you are not telling her about the moon. Throw away such confounded nonsense, and be done with it. You will never succeed if you still continue in this manner."

Walter had to burst out laughing again, and after he became composed, said, "This letter, my stoical friend, portrays the sentiments, feelings, and aspirations of the soul; and is thus breathed into the ears of one who will drink in every word in eager draughts, and then quaff for more."

"Fiddlesticks! fiddlesticks! and nonsense upon nonsense!" he excitedly exclaimed, as he walked rapidly through the room. "I believe there is nothing in your head after all but moon dreamings and other such nonsense. Who but day-dreamers ever heard of any person drinking in words? Oh, such nonsense! I can't stand it." And he took his hat and rushed out of the room.

Walter, with a smile, gave the finishing stroke to his letter, and then gave it to a servant to be mailed immediately.

## CHAPTER XVII.

When I did first impart my love to you,  
I freely told you all the wealth I had  
Ran in my veins, I was a gentleman,  
And then I told you true.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Blanche received Walter's letter she rushed into her own room and closed the door; then sitting down in her arm-chair, she read as follows:

"RIVERBANK, Sept. 29, 18—.

"MY DEAR BLANCHE,—I cannot portray to you the boundless joy which filled my heart on the receipt of your letter: neither can I tell you how much I have been thinking of you since I returned home.

"You have been in my thoughts by day, and in my dreams by night.

"The time seems very long since I wrote to you last, and yet when I reckon it up, I find it only a few days.

"Thus you see the large space you occupy in my time and affection.

"Mr. Belmont is here enjoying himself, so he says, most exquisitely. He only expected to remain a week when he came, but now he says he does not know when he will return.

"I am anxious to have him remain as long as possible, for I know it will improve his fast-declining health. We have roamed the hills and valleys in pursuit of game, and have wandered along the brooks and in the faded meadows with infinite delight. And as I gazed upon the beautiful scenery all around us, tinged with the last glimmering rays of the setting sun, I have so wished in my heart of hearts that you had been by my side, for I know your soul would be filled with admiration and delight as you would have gazed upon the beautiful scenery all around us. But I need not repeat, for I remember now that I gave you a picture of Riverbank and its surroundings in my last letter.

"Marian has only told me a few days ago that my old friend Dewitt wrote two letters since he went to Europe, but for more than a year and one-half she has heard nothing from him. He has either tired of the correspondence, else the letters have been lost or in some manner surreptitiously intercepted. But now as far as general news, I will write more in detail again.

"The all-absorbing thought of my mind has been the event of our approaching marriage. I have always referred the matter to you, and have said as often that I will abide by your appointment; yet you still decline to name the auspicious day, and persist in saying I must name it myself. And thus you cannot know the intricate dilemma into which I am thrown. Oh, should my deep, impassioned love, and my supreme joy at the consummation of our marriage relation, alone decide, how quickly my tongue would name the earliest day possible for the completion of all necessary arrangements!

"But oh, Blanche! you cannot imagine even at this happy hour the dark clouds that hover around my soul. As your father was a lawyer, perhaps you are aware of the difficulties that cluster around the commencement of a young man's career in the practice and science of the law. Even some of the brightest jewels in the profession have undergone a long trial of years before they got the privilege of trying a single case. Men, when they go into law, go with their eyes open, and retain the very best counsel they can get, no matter what it costs. They are not half as careful of their own lives. Though a fearful malady may be setting in, yet they will not be alarmed, and will call in a very ordinary or inferior physician; and will not be one-half as much excited over it as they are over a trivial lawsuit. I cannot account for this, unless it is from the fact that when they get into the law they think they are meddling with a two-edged sword, and must therefore watch every stroke, through fear that it will pierce them when least expecting it.

"I know these difficulties well, and therefore, believe me, the world never looked so dark and gloomy to me in my life as it does now, notwithstanding the fact that I see your calm, serene face, with its radiant smile, looking into mine and beckoning me onward. It is true I take courage and strive with renewed efforts to solve the mysteries of the law, and to become successful in its practice; yet when the stern facts rush upon my mind that it may be years before I can come crowned

with success to you, and ask you to come and share my fortunes, I sink down in deeper and deeper despair, and the last ray of hope becomes almost extinct. For I am stunned at the thought of taking you out from your beautiful home and luxurious surroundings and in placing you in one that my means would justify. Oh, I never could, in honor, do such a thing! and therefore I want to open my whole heart to you now, and tell you the cause of the hesitancy I have for setting our wedding day. You cannot imagine the torture of my soul when I think misfortune and poverty might come upon us,—I need not say us, for I do not care for myself,—but, when I even think of you having to share it, I cover my face with my hands and blush, as it were, with shame.

"But I have no doubt of my success in the end. It may take time to attain it, but if I have my health, I have no more doubt that I will reach the goal to which my ambition aspires than I have that the noonday sun is now shining in the heavens. There will, however, be barriers and difficulties to overcome; there will be dark days, I have no doubt, to be passed, and times when I will almost give up in despair. But, do I want you to share these burdens? Do I want to take you out of your beautiful home to share a miserable cottage in comparison? Do I want to throw or cast a dark shadow over your young life that perhaps may never pass away? Oh, no! rather than do such a wicked and cruel thing I would have my right arm wrenched from its socket and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

"I can bear the burdens, I know. I am used to the hard and real world, and as long as there is no one to suffer but myself, I can endure the torture of financial embarrassments. But, oh! I do not know what I should do if you had to share them. Your young heart is not used to them, and I know never could, and therefore I would be a cruel wretch to ask you to share them.

"Now, I have endeavored to lay my whole heart open before you, and you see now my hesitancy in naming the day of our wedding. You also see that in honor I could not do so now, for I do really despise that miserable wretch who would entice a young and faithful heart away from her beautiful home to give her, as I said before, a miserable cot in comparison. I ask you to share a happy and pleasant home with me, and not

a miserable one, and the same joy will then, as there does now, fill our hearts. And now, as I close, I would like to tell you when I will go to Claremont on purpose to see you. Oh, if I were to consult my own heart's desires, I would go immediately, and remain with you all the time.

"But indeed now, I am compelled to say that I may not see you for months. My mind is bent on my future career, and every other wish of my heart must be subservient to it. But if there is one motive in my soul which makes me thus strive more for success than any other, it is your smiling face and those loving eyes resplendent with beauty, which I even now see away in the distance beckoning me onward; and I resume my labors with renewed courage and happier impulses. May sweet dreams and happy hours be thine until you hear from me again!

"Affectionately,  
"WALTER LUDWICK."

"P. S.—I may go to Chicago next week to make arrangements to locate there.

"Mr. Belmont wants me to go in the office with him, but I do not think I will do so. I wish to start out in life on my own resources and on my own responsibilities. Then whatever of success I achieve, it will be owing to my own energy and industry.  
W. L."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Even then,  
Methinks thou wouldst be only made more dear,  
By the sweet thought that I could prove how deep  
Is woman's love. We are like the insects caught  
By the poor glittering of a garish flame!  
But oh! the wings once scorched, the brightest star  
Lures us no more; and by the fatal light  
We cling till death.

BULWER.

WHEN Blanche had finished the letter her eyes were filled with tears, and it fell from her hands. And she took it up after she had wiped her tears away, and read it over and over

again. On the evening of this same day she went to her own room, and wrote the following reply :

"CLAREMONT, Oct., 18—.

"MY DEAR WALTER,—I have read your letter with streaming eyes, through and through. Then when I had laid it down, I would take it up and read it over and over again with feelings of joy and regret,—joy for the exquisite delight of having heard from you, and for the further declaration of your deep, impassioned love ; regret, that you still do not know me better,—that, if I must say it myself, you do not know the generous and sympathetic soul I have ; yes, regret, that I should be the cause of one unhappy and harassing thought to you. Oh, I am truly blessed to know that every throb of your heart is for me, and that the being above all others whom I so fondly and devotedly love only thinks of my happiness !

"But, oh ! Walter, I am not the kind of a girl you think I am ! I do not love you because I think you will place me in a beautiful home, with luxurious surroundings. I am not one of those soulless girls who think of nothing but dress and jewels and fashion, and who would not give the affairs of their husbands one sober and earnest thought. Oh, no ; my inspirations are higher and loftier. Try to think I have a heart that would rejoice at your success, and would be pained with your griefs and disappointments ; and one who, if need be, would not shrink from sharing whatever of sorrow, whatever of adversity, might come upon you.

"The question has never occurred to me whether you were rich in dollars and cents or not. I only know that you are rich in mind and heart. These are the elements of the true man—these, coupled with energy and industry, will, under ordinary circumstances, lead to fortune and to fame. I have no doubt of your future career ; to me it is all bright and clear, though you often tell me it is so for the reason that I always look on the bright side of everything. But I am not doing so now. I am looking on the dark side of our lives, should sorrow and adversity come upon us. I have hands, I have a mind, I have a disposition to work. As long as we have health and love, what else is there in this world that we need care for ? And, I say, if these dark days and vicissitudes of fortunes should come upon you, who should help share them

but myself ? And, if these trials and difficulties which you are compelled to overcome, and which sometimes will almost make you faint by the wayside, who but the partner of these sorrows, as well as your joys, should be by your side, cheering and lifting up your sad heart by her smiles and sympathies and love ? Oh, I know how dreary the world must look to you, if it look but half so dreary as dear papa said the other day it looked to him ! And see how successful he has been. I heard him say the other day to a friend that there was a brilliant future in store for you ; and that, as long as you had health, you could not fail of reaching the height of your profession. Mamma says that she commenced keeping house in two little rooms and with wooden chairs, and now see how happy and contented they are.

"Since receiving your letter, I have often thought what a narrow and sordid soul it seems I would have were I to wait here in my beautiful home, as you say, 'with its luxurious surroundings,' until you, single-handed and alone, amid trials and difficulties and misfortunes, have worked your way to fortune and to fame. And then, worse than all, to go to you and thus enjoy the rich fruits of your own toil and industry without contributing even a smile towards clearing away the clouds that may have gathered around you.

"Oh, I could never do such a cruel and wicked thing ! And, besides this, I know and feel that you could not love me then as you do now, for you could never admire such a trait in my character ; and where there is no admiration there can be no true, genuine love.

"And now, have I scolded you enough ? Perhaps I have said too much, but still let me say more. Dismiss these doubts entertained in your letter concerning me. I referred the naming of our marriage-day to you because I thought it more appropriate and more with the nature of things ; but I never dreamed that you hesitated through fear of the financial embarrassments contained in your letter. And if you now hesitate for this alone, after what I have written you, I will not know what to think, and I do not know what I will say to you when I see you again. Oh, it is not the house that makes a happy home ! All these gorgeous and silkier apartments and marbled floors would but be a mockery of my grief did I think I would always have to live here without that love which my

heart has always longed for. Yes, let me be like the tender vine of which you spoke the second time we met, that 'gently and softly winds itself around the giant oak, and holds it there amid the wildest storms.'

"When clouds of gloom and sorrow gather thick and fast around us in this hard and real world, let us fly away on the wings of love and music to the ideal world, and roam at leisure amid its green fields and garden lands; and then when we come back, damp with the dews of inspiration, you will feel stronger, and will go forward with renewed impulses and brighter hopes for the life to come. Yes, let us walk through this life side by side together, and if there are any ills and burdens to bear, they will be all the lighter for having been borne by us both; and, at last, when we emerge into the clear sunlight of prosperity, as I know and feel we will, then we can look back over the scenes of the past with that exquisite joy which knows no bounds, and we will then love each other the more for having shared our misfortunes together. And even when old age comes, and we are approaching that unseen land beyond the shores of time, we will love each other then as devotedly, as sincerely as we do now.

"Yours sincerely,

"BLANCHE ALPEN."

"P. S.—I had forgotten to give you some of the news. Mrs. Wasson is recovering from the shock of Harry's untimely death. Mr. Spencer, Sr., has purchased her a house and lot, and gives her so much per month. Mr. Charles Spencer, Jr., is still a raving maniac, and the doctors have but little hope of his final recovery.  
B."

## CHAPTER XIX.

Cast my heart's gold into the furnace flame,  
And if it come not thence refined and pure,  
I'll be a bankrupt to thy hope, and heaven  
Shall shut its gates upon me.

Mrs. SIGOURNEY.

MR. BELMONT, after remaining at Riverbank over a month, returned to his home refreshed in mind and body, and he felt like a new man. Whether it was all owing to his exercise and cool morning walks, and a roam over the hills in pursuit of game, or the other part of his time, which was passed with Marian in whatever manner they desired, was not altogether known by any one,—not even, perhaps, by himself. But when he bade them all good-by, it was noticed that his farewell was more affectionate with her than any of the others. The ways of this world are hard and even past finding out.

Tom Ludwick brought in the mail, and after handing him the other letters, he held one up in his hand, as he said, "Here is a letter that I know is not a business letter, for no business man would write such a long one. The handwriting is that of a lady; and from the bulk of it, or size, no matter which, I should judge she was one of those sickly and nonsensical creatures who live in the stars, and who do not know enough to make a cup of coffee. Now, you were fooled once before, and I wonder at you for letting yourself become fooled again. I knew, of course, that you had no idea of marrying that whiffet, but then you did think that she was a confounded nice girl. I was certain, however, that she was of no account whatever. Now, I will venture to say that this one is no better, and I advise you to drop her at once, for there is no business whatever about such a correspondence as this. Get yourself a lady who knows something about work, and who has good sense, and then you will be all right."

After he had delivered this harangue, he handed him the letter, and then turned on his heel and left the room without giving any time for a reply. Walter grasped the letter eagerly,

and then locking the door, broke the seal and commenced to read. The impression it made could easily be observed in his face; for when he finished it a tear rolled down his cheek, and as he wiped it away, he muttered, almost inaudibly, "She is as priceless as all the gold of the Orient." Then he took the letter up and read it again and again.

There was nothing in his letter to her which was not strictly true. If there would be anything in this world which would pain him more than anything else, it would be the fact of meeting or incurring those financial embarrassments by which she would be deprived of the luxuries with which he would delight to throw around her. And here we also find that same pride of which I spoke in a previous chapter. Yes, he was too proud and dignified to ask her to come out of the elegant mansion in which she lived, to share such a one as his means could command. I cannot say that I can condemn this spirit, for he is a miserable wretch who has not that self-regard as to think of this, and have the matter thoroughly understood beforehand. If, however, he had not possessed this spirit, he would have been a very happy man, and his courtship would have been one brilliant ray of sunshine and happiness. But as it is, these doubts and fears would still rise up in his imagination, and he felt unhappy and discontented. But when he read this letter, he was pleased beyond expression, and he answered it in the evening. The following is an extract of his letter:

"Of course I do not doubt the truth of what you state in your letter; but are you sure you understand your own heart when you say, in effect, that you will join your destiny with mine, whatever it may be? Have you fully and calmly considered all you have written in your letter, or is it the outgushing of your young, enthusiastic, and impulsive heart? Do not deceive me, and, what is more, and of far greater importance to me, do not deceive yourself; for I never wish to see the day when I will see you sad and careworn. It would be misery and torture, and would almost break my heart."

In her answer to this letter she said, in reference to this paragraph, "You ask me again if I have examined my own heart when I in effect said that I would link my fate to yours, whatever it may be. Oh, unbelieving Thomas that you are! Do you still doubt? What can I say to convince you that I know whereof I speak? I am sure I understand my own heart, and

I know that if there should come a sad, sad time when adversity's horrors should come upon us, my woman's nature, stronger than man's, will bear me up; and you will be stronger by the magnetism infused into my own being. Yes, on this point, I repeat your own words: 'I will thus link my fate with yours, whatever it may be.'"

This letter was forwarded to St. Louis, where he received it with trembling and eager fingers. He was more than delighted, and pressed it to his lips and murmured blessings on the writer. That evening he wrote again, and referring to their marriage, said,—

"I will doubt no more the dearest idol of my soul. I will not write a long letter this time, for I only write long letters when I am in one of those sentimental moods, and when dark clouds are hovering around me. My soul is now too light, too full of joy. I can only say that the brightest vision in my enraptured imagination is your immaculate self. When Christmas-time comes, I promise you, without fail, to be by your side, and then we will both mutually agree on our marriage-day, and thus will set a good precedent for the life to come. In the mean time, let me hear from you often, and I will write you every opportunity I have."

And thus the vexed question was agreeably settled. When Christmas-time did come, he passed the holidays with her, and they experienced the sweetest pleasures to which any human being on this earth is susceptible. Their marriage was arranged to take place in the following May,—the month they both loved so much. They had probably deferred it that long through the hope that Dewitt Lu-Guere by that time would have returned; for it was their intention, if he returned in time, to have a large wedding; otherwise, to have a private one.

## CHAPTER XX.

Oh, Heaven! were man  
But constant, he were perfect; that one error  
Fills him with faults, makes him run through all sin;  
Inconstancy falls off ere it begins.

SHAKESPEARE.

TOWARD the coming of spring, Walter Ludwick called at Dr. Patterson's office. When they were alone in his private office, Walter told him of his approaching marriage, and desired him to act as groomsman. "I am not certain," he continued, "whether I will want you as first or second groomsman, as it depends on the return from Europe of my bosom friend, Dewitt Lu-Guere. He was to have been at home long ere this, but, for some cause of which we know nothing, we have received no letters for now nearly two years. Should he not come, I desire you to act as first groomsman."

The doctor was very much surprised at the information he received, and replied, with no little animation, "There is no person in the world whom I would feel more pleasure to accompany to the hymenial altar than yourself; and you may rest assured of my hearty and willing assistance in any capacity that you may desire." Then, after the long silence that ensued, he continued: "I ought to have congratulated you on the happy event of your approaching marriage. It is the most sensible thing, you will find, that you have ever done in your life." And in a lower tone, in which there was a something of sadness, he continued: "I shall always think that I have made a great mistake in not looking around a long time ago for a wife. I think it is the greatest mistake of a man's life, for there is no one who can live happy alone. It is not the normal state, it seems to me, of mankind."

"There is a great truth in what you say, doctor, and I have always wondered myself why you did not hunt yourself up a wife long ago. You have ample means, and unless I am greatly mistaken, I have always considered you a very domestic

man, and would make an agreeable companion around your own fireside."

"No, you are not mistaken," he sadly said. "I have all my life longed for domestic happiness. There probably was a time when I could have married well, but I had not the means then, and I was too proud to go in debt, and so let the opportunity pass. But I shall never cease to regret it. I solemnly tell you now, my old friend, that the hardest thing you can do is to hunt up a wife. Of course there are exceptions, and I place you among them. But in a wife, I want a companion, one who has a noble and exalted soul, and one who, if adversity comes upon us, would have the will to put her hand to the wheel and help roll it along. I do not care so much of the amount of work she would do, if I only knew she had the disposition to work if it were really necessary. But to marry one of those ignoble souls, who thinks that a man has nothing to do but to keep them up in a band-box, I would as leave go and hang myself at once. I could never love such a creature, I do not care if she were as pretty as a Venus. There is nothing I admire in woman so much as fortitude and magnanimity of soul and good common sense. If I could find one whom I thought was the true woman, I would marry her at once, if my love were reciprocated. I have changed something in my opinions since last I talked with you on this subject two years ago. But still, I am a great believer in love at first sight. I think, if ever I marry, it will be from my first impression."

The doctor was a very congenial companion. He and Walter were very confidential friends, and it was a great deal of pleasure for him at times thus to unburden his mind on this subject which now seemed to him a lost cause. They talked a long time, and then Walter took his departure, and the doctor went to his daily business of dealing out pills.

Some time later than this, about a fortnight after Marian had arrived at Claremont to assist in the preparations of the wedding, she and Blanche were sitting in the latter's own room talking confidentially. A very intimate, confidential, and sisterly affection had sprung between them from the first, and now they seemed like friends of many years' acquaintance. As they were sitting there in the twilight, Marian softly said, "There is a question I wish to ask you, on which perhaps you



can give me some light. Do you know or have you heard anything of your cousin, Mr. Lu-Guere? I would like to hear so much something about him."

The question quite surprised Blanche, not so much as being unlooked for, but because it brought to her mind the fact that she had neither heard nor seen anything of him for nearly three years. After she had replied that she knew nothing of him, she continued: "The truth of it is, dear Marian, that when Cousin Dewitt left Claremont he seemed to be very angry at me." Then she explained in detail all the facts concerning his departure, and that thus ended their first and last meeting.

In return for this confidence, Marian related minutely all the circumstances connected with his departure from Riverbank, and then added: "But that which seems so much of a mystery to me is the fact that he came right from home to Claremont and remained, Walter says, more than a fortnight; and all the time, nearly, he gallanted Miss Murdoch. Can you explain this to me?"

"I can explain this in part, but not fully. I will do so as clearly as I can." And then she explained about the affair of Mr. Belmont, and about his persuading her cousin to commence a flirtation with her, and to endeavor to win her heart, and then to cast her away, to gratify his thirst for revenge, and then concluded by saying, "But what effect her fascinating charms may have had upon him I cannot tell you, for I still see that she yet wears the ring that Mr. Lu-Guere gave her when he first came here."

As she uttered these last words a chill ran over Marian's whole being, and she covered her face with her hands as she almost gasped for breath. As Blanche noticed this a painful sensation pierced her heart, and she said, earnestly, "I really regret the dilemma into which my cousin has placed himself, and cannot too severely denounce his whole course in this unmanly and undignified affair. But if it indeed should be true that he has learned to love her, I am surprised that an educated and talented young man like him should love and marry a lady so inferior in mental accomplishments and whose only charms are in her bewildering beauty. And if, on the other hand, he is still flirting with her after his professions of love for you, and after he has ample time to reflect upon the dishonor of the act, I do not think that you have any reason to regret

that your intercourse so mysteriously ended. There is nothing, it seems to me, on this earth to be as much despised as a male flirt. I think, under these circumstances, that you would be doing right to efface from your memory every recollection of him."

A long silence ensued, and then Marian, wiping away some few tears that gathered in her eyes, softly said,—scarcely above a whisper, but loud enough to be heard by her auditor,—“Mr. Belmont has told me that he loves me, and wants to marry me; but I have told him I do not love him. Did I do right?”

“Yes; certainly, my dear child,” she said, as she threw her arms around her neck and passionately kissed her, and then continued: “But would it not be well for you to reflect that aside from this act of his and Dewitt’s,—the only act in his life that I can really condemn,—he is honorable, and would make you a kind and loving husband?”

“Yes; but my dear sister that soon is to be, do you not know what a strong hold this mysterious passion of love has on the human heart? You have loved, and do you not know how that it is the very life of your being, the Mecca around which all the affections of your soul cluster? My young and blithesome heart was won by his sweet words and winning ways, and there are scenes impressed on my memory that time can never efface, though it seems to me I were to live forever. Still, I would do as you say to preserve my own honor. I would strive to forget him, if I could only learn from his own lips that he did not love me, or if I knew it beyond a doubt. But, oh, it is this doubt that harasses and tortures the very soul out of me!”

Blanche could not restrain the tears that would rush to her eyes in spite of herself when she remembered the torture which but less than a year ago filled her own heart; and taking her hands in both of hers, she passionately exclaimed, “Yes, I have indeed loved! And if there were a day darker to my soul than any other one, it was when the doubt was strongest within me whether I was loved in return. Oh, that terrible, gloomy doubt! I shall never forget it! But there is only one remedy. Time, which reveals all things, will have to solve this mystery. Be truthful and candid. I have always found truth to be the fairest robes in which we can clothe our actions. This is the only advice I can give you.”

But little more was said, and, as the darkness of night had become deeper and more impenetrable around them, they were reminded of the lateness of the hour, and sought the nepenthe of all our griefs—balmy sleep.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Around her shone  
The light of love, the purity of grace;  
The mind, the music, breathing from her face;  
The heart whose softness harmonized the whole;  
And oh! that eye was in itself a soul.

BYRON.

SPRING, with all its inspiring hopes, at last came; and with it came the birds and flowers, and the green grass on the meadows, and the lovely foliage of the hills and valleys, and all that makes life dear and joyous. It was a spring, too, fraught with the brightest hopes and sweetest joys to this youthful couple, who were to be soon joined together in the holy and responsible bonds of matrimony. And it was with gushings of joy that they counted the days, until at last the eventful day dragged its slow length along; and the bells rang with their merry peals as the thirtieth day of the beautiful and flowery May was ushered in,—a day ever memorable to the actors in a ceremony fraught with the sweetest joys known to the human breast.

It had been their intention to have a large wedding, but owing to the fact that they had heard nothing from Dewitt, and as he was to be first groomsman, they changed their minds, and only invited their particular friends. Dr. Patterson was selected for first groomsman and Mr. Belmont was called in as second. Miss Lizzie Marlan was first, and Marian second, bridesmaids. Most of their intimate friends were invited, and, strange to say, there was not a single regret sent in, for all came to the wedding.

The day dawned bright and beautiful. There was not a dark cloud in the sky, and the few fleecy ones that floated above them were in exquisite contrast with the azure canopy

of heaven. The birds were singing sweetly, and the air was soft and balmy, and every breeze was fragrant with the perfume of flowers and roses that were blooming all around them.

In the large parlor, where the ceremony was to be performed, every conceivable place was decorated with flowers; and where they were to stand during the ceremony there was a beautiful arch entwined with the rarest flowers and festooned with the interspersing of the ivy and the myrtle. All that a refined taste and wealth could do to make everything look as lovely and as gay as the most fastidious could desire was done. And the whispered acclamation of every one was, "Lovely in the extreme."

Walter Ludwick was dressed in a plain, full-dress black suit, and wore a white cravat and white gloves. His face was calm and serene, and there was a self-possession which made him look noble and dignified, and which he never lost during the whole ceremony. His heavy moustache and chin-whiskers of an appropriate length also added dignity to his appearance.

But Blanche—the bride! Oh, how shall I describe her? If there were a doubt or a shadow at any time resting upon her face, there was not, on this happy day, the remotest trace of it left behind. Her cheeks glowed with perfect health, her eyes were resplendent with that natural beauty which never faded during the darkest moments of her life; and around her sweet lips there played a smile which indicated the exquisite joy of the soul within; and every lineament of her face was tinged with that radiant beauty and sweetness which none but the immaculate Artist of the universe himself can paint. And in her form, in her manner, in her general appearance, there were that natural gracefulness and queenly bearing which made her exquisitely beautiful.

Her dress was universally admired by the ladies. Fannie Murdoch said it surpassed anything she had ever dreamed of. It was of a rich white satin, trimmed with the costliest Brussels lace and orange-blossoms, and looked as fleecy and airy as though it were made of swan's-down. This dress was a present of a particular friend in Florence, and had been sent particularly for the occasion. The bridal veil, reaching to the floor, was of white satin tulle, and looked exquisitely beautiful. Her hair was dressed in a simple coil and chataleine braids behind, with here and there an orange-blossom. The bridesmaids

were beautifully dressed in white silk, trimmed with satin, and carried in their hands bouquets in satin holders.

A pensive stillness followed their entrance into the parlor, and continued during the whole ceremony, which was conducted after the fashion of the Protestant Episcopal Church, of which she was a member. There were many sobs as the minister said, "And now, my young friends, let me assure you that from this hour forward you assume new responsibilities under God, and if you rightly perform them, well will it be for you, as for all of us, at the resurrection morn."

Then followed the kissing and embracing of parents and child, and the shaking of hands and congratulation of earnest and warm-hearted friends; then all was o'er of this long-looked-for and important event,—made more so, perhaps, by reason of the tragic events that clustered around their courtship.

After dinner, which was gorgeous and sumptuous in the extreme, they looked at and inspected the presents, which were numerous and costly indeed. From the banks of the Hudson, where lived the mother of Dewitt Lu-Guere, came the most beautiful silver service, perhaps, any of them had ever seen. And then, when the presents of Messrs. Belmont, Marlan, and a host of other warm and true friends, were all spread out before them, it was a sight which dazzles the eye and fills the souls of the most unscrupulous with delight.

A few more hours, and they were at the depot,—all their guests accompanying them there. And now, amid tears and sobs, the train came puffing and crashing along, and when they were all seated therein, and as the last kiss was given, and the last "God bless you" said, the bell rang, and the train moved away; and in a few moments more she was flying many miles away from the happy home she had always loved so well, and which, alas, was to be her home no more!

They expected to be gone on their tour something over a month, in which was included a visit to the capital, as Congress was then in session. After which they would proceed East to the most important cities, and then turn up the beautiful Hudson to the home of Dewitt Lu-Guere.

After remaining a day or so at Saratoga Springs, where years ago they had first met, they intended going to the lakes, and from there to the Garden City of the West,—their future

home. From there, their purpose was to go to Riverbank and pass the beautiful summer months at his old home.

And thus ended the most important event in their young lives, and truly the most important event in any person's life. Thus, at last, these two who seemed, as Fannie Murdoch said, just made for each other, were united in that bond of union which made their two hearts one. And with gushing joy that filled their hearts to overflowing, they commenced the journey of life with congenial sentiments and a suitability of mind and purposes.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Lies it within  
The bounds of possible things that I would link  
My name to that word—traitor?

MRS. HEMANS.

THE bridesmaids and groomsmen accompanied them part of the way on their journey, and then Dr. Patterson returned with Lizzie to Claremont, and Mr. Belmont accompanied Marian to her home in the beautiful valley at Riverbank.

During her stay at Claremont, she could scarcely help but believe that Dewitt was untrue to her. When she heard with a throbbing heart that he had gone from her presence almost to Claremont, and remained nearly two weeks with Miss Murdoch; and then when she saw the additional evidence of his own ring on her finger, it was almost more than she could stand. When she reached home it was with an aching and throbbing heart, and with that painful sensation which induces a loss of faith in mankind.

Mr. Belmont of course knew that Dewitt loved Marian, but he was not sure whether she reciprocated his love when he asked her to marry him. But since her stay at Claremont he had learned from Blanche that she loved him as devotedly as he loved her. The terrible temptation was strong within him now to betray his faithful friend, as he had everything in his own hands. How easy it would be for him to misrepresent everything concerning Dewitt, and thus gain this fair young

girl for his wife! The temptation was strong within, and one evening—just the evening previous to his return home—as they were sitting out in the veranda, in the cool twilight, he said, “You do not know, Marian, how much I have been thinking about the question I proposed to you many months, it seems, ago. I wish I could make known to you how delighted I would be to have your answer in my favor. Have you thought anything about it since then?”

A shadow passed over his face as he expressed these words in his usual earnest-like and candid manner. She looked at him some time, and then clasping her hands together in such a manner which indicated that the words which she was about to say pained her, she turned more directly toward him, as she said, in a sad and mournful tone, “I regret exceedingly if my failure to answer your question in the manner you would wish gives you the least pain whatever. I do not love you as I know you would desire me to do, and I could not in honor extend the hand when I know my heart would, or could, not go with it. The time ‘might have been,’ probably, when I would have felt and acted differently; but you know we cannot undo the past, and the future is always so uncertain and mysterious. When I have fully blotted from my memory some once very happy dreams of the past, and there is infused into me, as it were, a kind of a new life, then perhaps I may have so changed that I could answer your question, did the opportunity still permit, more in accordance with your own wishes.” And then looking more directly into his face, she continued: “Now, Mr. Belmont, you will see the profound and high regard I have for you, when I have indirectly referred to an episode in my life which is always accompanied with pain and regret, and which, too, I have mentioned to no living being but one, and I never desire to do so again. But the esteem and consideration in which myself, and in fact our whole family, hold you, have induced me to think it prudent and but right that I should, at least to a certain extent, explain to you the cause of my actions. And if I have said or done aught that would wound or hurt your feelings, I most sincerely ask your pardon, though I would wish the same subject not to be referred to again.”

Mr. Belmont, with averted face, extended his hand, and then, after a few moments of silence, said, “I thank you for your

candor and truthfulness and the confidence you have reposed in me, and the esteem and admiration in which you say you hold me. And as a token of my high regard and admiration and love for you, I promise you upon my honor not to refer to it again, but shall await your own good time to mention it yourself.”

But little more was said. The next morning he returned home, sad and lonely. But a gleam of hope soon dawned upon his mind, and he thought he was springing into a new life; but as suddenly it died away, and a darker and more impenetrable cloud gathered around him. There is no doubt there was truth in what he said, for Mr. Belmont was an honorable man. But still, Charles Spencer was an honorable man, and he fell,—yes, he fell beyond even the hope of redemption,—and he had not even half the opportunity of betrayal that Mr. Belmont had. How easy it would have been for him to have entered into all the details about Dewitt's flirtations with Fannie, and to have shown in his usual logical and convincing way that the pretense of getting up the flirtation for himself was only a sham, and that it was Dewitt's own purpose and desire!

As a proof of this, he could have referred to the ring. Ah, the opportunity was a great one if improved! There was no doubt but Mr. Belmont uttered the truth; but did he fully know his own heart? Did he fully know the power this passion of love had over him, when he saw an opportunity to win? The answer must be clothed in doubt.

Many a time, at the dead hour of midnight, he sat in his office contemplating deeply the terrible temptation that was presented to him. Most fully did he consider the great confidence that Dewitt had reposed in him, by telling all about his love for Marian. And as fully did he consider the service she had done him in thus, to a certain extent, sacrificing his own honor in endeavoring to win the affections of a young lady who had never thrown a straw in his way, and then to cast her away as a plaything of the past, and all to please and gratify him. “Can I do this?” he would ask himself. “Can I thus link with my name that terrible epithet,—traitor? Can I thus stab the truest friend I ever had in the back, and crush him forever? Can I do an act over which devils in hell would rejoice, and angels in heaven would

weep? Would not the Everlasting himself point his finger of scorn at me forever, and perhaps set the curse of Cain upon my face?"

When these plaguing thoughts and gloomy forebodings would pass away, then her sad, sweet face would come vividly before his mind, and he would picture to himself a happy home, surrounded with all that makes life comfortable and enjoyable, in which she would be enshrined as his own dear wife. Then the tempter would whisper in his ear, "Why not do it? Man must strive for his own happiness, though he wade through blood to the knees." His face would brighten up, and he would hopefully spring to his feet and exclaim, "Yes, why not do it? I will be happy then!"

But will he do it? If the opportunity were greater than Charles Spencer's, the crime were greater if he should do so than his. Would he betray his bosom and confidential friend,—the friend who, in fact, had sacrificed his own honor for him; the friend who granted almost his every wish? Ah! would he thus stab him behind his back, and crush out the brightest hopes of his life, and make him a miserable and heart-broken man forever? Oh, no; I have some little faith in human nature, and believe he will not do it. But who knows the human heart? Who, besides the All-Seeing Eye of heaven, knows the depravity of the human heart?

Alas! it is a struggle betwixt the passions of the human soul and honor; and if the former prevail,—if black, damnable ingratitude prevail,—then with that fallen honor dies all that is noble, all that is sublime in Augustus Belmont.

## BOOK V.

### CHAPTER I.

"Domestic happiness! thou only bliss  
Of paradise that has survived the fall:  
Thou art the nurse of virtue."

COWPER: *Task*.

THERE is one spot on this ever-changing earth which remains the same, and which fascinates all the better angels of our nature, and gives the soul a sweet foretaste of that perfect bliss in that paradise beyond the shores of time, towards which we are apace approaching. Oh, if there is a bright spot on this hard and real world of ours,—a spot brighter by far than all the rest,—a spot where the weary heart may find that luxurious ease which nothing on earth can give,—a spot where the fatigued eye may rest with that infinite and boundless joy which calms all our fears and anxieties, and buries all our troubles and sorrows, it is the happy, happy circle of home, around which centres all the fondest hopes and brightest visions of mankind! Oh, it does seem to me that if any human being on this earth can be happy, it is when sitting around his own fireside enjoying the exquisite happiness of matrimonial bliss!

The wanderer in foreign lands and distant climes, at twilight's holy hour, sighs his soul away across the wondrous deep to his happy home, where he has often wandered in boyish glee over the hills and valleys strewn with blooming flowers, and along the meadows and brook-sides sparkling in the sunshine of a beautiful summer's morn. And with longing eyes and anxious heart, he looks forward to the time when he shall again set his feet upon the favored spot of his boyhood's days, and receive the loving smiles and the affectionate embrace of the father and mother and sisters and brothers who, with joyful hearts, welcome him home. In his buoyancy his soul feels

new impulses, new joys, and that which did not seem to interest him before now fills his soul with the sweetest pleasures. In imagination he sits beneath the same old elm-tree; treads the same old beaten path; wanders over the same hills and valleys, and by the same brook-sides, with that boundless joy which he never felt before, and which fills his soul with that sweet inspiration that gently lifts it up to heaven.

But how much greater joy, how much sweeter bliss, fills the soul of this same being as he contemplates and enjoys a home of his own! A home reared with his own hands and by his own industry, and shared by her whom his young heart holds most dear! If she had helped to build it! If they began life when they were young, and poor in worldly means, but rich in the resources of mind and heart and purpose, and through their own industry combined have made for themselves a home which they now enjoy,—oh, how sweet and boundless must be that bliss which fills their young souls, and how they must enjoy every pleasure that this life affords! If they are congenial,—and yet I scarcely need give utterance to the expression, for there is no domestic happiness where there is no congeniality of soul and suitability of mind and purpose,—how happy they must be, as they sit around their own fire-side, reading the books they admire and singing the songs they love, and engaging in that elevated and inspiring conversation which instills into their hearts new hopes and nobler impulses, and clothes their minds with a broader and deeper range of thought and gives them a more thorough knowledge of what they have read! And further, in these social chats,—in these communions of soul with soul,—how much stronger and purer are made their sympathies, and how much deeper is that love which exists between them instilled into their hearts! All these times, when they are shut out from the rude world, and when they are surrounded by the sanctity of their own home, how all the sympathies of their souls go out to each other! And if there is a burden resting on their young hearts, how easy it is to unbosom themselves and tell all their sorrows, and thus receive from each the sympathies and consolations of the other! And then when they go again into the active and busy world, they will feel better and stronger, and can withstand the cares and troubles of the world all the better for having its griefs shared by each other.

Yes, here in the domestic circle, after all, is the only true genuine happiness of mankind to be found. If he be happy and contented in his profession, or whatever his vocation in life may be, it is all because he brings the trophies of his toil and industry home to be shared by his wife and family. If his disposition is not to do this; if he is grasping after wealth, and then—miser as he is—hoards it up, and neither enjoys it himself nor lets any one else do so for him, but still grasps after more and more and is still not satisfied, he cannot be happy; for his soul is too narrow and sordid to enjoy of the pleasures of this world. Such a man does no good to himself nor those around him, nor is he of the slightest benefit to mankind. But he who has a nobler and a more exalted soul,—who has a better idea and purpose of life,—is only happy when he sees those around him whom he most loves happy. And if there be a spot on earth to him which seems to resemble that other home towards which we are all traveling, it is when seated in his own house, where a "charm from the skies seems to hallow him there;" and when he lives amid his books and pictures, and noble and exalted friendships, and a deep, impassioned love for all those whom he holds most dear on earth.

## CHAPTER II.

Then come the wild weather,—come sleet or come snow,  
We will stand by each other however it blow;  
Oppression and sickness, and sorrow and pain,  
Shall be to our true love as links to the chain.

LONGFELLOW.

THE wedding tour of Mr. and Mrs. Ludwick was a pleasant one indeed. They included in it a visit to the Garden City of the West, which they intended to make their future home. Blanche was very well pleased with the little cottage he had rented for them, and in a few days they returned to Claremont to make preparations to move at their earliest opportunity.

All the time that they were making arrangements to move such of her personal effects as she intended taking with her,

Blanche was deeply thinking about something; and when alone she would sink into a deep reverie, and would only be aroused from it when her mother would, in the greatest surprise, ask her what in the world she was thinking about. One time her father saw her thus deeply engaged in thought, and he inquired the cause, but she only gave him some evasive answer, which was satisfaction at the time, and nothing more was said on the subject.

Some time after this, when the judge was just about finishing his correspondence, Blanche came into the library where he was writing, and took a seat in silence near him. He was busy writing, and did not look up (which was a habit of his) until he had finished the sentence. Having finished the letter, he looked up in his usual affable and affectionate manner, as he said, "Well, my child, what can I do for you? Any business on hand?"

These kind words seemed to make her feel more at ease, and she brightened up as she said, "You asked me one day, dear papa, what I was thinking about, but I could not then definitely tell you. I did not know, scarcely, whether it was ideal or real, but I think I can tell you now. Am I justified in thinking that you will some time, sooner or later, give to me part of your fortune?"

The judge looked at her in the greatest astonishment for a few moments, and then said, "Well, my dear child, that is a question which I have given but little consideration; in fact, I have not given it any, for I have not yet decided when I will make my will. I do not think of dying soon." And then he looked at her in a kind of a half-smiling manner, as he continued: "It is my purpose now, however, to leave it all to yourself, for I do not know who else I could leave it to. Why do you ask me the question?"

She looked up to him in such a manner which showed that there was a beating of her heart and a trembling of her whole being. Then, after some hesitation and misgivings, she said, "I supposed that my conclusions were correct, and I was just wondering how much you were going to give me now. That is the question I desired to ask you."

The judge looked at her a few moments, as a slight frown passed over his face. She noticed it in an instant, and it pierced her very heart's core. After some hesitation, he slowly said,

"Well, that question, I do say, never yet occurred to my mind. I was, however, reflecting how much furniture I would make you a present of; but, as for giving any sum of money, the thought never came into my mind before. Is it possible that you doubt the ability of your husband to support you? If so, Mr. Ludwick is not the man I imagined he was, or he would not have married until he felt himself competent to support himself and his wife. I am strongly opposed to people in these days getting married until they have something on which to live."

The pain and mortification so transparent in Blanche's face, as he gave utterance to these words, beggars description. First she became as pale as death, and then the blood rushed to her cheeks, and she sank back on her chair exhausted, without saying a word. When he ceased speaking, he was looking out of the window at something on the street, and when he looked at her again, there was a reaction, and in the place of this weakness there came that power which makes her strongest when we would sometimes think her weakest. Being imbued with this latent power, she arose to her feet, as she impulsively cried, "Oh, papa, you have pierced my heart so mercilessly that I do not think I can ever forgive you! Say anything to me you have a mind to; but say not one disparaging word of my husband in my presence, for I will not and cannot endure it. This is a little affair of my own, about which he knows nothing, and which, if he did know, he would never cease to regret that I had done anything of the kind. His mind is as high above any relation of dependence as the heavens are above the earth; and he would starve rather than ask you for one solitary dollar. He never dreams of this act of mine, for I have told no living soul anything about it but yourself. And then to think that my husband should be thus slandered for no act of his own! Oh, it is more than I can bear!"

She burst into tears, and was about to leave the room, when the judge caught and drew her to a seat beside him, as he tenderly said, "Why, my dear child, I did not think thus to mar a feeling of your heart. I did not mean to say a harmful word of Mr. Ludwick, for I think him the finest and best man living! Come, brush away your tears." And he took her hands from her eyes, and wiped her tears away.

After she was calm again, he in a very kind manner said, "I am surprised, my child, that you take such a trifling affair

so to heart; but we will pass it by, and now, tell me again what you desire."

She then explained to him how it pained her to hear him speak words that reflected on her husband's honor, and then said, "As I told you before, Mr. Ludwick never dreams that I make this request of you, and it is done of my own notion, by which I may some time surprise him. But what I was going to say is, that if you ever intend to give me anything, I would like to have it now. You know the difficulties that cluster around a young man in the commencement of the practice of his profession, without my telling you, and you know that one dollar will be of more use to us now than a thousand would when we do not need them. And besides this, you know at best how little a wife can add to his income, and that there is thus an expense associated with the commencement of house-keeping which surprises one to think about. You see, then, that I want to make my husband a present now, which will be so useful to him, and which I know he will so much appreciate for its coming from me. And, again, what would be all your wealth to him or me when we do not need it? What would he care how much you would give him after he had worked his own way to fortune, and has all that he desires to make life comfortable and enjoyable? And then, what gratitude or love would your wealth inspire for you when we would know that you could not consistently give it to any person else? But you can easily perceive what a rich treasure even a small sum would be to us now. Have I explained myself fully to you?"

"Yes, yes," the judge said, kindly. "Why did you not explain that before, and then there would have been no misunderstanding?" And then, after some hesitation, he said, "There is a farm out in the West, worth fifteen thousand dollars, the rent of which will keep you all your lives. I will make you a deed for this in your own name."

"Oh, papa!" she impulsively exclaimed, "what makes you so insipid this morning? I would not take the deed if the farm were worth ten times fifteen thousand dollars. Why, Mr. Ludwick would spurn even the thought of touching a deed made out in my own name. I would not hand it to him for the world! Why, you do not know Mr. Ludwick at all, if you think that his proud spirit would allow him to touch an instrument which bore on its very face distrust of him by his

wife. If the deed had been made in my name before we were married, I could now make it over to him; but you see this cannot be done now. Whatever you are inclined to give me at any time, I would rather have a part of it now, and whatever that part is, I would rather have it in money, for I have now my plans all laid, and it would almost kill me to be disappointed in them. This very suggestion of yours would produce an estrangement between my husband and myself which I am sure would never be fully overcome, and I would not, and could not, blame him, if he would never forgive me for doing so. For if he had such a humiliating spirit as not to feel any resentment for an act that so reflected on his honor and integrity and ability, I could never have loved him. I could not honor a man who did not possess that dignity and pride which would make him spurn a mean and dishonorable act; and you know there can be no love where there is no honor and admiration. I have linked my fate with his, and if our life be that of prosperity, then let it be so; and if it be a life of sorrow, then I wish to share it with him. We will travel on together, and if our way does lie through the dark valley of adversity, we will still look hopeful to the future, and pray for the time to come when we will emerge into the clear sunlight of prosperity. Then we can look back over a long lifetime spent together."

As she ceased speaking, the judge, with tears in his eyes, clasped her in his arms as he exclaimed, impulsively, "My dear child, you have a soul in you as exalted and as pure as an angel's!" And then when he was calm again, he continued: "I will now question you no more. Just name the sum you want, and you shall have it with pleasure."

She hesitated for a few moments, and then said, "Well, dear papa, I can hardly say; I do not know how your finances are. How much could you spare?"

He hesitated for a few moments, and then said, "Would five thousand dollars do you?"

"Yes, yes," she said, brightening up; "that will do."

He turned to his desk and wrote her out a check for ten thousand dollars, and then handed it to her.

When she read it over, she burst into tears, and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him passionately, as she murmured, "Oh, papa! papa! I did not mean that you should give me half this sum. How noble and generous you are!"



## CHAPTER III.

From that day forth in peace and joyous bliss  
 They lived together long without debates;  
 Nor private jars, nor spite of enemies,  
 Could shake the safe assurance of their states.

SPENSER: *Fairie Queene.*

TIME passed rapidly away, until the first of October came and passed. The preparations for commencing housekeeping were fully completed. Mrs. Alpen had been busy all the time, and had packed in, along with other things, numerous little articles which none but the practical housekeeper can fully appreciate. After the furniture and bedding, with which she had presented them, were placed in the cottage, there was but little more needed, and anything that Walter did purchase was of the best quality, as this was one of his characteristics. He very seldom purchased anything of an inferior quality. The piano was always considered to belong to Blanche; but, as it had been in use so long in the family, Mrs. Alpen desired to have it remain, and so the judge made her a present of one of Steinway's best pianos, with which she was wonderfully pleased. The silver-ware and presents that she received on her wedding-day, rendered the culinary department almost complete; and there was only to purchase those substantial articles which are indispensable to the perfecting of the household arrangements.

At last, however, all was completed, and the friends who had accompanied them had gone, and they were now alone by themselves in their own home. The air had been cold all day, and a fire was kindled in the library, which burned lively and made everything look bright and cheerful. Blanche had finished playing on her elegant piano, and had taken her arm-chair to finish some braiding. Walter had been reading, but had turned from his book, and was looking dreamily into the fire. His mind seemed to be deeply riveted upon something, for he seemed unconscious of all around him. His young wife noticed this, and she sat there watching him for some time.

Then moving her chair nearer to him, she laid her hand lightly on his arm, as she said, softly, "My dearest husband, I

know there is something on your mind. Will you not tell me what it is?"

Walter looked up surprised, and drew her towards him, as he kissed her affectionately. Then he said, "Yes, my dear wife, I was just thinking of something; but there was nothing of grief in it. I was just thinking over my past life, to see if I could point out the epoch that is most indelibly impressed upon my memory. And it so happens that it is connected with your rescue last spring. I refer to the time, of which I suppose your father told you, that intervened after the servant-girl first told me where you were until I reached the door followed by the policeman and your father. Oh, I do not think I could ever erase from my mind the terrible suspense, the seemingly long space of time I lived until I bursted in the door and released you! How vividly I saw the alderman joining the hand of the only being I loved to that of another! and how fully I thus realized that my fondest and most cherished hopes were blighted forever! Oh, it is impossible for that period of my life ever to be forgotten!"

Blanche looked up at him in the greatest surprise, and then looked reflectively into the fire. She turned after awhile again, and laid her arm gently on his shoulder, as she said, "I can tell you, too, the happiest moment of my life,—the time that Charles Spencer told me that you loved me. Oh, I never can forget the sweet joy, even in the midst of my deep sorrow, that filled my heart as he said that you loved me truly! It was just, too, after he had told me of his sworn purpose to force me to marry him. I have often since then desired to refer to this, but I always saw such a dark shadow creep over your face when anything concerning my rescue was mentioned, that I have always refrained from doing so out of deference to your wishes."

"Yes," Walter continued, "there are important epochs in the history of our lives; but, oh, how wonderfully and unlooked-for events do transpire! Scarcely can I believe my own eyes when I now look around me and realize the fact that I am in my own house. See, the blinds are down, the curtains are closed, and we are shut out from the cold and callous world, and are thus in the sacred retreat of our own home,—the sweetest spot on earth. But, oh, it seems to me so much like a dream that I can scarcely realize that this is indeed a

reality! I look around me and see everything so domestic-like, and above and beyond all, I see here by my side my own dear wife, who has always been the morning star of my memory, but now the guiding star of my life. Yes, this picture, as you see us now, is just the picture upon which, in imagination, I have gazed all my life, and I can scarcely think now that it is real. Why, if an angel, one year ago, would have told me that in something over a twelvemonth I would be sitting in my own home, with the fairy I met years ago at the Springs as my wife, I could scarcely have believed the tale. But I know now that all is real, when I look into your sweet, loving eyes, and hear the almost heavenly charms of your voice."

He ceased, and they both sat there in silence looking into the fire, and drinking in the sweet inspiration that each inspired. Then, after a silence longer than either knew, he, encircling his arm closer around her waist, said, "I have told you how happy I am, and I see by your face and by your eyes that you too are happy. Oh, I feel that we are both so happy! for there is not one little fleecy cloud hovering over us, and the world seems, and really is, so bright and joyous. But have you ever thought,"—and his voice became lower and more solemn,—“even now, when our joy is so perfect and complete, that there may yet come a sad, sad time, when we will not think so much of each other as we do now,—a time when this genuine love which thrills our hearts now will not be so strong and heavenly after we have been struggling hard and perhaps unsuccessfully with the world? Let us, my dear wife, look at these things even now at the height and consummation of all our joys and hopes, for we are still only human beings, and liable to err. I have often told you that I believe nearly all the unhappiness and troubles of married life are incurred by the uncongeniality of the parties, which prevents each from being admitted into the confidence of the other. Hence the result,—they never, never know or understand each other, though they live together all their lives,—thus they drag out a miserable existence on this otherwise beautiful earth. Have you ever thought of this before?"

She still kept looking into the fire after he had ceased speaking, and then turning her dark, tender eyes towards him, she said, in a sweet and inspiring voice, in which there was

mingled a something of sadness, "I know you always look so much at the dark side of everything, that I never like to give you encouragement to pursue or continue in that train of thought. In doing so half the burdens of our lives are imagined ones, and it is enough that we bear the ills we have, without flying to those we know nothing of. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,' and again: 'As the day of our trials, so shall the day of our strength be.' Thus you see that the Divine Evangelist has himself cautioned us against prying into the future too much, by assuring us that the 'righteous shall not be forsaken nor his seed begging bread.' Oh, how much more truly happy we would be if we would but carry our burdens to the Cross and look to Calvary! We have a great work there. But still, notwithstanding all these promises, which should calm all our fears, yet there is so much truth in what you say, that it is indeed well that we should give your words careful consideration. Slight as my own experience is with the world, I know of married people who are continually sparring with each other, which must effectually destroy all that there is of happiness in this world. But, oh! in the fullness of the glory of my own heart now, I cannot with the utmost stretch of my imagination conceive of a time when you and myself would be sparring and quarreling with one another. You know we never had any such love-quarrels as lovers generally have, for intuitively almost we understood and loved each other from the very first. The most of your doubts and fears arise from an over-anxiety concerning my own happiness, which I have so often told you to dismiss. But, my dear husband, even should there come a sad, sad time when, as you say, we will not love each other as much as we do now, and even if each has been cheated, as it were, in the other, even then I can point you out a remedy that will never fail to bring back the love of other days. I would suggest—charity? I most fully agree with you that we are all liable to err; but you know the teachings of the Apostle, which, if we follow, will never lead astray or in forbidden paths. For heaven knows that the best of us come far short of doing our duty, and we all need charity; yes, a great deal of charity. Now, I would suggest again, that if there ever come a time when perhaps you will not love me as much as you do now, and will think, perhaps, that I have not done right in some things, I would

suggest to your heart now a little charity,—yes, a little charity,—for I might be trying to please you all the time and you would not know it. Remember, I am just as anxious about your happiness as you have said you are about mine. And if there be anything that would pain me more than another, it would be to see you sad and careworn. You see I am now looking on the dark side of our lives, and do you not also see that I have given the troubles that may come some consideration at least?"

After she had ceased speaking, he looked at her a few moments as though he were surprised, and then, impulsively clasping her to his heart, he exclaimed, "Oh, my dear wife, you wind yourself more and more into my affection each day you live, and by each word you utter! Yes, you are as essential to my life and happiness as the very sun that brings us the glorious light of day! It seems to me now that I could not live without you, and I pray the time may never come when there will ever hang one little cloud over our love for each other. The great trouble that there is not more happiness in the married relation, is the fact that so many rush into it without giving the subject that consideration which its solemnity and importance demands. They think they love one another; but when the honeymoon passes away, and all these fine ideas that cluster around their marriage fade away, and they come down to real life, they then discover that they are not suited. Each one thinks they are cheated, and thus their life of misery and woe commences. They did not understand each other when they were married, and not having any charity, as you so justly say, they never make an effort to learn or understand each other afterwards. Thus one pulls this way, and another that way, and they lead a most miserable life from the beginning to the end. But happily for us, I think I do not mistake the fact when I say that we understand each other, and have done so, as you say, from the very first time we met. However, let us follow your suggestion, and be charitable to each other."

And as they arose to retire for the night, he said, "And now, as we close this confidential talk, let me say this,—that whatever of success I may attain in the future, whatever of brilliancy there may be connected with it, the sweetest joy of my heart will be the reflection that it will be shared by you."

You are so identified with every ambitious thought that fills my soul, that it seems to me I were nothing without you; and therefore, if at times I am so taken up with the affairs of the world that it would seem to you that I was neglecting you, and do not show as much of my love as I do now, still remember that my pursuit and desire for success is more for yourself than myself, and that without you by my side to share it, all were as "tinkling brass and sounding cymbal."

Oh, how truly this young, ardent couple have spoken in this their evening conversation! How refreshing it is, when we remember the achings and heartburnings that exist in so many millions of homes in this broad land, to see this youthful couple standing in the threshold of the morning of their lives, and thus prudently guarding against those dangers and avoiding the quicksands of this life which destroy all our happiness! It has always seemed to me one of those unaccountable things why they do not, at the commencement of life, open their hearts to each other, and endeavor to impress upon their minds the fact that their interest, their hopes, and their desires are identical, and that only true, genuine happiness can be insured by each one striving to promote the happiness of the other. But they fail to do this, and therefore they never understand each other; the result of which is that they always live a jarring, discordant, and unhappy life, until their earthly pilgrimage is ended.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"All nature fades extinct; and she alone,  
Heard, felt, and seen, possesses every thought,  
Fills every sense, and pants in every vein."

THOMSON: *Seasons*.

THE stormy days of winter had come, and the winds were singing a mournful requiem through the trees stripped of the golden foliage of autumn, and everything presented that hard and hopeless appearance which so disheartens one with this season of the year. But now the Christmas-time had come,

and everything looked more cheerful than heretofore. The heart of the great city throbbed with that infinite and peculiar joy which this day, above all others, brings to the Christian world.

When Blanche received her check for the ten thousand dollars, she deposited it in her own name in the bank. After arriving at her new home, she inquired indirectly about the various banks, and then went down-town one morning, about a fortnight before Christmas, and deposited her certificates for the amount in a responsible bank in her own name, so that she could call on it whenever she desired.

She had long since made up her mind what to do with the money, or when she would give it to Walter. There is no one, however, can tell the anxiety or suspense that was in her mind from the time she received the check. But now the time for disposing of it was drawing nigh, and she would then have it off her mind. A few days before Christmas she went to several stores, and, after examining a great many pocket-books, she finally decided to take one of those bank-books on which there was a very beautiful golden clasp, with a smooth place where an inscription of some kind could be written. She had the words "From Blanche" engraved thereon, and then returned home and locked it up in her trunk. The day before Christmas she went to the bank and drew out her ten thousand dollars in the following manner: eight thousand dollars in eight one-thousand-dollar bills, and the balance in one-hundred-dollar and fifty-dollar bills, and down to the fractional currency. She placed these in their proper places in the book and then locked it up in the most secret part of her trunk. All this was done with nervous hands and a throbbing heart, for it had been on her mind ever since their marriage, and of late she was thinking of it day and night.

When Christmas-eve came, Walter spoke of inviting a few friends of the legal fraternity to take dinner with them, but as this would entirely destroy all her arrangements, she said, "I would rather you would not do so now. You can invite them for New Year, or any other time. I would rather eat this first Christmas-dinner of ours alone. No one that you can invite will feel the same throbings of the heart that we do, and you see we cannot altogether be congenial. Our first Christmas-dinner will always be an important episode in our

lives, and it seems to me that I would enjoy it better by ourselves. But if you really desire to have your friends here, I will accede to your wishes in deference to my own."

Walter studied for a few moments, and then looked up as he said, "I did not think rightly when I spoke, but I see now how right you are. They could not appreciate our feelings on this Christmas-day, and thus the congeniality that otherwise would exist between ourselves would be something marred by those who had nothing in common with us. Let us do as you say,—eat our first Christmas-dinner alone."

Thus her arrangements were all completed to her infinite satisfaction, and there was nothing likely to occur that would mar the harmony of the occasion or that would prevent her from making the present just as she had desired. She cooked the dinner herself,—for she had not yet hired a girl,—and a sumptuous dinner it was. There was nothing of a luxury of any kind that was not on the table. The turkey was well roasted, and everything had that relish which makes the water come to one's mouth. Blanche, besides her other accomplishments, was a most excellent cook; and there was nothing scarcely about the culinary department that she did not know or could not do. It was such a meal, with the exception of their wedding-dinner, as neither had sat down to before.

After it was over, and they were seated around their cheerful fire, Walter presented her a very costly and beautiful gold watch-chain and a set of jewelry. She was surprised, but still she was so absorbed with the thought of her own present that she did not know what to say or do. Finally she drew up her chair closer by his side, and said, in a soft, sweet, and nervous tone of voice,—a tone that always thrilled him,—“Now as you have made your present, I wish to make you mine.” And she handed him the bank-book wrapped up in fine tissue-paper.

He took the book and said, as a happy smile played around his lips, “I have noticed something in your manner, and something, I could not tell what, in your eyes all day. It all seemed so much of a mystery to me; but now it is all plain. You have been intending to surprise me with a present. You are one precious little soul!” And then he commenced to unwrap it as he continued: “Well, I must see now what my little fascinating wife has purchased for me.” As he held the book

up, he said, "That is indeed beautiful. See how beautifully your name is engraved on the golden plate." Then laying it on his knee and looking up lovingly into her face, he continued, in the same tone: "That name, my dear wife, is written as indelibly on my heart as anything on earth can be. From the size of this bank-book, you see, I will have to carry it in my left side-pocket, and thus, you see, your name in the outer world will be next my heart, while your own immaculate self shall be enshrined within it. Now you see what a strong hold you have on my affections, which I think nothing can erase. But, I must see how many bills and notes it will hold," he said, as he again took it up and commenced to open it. "We have not so much money to put in it now, but I am sure the time will come when we will have abundance of it."

Blanche was sitting close by his side with her elbow resting on the table, and her beautiful cheek resting on the palm of her hand,—the favorite position of hers in which we have often seen her before. She did not say anything, for her heart was too full, and her eyes were slightly moist by his manner and the kind words he had spoken. She was sitting there looking at him as he commenced to open the bank-book.

When it was opened, and he saw the number of bank-notes before him, and so nicely arranged in their order, he was kind of paralyzed. He looked at them for a long time without moving hand or foot. Then he looked into her face, and then again at the money, in such a profound silence that, should it not have been for the storming of the wind without, they could have heard each other breathe within. Then, to reassure himself that he was not dreaming, silently and nervously he took the money out and counted it over, until he was assured of the fact that he had ten thousand dollars in his hands. He gazed at it for some time; and then in silence replacing the notes in the proper places, he closed the pocket-book, laid it on the table, and leaned back and almost gasped for breath as he wiped the tears away from his eyes, and covered his face with both his hands. He did not know what to say or do, and he sat there in silence.

After awhile he leaned forward, and touching her arm slightly with his forefinger, he said, in a tremulous and husky voice, "My dear wife, this is too much for me; you quite overcome me, for I can scarcely realize where I am!"

Blanche was overcome too, and now her tears flowed freely. Truly, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." This had been such a strain on her nerves so long; she had dreamed of it by day and by night, and had everything so pictured out as to the manner in which she would accomplish it, that now, when all was over, and she saw the appreciation of it by her husband, it was too much,—yes, more than her impulses and sympathetic soul could stand,—and, true to woman's nature, she found relief in tears.

Regaining his presence of mind, Walter looked at her again, and seeing the tears in her eyes, he reached forward and clasped her in his arms and pressed her to his heart, as he exclaimed, impulsively, "Oh, my dear wife, you, your own dear self, are as priceless to me as all the gold of the Orient!" And after kissing her again and again, he wiped her tears away, as he said, "Of course, my dear wife, I appreciate your gift; but, oh, I care nothing for the money in comparison to that great, noble, and generous soul which your every act foreshadows! There was many another way in which you could have given me this without producing the effect on my feelings that it does at this time. But, it seems to be as natural for you to do these little things as well as larger ones, which so wind yourself into my very soul, as it is for the sun to shine of a clear noonday. But, why need I tell you so many times of the deep love I bear you? I can but press you to my heart, as I exclaim, You are the guiding star of my existence!"

Oh, they were happy! too happy, I sometimes think, for earth. Long they sat there. When he arose, he said, "You take this and keep it until morning, and then I will deposit it in the bank."

"Oh, no, no; keep it yourself!" she exclaimed. "It has been such an elephant on my hands so long, that now I rejoice that I am rid of it. I gave it to you; it is yours. Do as you desire with it. I have trusted you with my life; and now, what is there on earth in which you would not have my fullest confidence? Yes, we are one and inseparable!"

The next day he deposited the money in the bank to his own credit. The cashier was surprised when he counted it over and said that there were ten thousand dollars. He marked it in the bank-book kept for that purpose.

And thus the career of Walter Ludwick was fairly and auspiciously begun. No man in this broad land could commence life with fairer hopes and nobler impulse and stronger motives. Lifted up from the gloomy horrors that hang around that long space of time that intervenes until he would succeed in acquiring a paying practice, by having a sum of money in bank which would guard and protect him from any financial embarrassments that might be forced upon him, he felt that the world never looked so bright and cheerful. He felt that the zenith of his glory was almost reached, and that he would then be happy forever.

What he would do with the money he had not the least idea whatever. His mind was ever looking forward and upward, to achieve that position in life which he knew would bring joy to that priceless heart by his side. Of all the varied motions and impulses which induced him to strive for riches, there was none stronger than the desire to please and make her happy thereby. And of all the alluring stars that shined upon him and beckoned him on to deeds of glorious achievements, there was none shone with greater brilliancy than that one which had been the morning star of his memory,—the bright angel face by his side.

## CHAPTER V.

Come then, oh care, oh grief, oh woe!  
Oh troubles! mighty in your kind;  
I have a balm ye ne'er can know,

A hopeful mind.

F. VANE.

YEARS have passed away since we last saw the hopeful and genial countenance of Dewitt Lu-Guere. A sad and lowly life he has led since he received the last letter from Marian Ludwick. Yet his zeal for completing his profession never flagged; and he looked hopefully forward to the time when he would return to his own native land again. His ambition to be something, and to emerge out of the dreamy and worthless life

into which he had drifted since he left college, was strong within him, and was almost as much of his existence as life itself.

Those were sad days, however, when he would hear the voice of the mail-carrier, and would then learn from his own lips that there was no letter for him. If he would spring up from his seat in ecstasies of joy at the thought that there might be a letter this time, it was only to return with that utter despondency and despair which almost broke his heart. Sometimes he felt positively sure that in the next mail he would most certainly receive a letter; but it was only to still sink down in deeper and deeper despair. Many a time he would rise up in the night in his dream and exclaim, "I know there is a letter this time;" and then he would lie down again and sink into a dreamy sleep.

The reader has no doubt thought, as I have thought sometimes myself, that Dewitt Lu-Guere was a fickle and inconstant man in view of the deep love he manifested for Fannie Murdoch, so recently before he met Marian. But upon a more mature reflection, we must admit that this cannot be true. Dewitt's heart was yet undisciplined, and the love he thought he felt for Fannie was only the result of an impassioned nature, which had not yet received the approbation of the intellectual faculties. His imagined love for her was nothing more than that green-house exotic and questionable love which never had any real existence, and was therefore doomed to as sudden and quick a death as the tender plant when exposed to a burning tropical sun. The secret to this whole affair is the superiority of the mind of the one over that of the other. Had not Dewitt Lu-Guere been a talented and educated young man, of course he could not have loved Marian more than Fannie, for the bewildering beauty and fascinating ways of the latter would still have held him spell-bound at her feet. But when he was freed from her charms, and reason began to assert its sway; when in companionship with Marian he perceived the grandeur of her mind and soul, with which his own blended in such sweet harmony, he saw, almost in an instant, the difference between that bond of love which is caused by the personal charms of the "loved one," and that heavenly bond of union which is inspired by the intangible affinities and wondrous magnetism of the immortal mind and soul. Yes, with-

out being able himself to give a reason for the change, he unconsciously felt in his own heart the ecstasies of that bliss which is inspired by the only true and reasonable basis of the marriage relation—"platonic love." And even now, after this long estrangement, the fire of this love burns brightly in his soul, and he longs for the time when he will reach his own native land, where he can clasp her to his heart never more to be separated. In his darkest hours he never once doubted her,—never even dreamed that she would ever cease to love him.

It was a hard struggle with Mr. Belmont to resist the wonderful temptation to betray his confidential friend, and win thereby the lady he most loved for his wife. It was one of those questions that required him to smother, in his usually generous heart, all that we most admire in mankind. On the one hand, he would say, "Why should I hesitate, when I can tell her of the devoted attentions he bestowed upon Fannie just after he had left Riverbank? Could she then love him still when she thus heard of his inconstancy?" And on the other hand, he would say, "Has he not forfeited my friendship in not keeping up a correspondence with Fannie, in order that I might fully wreak my revenge? Oh, why should I thus cast away the jewel I love so much, through fear of committing an imaginary wrong? Is there any law that compels a man in honor to tell the truth, when, at the same time, his own happiness would be blighted forever?"

There were many other arguments he would advance to persuade himself that he would do no wrong by concealing the truth and thereby win his wife. But, on the other hand, when he solemnly reflected on the dishonor of the whole matter; when he considered how Dewitt had befriended him and had done so much to contribute to his happiness; when he considered that he would not only stab his absent friend, but that he would thus deceive the very being he would take to his heart, he was so nonplused and undecided what to do, that he would spring to his feet and rush out into the street.

Thus time passed away, and he was yet undecided. The siren voice of hope sang sweetly in his ear, and he was fully persuaded that unless he did both deceive her and his absent friend, she was lost to him forever. Another idea came into his mind which partially persuaded him to make the attempt,

—that when they were married they would immediately sail for Europe, and would thus remain four or five years, and by that time all would be forgiven and forgotten. This was the most patent argument in his favor; but, then, when he reflected that it might some day come to the knowledge of his wife that he had deceived her, and blasted all her fondest hopes and desires,—and more, had dishonored himself,—this was too much for him. There was an innate sense of honor in Mr. Belmont worthy of the man whose intellect every person admired. He could never condescend to do a dishonorable act without feeling a remorse of conscience for a long time afterwards. Even when he thought of revenge on Fannie Murdoch, it took him a long time to finally make up his mind to proceed as he did. But it was the very hopelessness of his forlorn condition and his exasperation that drove him to it. Yes, there is no doubt but that, naturally, Augustus Belmont was an honorable man.

He had pondered over this so much that he did not know what he would do. And on the very evening he started again for Riverbank, he did not know whether he would make the effort to deceive her or make a clean breast of all the facts.

## CHAPTER VI.

Oh, truth!  
Thou art, whilst tenant in a noble breast,  
A crown of crystal in an iv'ry chest!

DAVENPORT.

WHEN Augustus Belmont arrived at Mr. Ludwick's, and was ushered into the parlor, he was still uncertain what he would do. Marian was as pleasant and fascinating as ever, and Mr. and Mrs. Ludwick were rejoiced to see him. Tom was peculiarly pleased, as he thought there was no man in the world like Lawyer Belmont, and he generally did everything in his power to make his sojourn at Riverbank as pleasant as possible. But nowhere did Mr. Belmont find that sincere

pleasure and happiness as in the presence of Marian. Here all the better angels of his nature seemed to predominate, and he was the young and jovial companion he had been many years ago, before the dark shadow crossed the pathway of his life.

They were sitting in the parlor after all had retired. Marian, in her usual unassuming manner, said, "I feel, Mr. Belmont, that you are so much like an old friend of mine, as well as a particular friend of our family, that I have more confidence in you than in almost any person I have ever met. I therefore have concluded to ask you a question which may, indeed, seem curious enough to you, but which would give to me a great deal of contentment and, perhaps, happiness, if I had a definite answer. My sister writes me from her home in the West, in answer to some questions I asked her, that you, above all others, knew the real motives of Mr. Lu-Guere's attentions to Miss Murdoch; and also that you knew, if anybody did, his sentiments or feelings when he left Claremont for Europe. Now, my request, if you will comply with the same, is to tell me all you know about him in this connection that may be of any interest to myself."

Mr. Belmont was wonderfully impressed by the candid manner in which she spoke to him. Blanche had told him that she loved Dewitt, and therefore he knew why she did not accept himself. The issue with which he had been struggling for the last few months was now squarely before him, and evade it he could not any longer. Now was the only moment in which he had to decide whether to deceive her, and stab his absent friend and dishonor himself, or to rise to the dignity of a true manhood by preserving his own honor and all that is noble and godlike in mankind.

After studying for a few moments, he looked up and said, "Why, Miss Marian, do you ask me this question? Do you not know how much I am interested in the answer, and how much I would rejoice to see you and Mr. Lu-Guere estranged? Would the hope not be strong within me, if I were convinced that the love which you have bestowed on him were broken off, that you would then love me and consent to be my wife? I know that you love Dewitt Lu-Guere. Now, supposing I tell you that he loves Miss Murdoch, and that he told me that he cared nothing for you,—could you believe these facts when

I am so much interested in having you cease to love him? If he did not love you, and had thus deceived you, how could you in honor still love him? I know you could not, and I do not believe that you would continue even to think of him after you had discovered his inconstancy. Your spirit is too proud and dignified for that. I think you would spurn, rather than love him. Now, under these circumstances, how could you give credence to anything I would say, if it would be in any respect in favor of myself?"

I will not attempt to portray the surprise written upon her face at these unexpected questions. She looked at him in that manner of speechless amazement which one would sometimes almost pity. After she had reflected for a few moments, she said in a calm and steady voice, "I never thought of that before, for I always took you to be such an honorable and truthful man, that I never for a moment doubted your word; for to doubt your word of honor would be to cease all friendly intercourse with you from the very moment such a doubt entered my mind. Besides all this, my brother told me one time that you, of all men, were the soul of honor, and that you would not condescend to do a dishonorable act for the fondest wish of your heart. His wife, who has known you so long, says the same; and from my own judgment of human nature, I could not for a moment doubt you, though your answer would blight the most cherished hopes of my life. It is very true, as you say, that I would spurn the man that would thus deceive me, for I could not in honor love any one who did not reciprocate my love, much less love one who was not honorable. I always consider there is honor in love as well as in anything else, and how could I love any one who was deceitful, and in whom I could place no confidence? If Mr. Dewitt Lu-Guere, after the words he spoke to me, and by his actions, which showed that he loved me, went immediately to Claremont and renewed a flirtation so dishonorably begun before, and then perhaps made jesting remarks concerning myself, why, I could not love such a man though he were a prince in fortune and in fame. The truest words I ever heard any one utter were those of my sister Blanche when she said that there was no true love where there was no admiration. How, then, could I admire a man who would do such a thing? It were impossible."



Mr. Belmont was completely confounded. It was not so much what she said, as in the manner in which she said it. There was so much truthfulness and candor in her face, and she seemed so innocent and unused to the tricks and subtleties of the world, that it would have been almost sacrilege in him to have betrayed her trusting confidence. With his heart wrung to desperation almost with the doubts and uncertainties that hung over him for months past, and with his last hope fading away, he looked up and, in a sad and mournful voice, said, "I thank you very much for the confidence you have reposed in me, and would say that I have always striven to act honorable in all things; and that if there have been times in which I have acted dishonorably, it was because of the circumstances over which I had but little or no control. You perhaps know something of the early history of my life, and that there was a cloud cast over it then, which has never been dispersed. Since then, my life has been a sad and gloomy one, and I have sometimes thought how useless it was for me to live. But when I saw you, new hopes were infused into my heretofore despondent soul, and methought that I saw a brilliant future spread out before me. But now I see my last hope fading away, and I go into the world again, a dreary, sad, and solitary man. There is no more real happiness for me in this world, for the brightest and happiest moments I have had were always destroyed by the ruthless hand of fate. You ask me to tell you if I know anything about Mr. Lu-Guere's love for you, and his flirtation with Miss Murdoch! Well, since you have been so truthful and candid with me, I will return the favor and will tell you all about it, for I know every sentiment and feeling that throbbed in his heart when he came to Claremont the last time. Yes, the whole burden of his song was about yourself; and if you have been led to believe, through his flirtation with Miss Murdoch, that he did not love you, why, I am free to say that you are greatly mistaken. He declared to me in the clear moonlight, as we sat out on the veranda at the hotel, that you were the only being on all the earth that he loved; that his soul was so wrapped up in you, that should anything transpire by which you would cease to love him, it would blight the fondest hopes of his life. Yes, I remember so clearly what he said when he was standing there in the moonlight, after I had reminded him that if he loved

you so much and so sincerely, that he should have made an engagement before he went away. He replied, emphatically and feelingly, 'I do not think much of these engagements unless the wedding-day is set; because, if before they are married either should cease to love the other, then the engagement should be broken off, and you see it all makes trouble. But though there is no positive engagement between us, yet if an angel from heaven were to come and tell me that Marian would marry any one before I see her again, or that I would marry any one before I see her again, I would not believe the tale. I believe this much in destiny,—that she and myself are to be man and wife, and nothing else can get it out of my mind.' Thus you see the firm hold you had on his affections. In regard to his flirtation with Miss Murdoch, that is very easily explained. It was in part forced upon him by myself, and partly by her own foolish actions. She always had such a habit of boasting what she would do with gentlemen and how she would flirt with them, whether she really meant it or not. And while Mr. Lu-Guere was on his way, the last time he was here, to tell her, in defiance of my own wishes, that he desired their future engagements to be canceled, as fate would have it, he did not find her at home, and thus the opportunity was lost. On this same evening he called on another lady, from whom he learned of the boasts Miss Murdoch had made in regard to her having him on his knees in a short time before her, which so exasperated him that he came to my office the next morning and avowed that he would now continue the flirtation until he would teach her a very solemn lesson, which she never could forget. So, if you have any idea or thoughts that Dewitt Lu-Guere loves Fannie Murdoch, dismiss them at once, for he could no more love her than he could a Chinnee. She is not his style of a lady at all, for I know him better almost than I know myself. Now he will be home in November, for certain, if he is still alive. He told me he was not certain whether he would be home in three or four years; that he wanted to take a very thorough course of study. I have no doubt of his coming home, and I have no less a doubt but that the fondest hope of his heart is in meeting you and claiming you as his own forever."

Marian's eyes were streaming with tears. In silence, with her handkerchief in one hand she covered her face, and then

reached out the other to him, as she murmured, in a sobbing voice, "Oh, Mr. Belmont, how can I thank you for lifting this weight of sorrow from my heart!" And then after she wiped her tears away and had become more composed, she said, "Truth has often been called the anchor of the soul, and character may, with equal propriety, be called the helm of the soul,—that which guides us over the oftentimes stormy sea of life. It has always been my aim or motive to live and act in that just and upright manner which would merit the reputation of a truthful and unassuming girl, and whatever of other accomplishments I may have, they can only be so much added to those essential requisites of a true lady. I take it to be the same in gentlemen. He who is without truth is also without character, and it does not matter what else may be in his favor, there is nothing that will lift him up to the honor and dignity of true manhood. Whatever may be our future, rest assured that you have my fullest confidence in your integrity and honor, and everything else that makes a man great."

They were both silent for a long time. At last Mr. Belmont spoke: "I will be gone in the morning before you are up, but there is one request I wish to make. Dewitt will be here in the course of a month; as soon as he comes, telegraph me at once, and have him remain here until I arrive. There must be some arrangements made about his flirtation with Miss Murdoch,—that is, how to bring it to a close. She still has his ring, and that is evidence of an engagement; but I can make everything right. Tell Mr. Lu-Guere how true to him I have been."

"You may rest assured I will telegraph you at once. Make your arrangements so that you can remain at least a week or a month with us."

"I will do so if I can; but, in the mean time, fair thoughts and happy hours attend you." And the next morning, when he left for the train, there was a gleam in his eye as he said to himself, "Now for the consummation of my revenge. Oh, revenge! 'tis sweet, 'tis sweet!"

And thus the temptation to betray his absent friend was passed. It was a hard task to overcome, but that innate sense of honor, which to a certain extent had been smothered, was yet strong enough in Mr. Belmont to prevent him from

committing that awful crime, ingratitude, for which on this earth there is no repentance.

Yes, Mr. Belmont, by thy truth and candor thou hast added honor to thy hitherto not spotless character.

But who is skeptical enough as to say that for this godlike act he will not receive a rich reward? Who will say that, at some unlooked-for moment, the clouds will not be dispersed, and that streams of glorious sunshine will not illumine his pathway? Who will say that his fondest hopes—domestic happiness—will not be realized when perhaps he least expected it? Oh! I pause in vain for an answer. His day of glory will yet come, and the very air around him will be fragrant with flowers and resonant with the songs of birds.

## CHAPTER VII.

Absence, with all its pains,  
Is by this charming moment wiped away.  
THOMSON.

THE day at last came when Dewitt Lu-Guere, having completed his profession, turned his face homeward. Oh, who can portray his matchless joy as the last vestige of a foreign land faded from his sight, and he realized that he was on the dark-blue, boundless ocean? What must have been the throbbings of his heart as in imagination he saw the dear old hills and valleys of his own native land? But above and beyond all, what sweet transporting bliss filled his soul, as he thought of clasping to his heart the dear one left behind at Riverbank? All his fondest hopes were inspired by her; and, if there were hours on the vessel brighter and more cheerful than others, it was those hours when his soul was most full of her.

When he arrived at New York, he was in some doubt whether to go home to the sylvan scenes of his childhood or direct to Riverbank. The suspense to see and learn exactly how matters stood with his own eyes was so strong, however, that, after some reflection, he concluded on the latter.

It was a strange infatuation that took possession of Dewitt.

Nothing could crush the thought out of his mind but that when he would go to Riverbank he would find her there awaiting his return, just as though they had regularly corresponded all the time. His experience with the world, or with the rough side of it, was not very extensive. There had never a shadow crossed his young life, and he took every one to be as faithful as he had been. Why she did not answer his letters he could give no reasons. If any one should have said to him, "See how foolish you are for thinking that after this long absence,—these four years with their innumerable changes,—you will go to her home and find her loving you as devotedly as ever," he would only have looked at him in the utmost surprise, wondering how any one could have so little faith in mankind. In no manner could the impression be made on his mind that she had forgotten him; and when he neared the picturesque little village, there was no hope stronger than that of clasping her to his heart, never to be parted again.

There had not an evening passed since Mr. Belmont told Marian the story that filled her whole being with rapturous joy in which she did not sit at the window and watch for his return. And who can imagine the joy in her heart when on a beautiful and sombre evening in November, when the twilight shades of evening were gathering around her, she saw, for the first time, a gentleman leave the road and turn his face toward the Ludwick mansion? Did she put her hands to her eyes and endeavor to pierce the distance, so as to convince herself that it was he for whom she was watching? Did her heart so throb incessantly that its very beating told her that the form she saw was truly his? Ah, nay! I need not say that such was truly the case. She watched him, with the blood almost ceasing to course in her veins, until he passed in through the gate, and then she arose and found herself so weak that she could scarcely stand. But when the bell rung, she nerved herself and was about to leave the room to answer it, when she heard one of the servants approaching the door. In breathless silence she awaited to hear his voice, and at last, when she heard him pronounce her name, she sank down on a chair, while she pressed both her hands on her heart to still its beatings. With trembling steps and throbbing heart she approached the door and entered therein.

"Marian!"

"Dewitt!"

They pronounced the names simultaneously, as he passionately clasped her to his heart, and murmured through his tears, "We shall never be parted again."

She could give no answer, but rested her head on his bosom, and her tears flowed fast. They were too happy, too happy to talk, and they sat there in silence, drinking in the love that each inspired.

After they had become more composed, Marian, with her arms resting on either shoulder, and looking lovingly into his face, said, "How, my dear Dewitt, does it come that you were so cruel as not to answer all the letters I wrote you?"

He looked into her face in the greatest astonishment, as he said, "I was going to ask you the very same question. Why did you not answer the last letter I wrote you, in which I told you to tell me something of yourself? That letter you never answered."

"I answered every letter," she said, softly, "and wrote two others besides. Why is it that you did not receive them?"

He looked at her in blank amazement for a few moments, and then said, "That I can't tell. I only know that many a weary hour I passed in not having heard from you. Have you got the letters? Perhaps I can tell something about it from them."

She arose, and soon brought him the only two letters she had received. Hastily looking over them, he exclaimed, in the greatest astonishment, as he finished the last one, "I know the reason now. My number was changed between writing my first and second letter, and I neglected to note the change. How stupid I was not to think of it! But I was more stupid in not writing again. If I had possessed the remarkable good sense and judgment that you displayed in writing again and again, perhaps these long years of sorrow would have been avoided, and we would have been happy during all the time of my absence."

And thus, for this trifling mistake, they had passed years of sorrow and disappointment. It was so foolish in Dewitt's not writing again, when he did not receive an answer to his second letter. It is well for people to have what some call "spunk," but it looks and really is so silly to be offended upon such a slight pretext.

It was, however, not so much that Dewitt had concluded, when he did not receive the answer, that she had slighted him, as it was that spirit of pride made him disdain the idea of writing again; and by this foolish and nonsensical pride of his he passed years of sleepless nights that otherwise would have been sweet and pleasant.

Marian explained to him all about her relations with Mr. Belmont, and also how she had almost lost faith in him for engaging in such an ignoble affair as his flirtation with Miss Murdoch. In return he explained to her why he had done so, and then said that no lady had the right, because she had the opportunity, to blight the affections of any man without punishment. That it was one of the laws of nature that every wrong must be redressed. "I do not know," he then continued, "as this flirtation of mine will disappoint Miss Murdoch in the least respect; but I do say this, that for the crime she has committed there will come, sooner or later, a retribution which, in the end, will be fearful indeed. But for her Mr. Belmont—a friend for whom I have the most profound regard and esteem—would have been living as happy and contented a life as you and myself soon expect to live. Yet, what is his condition to-day? Simply a man laden with earthly honors, but with a vulture gnawing at his vitals. This world has no charms now for him. Many a time have I seen him with his head bowed down in sorrow, only wishing that this 'too solid flesh would melt and resolve itself into dust.' 'But he is a man, take him all in all, the like of whom I shall never look upon again.' Is aught but retribution due, then, for ruining and blasting the life of such a man? I believe not; and surely, yes, surely, it will come sooner or later."

Marian could say nothing against Mr. Belmont, no matter what she thought; and so she replied, "But we will not discuss this matter now, for in my great joy I had almost forgotten the fact that Mr. Belmont wanted me to send him a telegram the very moment you arrived, for he said you were sure to be here this month. If you will excuse me, I will go and write one and send it to the office." This being done, she now returned; and as she was sitting by his side, looking lovingly into his face, she said, "Do you blame Mr. Belmont for asking for my love? And do you blame me for receiving his attentions?"

He looked at her in a mischievous manner, and then, kissing her, laughingly said, "No, my dear Marian; how could I blame any one for falling in love with you, who are the most precious being in the world? And how could I blame you, when I acted so foolishly in not writing again and again until I did receive an answer? Mr. Belmont is my friend, and he is your friend too; and he must become a frequent visitor at our house."

A pleasant evening was passed with the whole family. When they were left alone again, they set their wedding-day, which was to be one month from that time.

In a few days Mr. Belmont arrived. It was with unbounded joy that the two friends met again, and they embraced each other affectionately. Late in the evening, when Tom—the enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Belmont—and all the others had retired, and Marian and they two were alone, Mr. Belmont said, "Now I will tell you the main reason why I wanted to come here and see Dewitt previous to his coming to Claremont. You see Miss Murdoch believes nothing else but that you love her, and that when you come home there will be nothing to do but arrange matters for the wedding. In proof of this she shows the diamond ring she still wears. You remember, Miss Marian, of seeing it. Now, my purpose is in making known to you the law which would govern this case, should it be brought into the courts. That she could make out a case of breach of promise of marriage I have not the least doubt; and that she would bring the matter into court, I have still no less a doubt. She is capable of doing anything, if she and her mother take the notion. Now, as you are both interested in this matter, I thought I would thus make known the facts in time, so you could have time to decide what to do."

They were both silent, and each could hear the other breathe. Marian was very pale in the face, and Dewitt was not any better. They both had a horror of the courts, and how to avoid it neither could tell. Finally Dewitt, brightening up, said, "But, you see, I never promised to marry her; she will not swear that I did. Where, then, would she have any hold of the law upon me?"

"It is not necessary for you to make an actual engagement to constitute a promise to marry. Your actions, your attentions to her, and the fact that you gave her that diamond ring, combined with her own evidence that she thought you intended

to marry her, would make out a case against you, without a doubt. Do not risk a lawsuit, unless you want to be beaten, on the plea that you never, in words, promised to marry her. No express words are necessary to constitute a promise of marriage."

They were both silent again, and then Dewitt, rising and taking two or three turns across the room, said, "Well, I do not know what to do. You got me into this dilemma, and now you must get me out the best way you can. I suppose it will have to go into the courts."

"Oh, no," said Marian, "do not let it go into the courts. I have a horror for courts when matters of this kind go into them. Mr. Belmont, you can certainly avert this impending crisis, and settle everything so that nothing can come out to the public. I cannot bear the idea of having every one talking about it. Say, what can you do? We both, as Dewitt says, look to you."

He studied for a few moments, and then looking up, said, "If you leave everything to me and follow my instructions implicitly, I have not the least doubt in the world but that I can make everything right, and the public will never hear of it. Dewitt, if you say here in the presence of Marian that you will do as I tell you, then I will guarantee you in the sum of ten thousand dollars that you will be free in less than a fortnight, and will get your diamond ring back, and you will be a thousand dollars better off than you are now."

Of course he replied that he would, and then Mr. Belmont said, "As she does not know your handwriting, I will write her a note stating that you will call on a certain evening. Then I want you to dress up in an old suit of clothes, something like a sailor; put on an old slouch hat and an old pair of boots, and then call on her the evening I designate. I will arrange your wardrobe for you at my office. Now, will you do this, and follow my instructions?"

Dewitt hesitated, and then said, "But what will you write in the letter? Let me know that."

"No, sir; if you want me to relieve you from this embarrassment, you must do as I tell you, and obey my instructions. If you desire, I will give a bond in the sum of ten thousand dollars to you for clearing you of everything and preserving your honor."

Seeing that he meant business, and believing in his honor, he consented, and they were all happy again. The next morning Mr. Belmont returned to Claremont.

"Revenge is sweet," he said, a week after he had returned home, when he sat down to write Miss Fannie Murdoch the letter. When he had it completed he signed Dewitt's name to it, and then wrapped it up carefully and put it in his pocket. Then he resumed his writing, and addressed a letter to Dewitt, summoning him to Claremont.

"Be sure," he wrote, "and arrive here on the midnight train on the day I have designated." This being done, he went out and mailed the letter; and as he returned to his office to contemplate the bold project into which he had entered, there escaped from his lips, scarcely above a whisper, "The die is cast, and let come what will, I must push it through to the bitter end at the risk of my life."

## CHAPTER VIII.

For maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare,  
And Mammon wins his way where seraphs might despair.

BYRON.

Oh, frailty! thy name is woman.

SHAKESPEARE.

THERE was great excitement at the Murdoch mansion when it was supposed that in the month of November Dewitt Lu-Guere would return home. Mr. Belmont was right when he said that Fannie considered his giving her the ring as the strongest evidence of his love for her; and it was therefore equivalent to an engagement. Such a valuable ring, she thought, would not be given to her in mere jest. "Of course," she said to her mother one time, "he means to ask me for my priceless love, by giving me this almost priceless ring. But, then, he is so wealthy, and so generous, and so noble, what does he care for a thousand dollars? He will buy me ten times this amount of jewelry when we are married. He is the most desirable being I ever saw on this earth."

This is the strain in which she would always talk, and her mother would coincide with every word she would say. "Grace would keep quiet as long as she could; but, ever and anon, she would break out and express her mind. "I have never heard," she said, in reply to the remarks of Fannie as above stated, "such nonsensical talk in all my life. You and mother just talk as though marriage were nothing else than a mere civil contract. You say you love Mr. Lu-Guere, and I now venture to say that if he were poor, you would not look at him. Such a disposition is enough to disgust any one from ever getting married. I do not believe Mr. Lu-Guere will ever marry you, for I think, and always did think, that he was only flirting with you. There are more elegant ladies in the East than you are."

"Dear mamma," Fannie cried out, "just hear what sister Grace is saying! I cannot stand it! Do say something to her." And she burst out crying for dear life.

Mrs. Murdoch looked out from under her green glasses, and said, as she gave her head its peculiar nod, "Grace, go to your room immediately, and do not let me see you again this evening. You are getting worse and worse. I declare I do not know what to do with you. I will most assuredly tell your father on you this evening."

Grace arose to go, for well was her need; but, as she did so, she pointed her finger scornfully at both of them, as she said, "You both know better than to tell father one word, for you know that your most consummate pride would not stand for an instant before him. I hope and pray you will tell him, and then perhaps this farce, of which I am heartily sick and tired, will end." And without giving time for any reply, she left and went to her own room.

But one afternoon there was great excitement and indignation in the Murdoch mansion. When Mrs. Murdoch entered Fannie's room, she found her in tears, weeping most bitterly; and after inquiring the cause, she handed her the following letter:

"SYLVAN HOUSE, Dec. —.

"MY DEAR FANNIE,—At last, after years of adversity and suffering, I come to you again, as the personification of all I hold most dear and heavenly in this world! As I lay my weary head now on my pillow I say to myself, 'There

is one being, at least, in this world who is as true as steel, and who, I know, will not turn from me in my sorrow and grief with a cold and cruel frown, as the world has done since I again put my feet upon my own native land.' Oh, yes! my soul turns to you, filled with that deep and sincere love which no being on this dreary earth can now inspire but your own dear self.

"Yes, my dear Fannie, misfortune has indeed wrought fearfully upon me. I had barely enough of money to complete my education, for my father hopelessly failed, and now since my return home I learn that my rich uncles in Boston and New York have failed also; and thus you see I am turned out upon the dreary world almost friendless and alone, with nothing but my ambition and education and your love. I can only say I come to you poor, very poor, in purse, but, I think, rich in mind and heart, to claim the love that has strengthened me with buoyant hopes these many years.

"My rich friends have all gone, and there is nothing left me now but youth and love. I can scarcely wait until Thursday, the 20th instant, when I will go to the most cherished being on earth.

"Yours affectionately,  
"DEWITT LU-GUERE."

Mrs. Murdoch leaned back in her chair and looked out from over her glasses at Fannie for a few moments, and then taking them off, her face white and her lips blue with rage and mortification, fiercely exclaimed, "What most consummate impudence this is! In all my life it exceeds anything I have ever seen. A beggar coming to claim the hand and heart of a Murdoch! Why, I declare it drives me nearly mad! What, my dear child, were you crying about? Did you have the remotest idea of marrying him after you read this letter? Let me have your answer,—speak quickly."

Fannie had dried her tears by this time, and was now calmly looking at her mother, with occasional sobs and some tears still coming to her cheeks, as she said, "I was crying, not that I love him now as I did of a yesterday, but the disgrace of this affair flashed full upon my mind so strongly that the mortification that I experienced was so torturing that, indeed, I thought it would break my heart. Just to think of a Mur-

doch receiving such an insult as this! I do not see how I can survive it. Just to think of his coming to me a beggar, and asking me to be his wife! Oh, it is most distracting!" And she burst into tears again.

Mrs. Murdoch studied for a few moments, and then raising herself up majestically, she exclaimed, "Endeavor to arise to the true dignity of a Murdoch. And when he does come, give him such an insult as will ring in his ears the longest day he lives! Give him back his ring, and tell him he may need it now."

Just about this time the door was noiselessly opened and Grace looked in and laughingly said, in which there was derision mingled, "How are you now with your rich New Englander? Methinks now I see the end of all things."

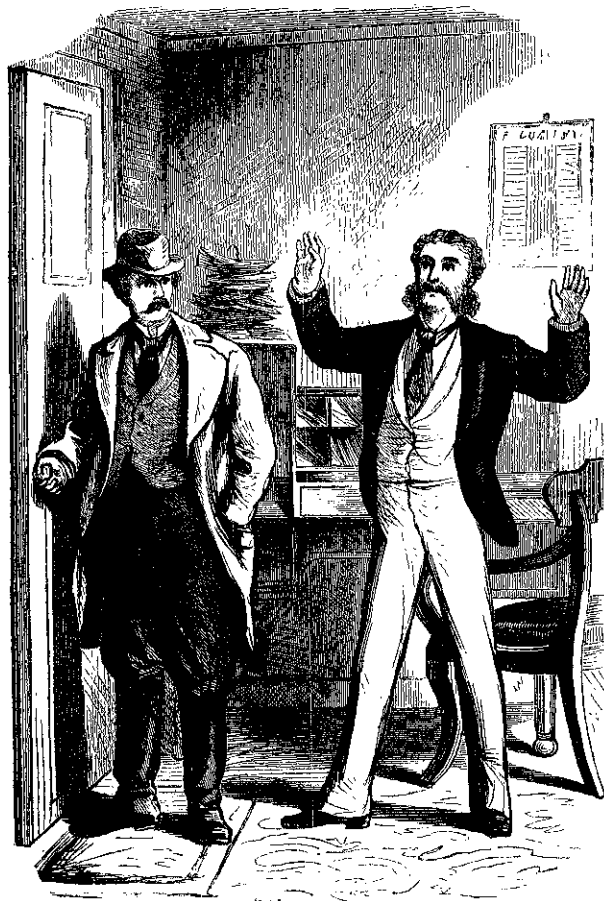
Mrs. Murdoch was about to administer a rebuke, when Grace closed the door and fled for dear life.

Dewitt Lu-Guere arrived at midnight, in strict compliance with Mr. Belmont's letter. As soon as he stepped from the train, Mr. Belmont caught him by the arm and took him around the back way, and proceeded immediately to his office. After he had eaten a lunch and everything was made comfortable, Mr. Belmont handed him a copy of the letter which he had sent to Fannie, at the same time saying, "This will explain to you, as fully as possible, what I want done. There is no time to be lost, for the thing must go through right, and at the proper time, too."

As Dewitt read the letter he got pale, and as he read further he got paler and paler, and when he had finished it he was as pale as death. As he handed the paper back to him, he said, tremulously, "I do believe you are almost crazy, else you want to lead me into another trap. Explain yourself immediately."

"You talk so foolishly," Mr. Belmont exclaimed, angrily, "that I have no patience with you. Why do you think that I would wish to lead you into a trap. Had I desired to do so, it could easily have been accomplished when you were absent. I think, sir, that such an intimation comes with bad grace from a man whom I have befriended as I have you. As for being crazy, I was never more in my right mind in my life."

Dewitt was silent. He saw that Mr. Belmont was angry,



"The rich New Englander, in the disguise of a penniless man, on his way to call on the proud Miss Fannie Murdoch."

Page 465.

and concluded that it would not do under any circumstances to quarrel with him now. Looking up, he good-humoredly said, "How peevish and captious you are! I did not mean anything when I thus was talking to you. Be a little calm, and we will talk the matter over. What assurance have you that she will not accept me, and rejoice that I have returned to her again? I do believe she would marry me, poor and all as you have represented me as being."

Mr. Belmont looked at him in the utmost surprise, and then, with a sarcastic smile, said, "How foolish you talk! Why, Dewitt, you know nothing about human nature, and you know nothing about the girl. She would not marry you if you were the last man in the world. I will give you my bond for ten thousand dollars, conditioned for its full payment if she does not treat you to-morrow evening with infinite contempt, and hand your ring back, and tell you that you may now need it."

Dewitt brightened up as he said, "I will not ask your bond; I will take your word for it. I want that ring at any rate. Give me your full instructions, and I will make the attempt."

Mr. Belmont opened a box and brought forth an old suit of clothes and a slouch hat and an old pair of boots, and as Dewitt looked at them, he could not but laugh outright. "Now," Mr. Belmont said, "I will conceal you here, and have your meals brought to the office until to-morrow evening; and then you can don this suit and make your way to Mr. Murdoch's. Your own judgment will have to dictate what to do and say when you are there. I would not be surprised at all if she would send one of the servants with her regrets at not being able to endure the proposals of marriage from a beggar."

The next day—the longest that Dewitt had ever known—finally came and passed away, and the dark shadows of night gathered around him as he commenced to dress himself for his perilous journey. When he was standing in the door, ready to launch out upon the street, he presented a most ludicrous appearance; and Mr. Belmont, throwing up his hands, broke out into a merry peal of laughter as he said, "The rich New Englander, in the disguise of a penniless man, on his way to call on the proud Miss Fannie Murdoch. No one can tell the whirlings of time."

With trembling limbs and a throbbing heart he finally reached the Murdoch mansion. As he had his hand upon

u\*



the bell, he paused to still the beatings of his heart. What to say when he would meet her he scarcely knew. He rang the bell. It was answered by a servant, who showed him into the parlor, and then disappeared after he had handed her his card. She soon returned with the information that Miss Murdoch would appear in a few moments.

Ah! that was a terrible suspense, a torturing moment to Dewitt. Every half-minute seemed an hour; and when finally he heard a rustling of silk at the door, his heart was throbbing as if it would leap from his bosom. In the next instant the door opened, and, arrayed in the finest lavender silk, and adorned with her costliest jewels, Fannie swept into the parlor. The artist with his power could not paint a picture half so beautiful. Her eyes shone with the peculiar loveliness belonging to herself and to no one else. Her face was charming beyond any power of mine to portray, and her form and movements were as graceful as any human creature could be. There was no trace of sorrow, or disappointment, or anything else in her face, for she looked as fresh and blooming as the first lovely flowers of spring. Under different circumstances, it is impossible to tell what Dewitt would have done. If there is anything in the world that has more power over man than anything else, it is a beautiful and fascinating woman. There is nothing else on earth as powerful, especially if the face and manner or outward appearance bears the impress of a sweetness of disposition and a loving nature. It will bring the proudest man to her feet, unless reason renders that timely aid which checks it before the fatal spell becomes predominant.

Dewitt arose to approach her with hands extended, forgetting for the time the circumstances which surrounded him. But he stopped short, as by the imperial wave of hand she motioned him to his seat, and then took a chair some distance from him. Her manner chilled him to the heart, and gave him that nerve sufficient for the occasion. Each could hear the other breathe, so perfect was the stillness that reigned around them. Presently this angel in appearance spoke. "Be so kind, Mr. Lu-Guere, as to explain and conclude, as speedily as possible, the purpose of your visit, as I have other engagements for the evening."

Her words had such an effect as to destroy that bewilder-

ing beauty of her face, and to show that she was still human. Dewitt replied, "I am at a loss to know what to make of this reception. It is so different from what I anticipated, and also so different from our affectionate parting four years ago, when, with your head resting upon my bosom, you said that you loved me devotedly. To be brief, I come now to take you to myself, so that we will never be parted again."

The words stung her to the quick, and she replied hastily, and without much forethought, "I supposed then that I loved a man equal to my own position; but now, since that position is changed in him I once loved, it is due to the honor of the Murdoch name to say that none of its daughters could ever marry a penniless man; so that it is useless to protract this interview, and I therefore return you your jewelry, which you will no doubt need now, with the request that we in the future recognize each other no more."

Dewitt mechanically took the ring she laid on the table, not deigning to hand it to him herself. As he was standing in the door he turned and, pointing his finger of scorn at her, said, in an indignant manner, "Miss Murdoch, you will rue this day before the new year dawns!"

Her cold reply was, "I care nothing for your threats; they all fall harmless at my feet."

When he reached the street, he rushed at the top of his speed to Mr. Belmont's office; and, almost bursting in the door, exclaimed, as he sank down on the seat, "Glory! glory! I have almost seen the end of all things! Human nature may don the lion's skin, but the ears of the ass will still protrude!"

After he had become rested, he recited the whole affair from beginning to end; after which, Mr. Belmont laughed heartily, and said, "Now my revenge is almost complete. Your marriage, you say, transpires a few days after Christmas. I am glad it is so soon. You told me that you were only going to have a few friends present. Now, then, I want you to take the first train and come to your uncle's here. I told him confidentially that you were to be married, and the only thing he said was, that he would give you a grand reception. I will see that all is arranged here, and you can attend to matters at your home. I would like to be at the wedding, but it will be impossible for me to be present. After the reception at your

uncle's, Colonel Marlan will give you one, and then I will give a grand one at the hotel; and thus, you see, we will have the liveliest times that ever Claremont saw. Then my revenge will be complete. I will let her rest then, for I know her so well that I firmly believe she will almost go insane over it. She dotes on wealth and relations in position, and when she sees what treasures she has thrown away, it will almost drive her mad."

Dewitt laughed, and then dressed himself. They went to the depot, and he took the midnight express for New York, on his way to his home, where he had not yet been.

## CHAPTER IX.

Strike up the dance, the cava bowl fill high:  
Drain every drop!—to-morrow we may die.

BYRON.

Never shake thy gory locks at me;  
Thou canst not say I did it.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Dewitt returned again to Riverbank, it was on the occasion of his marriage.

The wedding was a very private affair, as only a few intimate friends were present. Walter and Blanche sent their regrets, in which they said it was utterly impossible for them to be present. Marian looked very beautiful; and Dewitt, with his long black moustache and goatee, presented that commanding appearance which Fannie Murdoch, if she had been present, would have pronounced "perfectly elegant." After the ceremony was over, they went immediately to Dewitt's home and remained a week; after which they passed a few days with his uncle's in New York, and then went immediately to Claremont. The day for their arrival was announced, and there was no little anxiety to see the rich New Englander, as they called him, and his fair young wife. But before they had scarcely got a glimpse of him, they were hurried into

Judge Alpen's barouche, and were soon driven away to his residence.

The grand reception at his uncle's was the theme of every tongue. Those to whom invitations were extended looked forward to it with the greatest of pleasure.

And when this reception did come, it proved to be the finest ever given in Claremont. The invitations had been out for two weeks, and the ladies spent nearly the whole time in arranging and making their dresses.

It was announced, in some manner, that they were all to appear, both ladies and gentlemen, in full dress; and there was nothing left on either side undone which would contribute to the completion of their perfectly splendid toilet.

Mrs. Lu-Guere was dressed in a dark, rich lavender silk, made in such a neat and elegant style that both Lizzie Marlan and Ophelia Brandon pronounced her the most charming and beautiful present. Dewitt was dressed in a full-dress black suit, and combined dignity with a very prepossessing appearance. Nancy Spriggins was there in all her glory, and also Colonel Marlan and Colonel Brandon.

Dr. Patterson was there, and I suppose was the happiest man present. He and Lizzie Marlan were very much devoted to each other, as their wedding was to transpire in a fortnight after this reception. Their courtship was very brief, but they, in some mysterious manner, became attached to each other at Mr. Ludwick's wedding, where they had met for the first time. Lizzie looked peculiarly charming, and leaned on the doctor's arm as lovingly as though they had been made for each other. Mr. Belmont, I suppose, was the happiest man of the occasion. The thorn that was always piercing his heart on such occasions was removed, for Fannie Murdoch was not there. She received an invitation, but of course sent her regrets.

None scarcely knew anything about the difficulty, for she had only told Nancy Spriggins about it, and she had only told it to a few. When the invitations came out, Fannie sent a note to her to come and see her immediately; and she then exhorted her not to breathe a word of it to any one.

The reception was all that could be desired. The *Daily News* the next morning gave a very brief account of it, part of which is inserted here:

"We had the rare pleasure, last evening, of being at the

reception of Mr. and Mrs. Dewitt Lu-Guere, given by his uncle, Judge Alpen. We have always known, and frequently spoken of, the generosity of the judge; but on this occasion he distinguished himself above all others, in giving to our young people such an occasion for enjoyment as they have never yet experienced. Of course we do not overlook the part his very amiable wife took in it; for of all ladies (except of course our own), she excels any of them on such an occasion, for making their guests all feel at home and to make up their minds that they have nothing to do but enjoy themselves. The gentlemen all appeared in full dress, and looked, as we thought, elegant. Our better half, who, we are free to say, is a better judge of the ladies' toilet than ourselves, says they were the most elegantly and most tastily dressed young ladies she had ever seen. Of course the bride and groom were the stars of the occasion. Mrs. Lu-Guere is, indeed, a most lovely lady, and Mr. Lu-Guere has a commanding and dignified appearance that makes him show off to a great advantage. He is a gentleman, we are informed, of wealth, besides being a graduate of Yale College, and also a graduate of the medical college of Leipsic, Germany. His uncle, in New York City, with whom we are personally acquainted, is one of the most flourishing merchants in the city. He has also another uncle in Boston, who has the finest, or among the finest, wholesale dry-goods establishment in that aristocratic and Puritanic city of the bay. We are free to say that Dr. and Mrs. Lu-Guere have a bright future spread out before them, and we hope they may live long and prosper. Her parents, as well as many warm-hearted friends, regretted the absence of their daughter and only child, and her talented and ambitious husband, Mr. Walter Ludwick, who read law with Augustus Belmont, and was admitted to the bar last spring in one of the courts of this city. Their regrets were read with a deep feeling of disappointment. Aside from this consideration, the occasion was one of those interesting episodes in the history of one's life long to be remembered."

Grace handed the paper containing the above editorial to Fannie, and then took a seat near her to hear what she had to say. When she finished it, she gave one scream, fainted, and fell prostrate on the floor. Grace, wonderfully alarmed, picked her up and laid her on the lounge, and then cried for

help. Her mother came running in, and, seeing her critical condition, ordered some restoratives, and sent for the family physician. She lay there on the bed, pale as death. When the doctor arrived, he announced it a dangerous case of prostration of the brain, and that her illness might continue for a long time. After leaving them a prescription, he took his departure.

Soon after this, Mrs. Murdoch entered Grace's room, pale in the face and blue around the lips with rage, as she exclaimed, through her clinched teeth, "You, and you alone, are to blame for all this! You cruel wretch, what did you say to her that so frightened and prostrated her?"

The time had come when forbearance had ceased to be a virtue with Grace. This long feeling of a deep wrong and partiality, which was so manifested by Mrs. Murdoch on all occasions of a dispute between Fannie and her, had now reached its height, and could be restrained no longer; and, forgetting almost that she was her child, Grace arose defiantly, and, with her face pale with anger, broke forth, as she pointed her finger in scorn at her mother,

"Never shake thy gory looks at me;  
Thou canst not say I did it."

"You, instead of me, are the cruel wretch who has done all this, and you know it. 'By pride angels have fallen ere their time.' And now, by pride, aided and abetted by yourself, she has fallen, and the retribution, if she should die, rests on your own head, and not mine. I have been sick and tired and disgusted with the life we have led here for the last ten years; and I pray now for the day when poverty comes, so that it may be ended. Breathe any more of your maledictions upon me, and I will tell father this evening the whole affair. I will show him Mr. Lu-Guere's letter, which I picked up from the floor, and I will then show him this article in the paper; and then you will hear such a storm as will make you wish that you had never been born. I know where I stand, and henceforth the line between us is now and forever drawn, and from henceforth I bear no more your vindictive and cruel epithets; and the very next time they are repeated, let it be wherever it may, I will lay the whole affair before father, and then you will see a final resurrection."

Mrs. Murdoch, completely outflanked, stood there like one in a trance; then, recovering her presence of mind, and knowing the better part of valor, turned and left the room without a word in reply. Although she had never in her life before met with a rebuke in her own family, yet the falseness of her own position, and the truthfulness of her daughter's, flashed so vividly upon her mind that she was completely overcome. When she even thought of the affair being laid before her husband, she trembled, for well she knew how he would decide it.

The news of Fannie's illness spread rapidly, and numerous friends called to see her; but only a few were admitted, as the doctor gave strict orders against producing any excitement whatever. Mr. Belmont perhaps knew the cause, and rejoiced over it,—for in a few days afterwards his grand reception was given at the Metropolitan Hotel, which, for the number of guests present and the ample accommodations and almost priceless supper, surpassed anything of the kind any of them had ever seen. Dewitt's uncle, from New York, who was present on this occasion, said it was the finest affair he had ever witnessed. And such was the expression of every one. Not until almost the dawn of day did all the guests retire. The music was most exquisite, and they all wanted excess of it.

The wedding of Dr. Patterson and Lizzie Marlan followed in a fortnight, and it was a large and brilliant affair. Then Colonel Brandon gave them a reception which the most fastidious could not help but pronounce "elegant."

And thus ended these rounds of pleasure which all, young and old, had enjoyed for the last month. I do not mention other little household gatherings, where music and literature and dancing were the order of the evening. In a few days after this reception the newly-married couples started on a tour through the South, to be gone till spring.

Their friends at Claremont felt that the sunshine had passed away and that a cloud of gloom hovered over their beautiful city, that so recently rung with peals of laughter and exquisite music. It was their intention to remain mostly in Florida and the Gulf States, and then return with the birds in the spring, and settle down in real life.

Dr. Patterson and lady only intended to remain a month,—and they parted on the coast of Florida.

## CHAPTER X.

In the day of woe, she ever rose  
Upon the mind with added majesty,  
As the dark mountain more sublimely towers,  
Mantled in clouds and storms.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

THREE years have passed away since last we saw Mr. and Mrs. Ludwick in their city home,—years fraught with all their joys and sorrows. Three years,—how quickly they have passed away!—so quickly that it seems but scarcely a year. Yet when memory reverts to the past and recounts the scenes and incidents that have transpired, we are surprised to realize that so many thrilling events have been crowded into such a short space of time. There are incidents that we remember with rapturous delight, but then there are sad ones over which we brood in sorrow and sometimes remorse. Gladly would we banish or erase them from our minds; but, alas! the more we try, the more indelibly are they written on the tablets of memory.

It was not until early spring that Walter and Blanche determined what to do with their ten thousand dollars. Having carefully studied the whole matter over, Walter said one evening, as they were sitting around the bright fire that burned in their little parlor, "I dislike so much this necessity of paying rent, for it always seems to me that it is money just thrown away. Then, you know, there is nothing like having a home of your own. We can make improvements all the time then, for we know it will not be money laid out for the use of other people."

"Yes," Blanche replied, "I quite agree with you. It seems so humiliating to be renters. Yet, I would rather be so than to run in debt. I can never cease to remember of my father's telling about so many people running in debt, and that it was the cause of more than half the lawsuits that came before him. But we have enough of money now to build a house, and it will be invested and be of some use to us."

So it was agreed that they would build a house; and, after looking around for some time, finally agreed upon a beautiful and convenient location in a pleasant part of the city. He directed an architect to draw a plan of the house, and the very next day after it was made he let the contract for its completion by Christmas. The cost of the house and lot was estimated at eight thousand dollars. But who can tell the cost of a dwelling when one commences to build? You may place a certain sum of money in the bank for that purpose, and before you know what you are about it is nearly all checked out, and you scarcely know where it is gone. This was the way with Walter. He saw some improvements and changes as they progressed that they wanted to make; and when the house was completed in the fall, he found that it would cost him over nine thousand dollars. He was amazed when he figured up the amount. His practice being small yet, he was compelled to check sometimes on his reserved bank fund for the necessities of life. But time rolled along and Christmas came, and they had moved into their new house. Yes, their own house, for it was all paid for. It was a torture to Walter to owe any man, and scarcely had the work been done until he paid the amount of every bill presented. In so doing he had gained for himself quite a reputation for promptness in paying all obligations due from him. As their house cost more than he anticipated, they did not get very much furniture,—only got some carpets, and other furniture which was almost indispensable to make their parlor look agreeable and comfortable. The large double parlor was not furnished at all, as they had no possible use for it. When all was arranged as they intended for the present, they realized that easy and happy feeling which comes to every young couple when they reflect that they are in a home of their own, without looking at the end of every quarter to see the landlord cross their threshold for his rent.

A month after they had moved, a little stranger came to their house one night to live with them, and they called his name Walter, or rather Blanche did so, for he left the naming of him to her. But the happiness, the boundless joy, that this little stranger brought into their new home, oh, none but the doting mother and delighted father can imagine! As they looked upon the child that was of their own flesh and blood they did not know what happiness was until now, for they felt

that sweet bliss steal over them which made the world one perfect paradise of joy.

Thus time passed on. Walter had as yet attained but very little success. He had no time, however, to feel gloomy for the joy that filled his heart. He would leave his home in the morning with the sweet kiss and loving smile of his young wife, and then he would return again at noon to receive and give the same again, and when night came, they would sit around the fireside with that infinite joy and bliss which made them wonder why married life could be anything else than one continued ray of sunshine. Thus passed the second year of their married life, and there was not as much as a shadow crossed their pathway. But when the third was ushered in there was a change.

The last of their ten thousand dollars had been checked out of the bank, and now they had nothing to live upon except what Walter made by his profession. This, even at the end of two years, was a very limited amount, as every one knows the difficulties that the young practitioner of the law in a large city has to encounter. Some weeks he would return home of a Saturday evening almost heart-broken, and almost engulfed in despair. His only solace was seeing the smiling and cheerful face of his wife and receiving her affectionate kiss of welcome. Then, after they would eat their meagre meal, they would return to the library, and she would resort to the piano after everything else had failed to revive his drooping spirits. Frequently, all day long he would sit in his office without an individual entering therein, and when night would again come, his face was so clouded with gloom that he was almost ashamed to go home, for his very presence seemed to cast a shade of sorrow over the face of his young wife. But he could not help it any more than he could make water run up stream. He was running in debt every day, and there was nothing else on this earth so torturing to him as to owe any man and not be able to pay him. The thought of it almost drove him to distraction, and do as he would, he could not banish the trace of it from his face. Had it not have been for the smiling face of his wife, and her pleasant and hopeful conversations, and the many evenings she rendered happy with exquisite music, it is almost correct to say that he could not have borne the burdens that almost crushed him to the earth.

The first part of this third year passed without being very hard to bear for Blanche, but there are times when the fortitude of the strongest almost fails her. One day the butcher came to the house, and demanded of Blanche the payment of his meat bills. She was so frightened that she ran to her drawer and got her pocket-book, and it took almost the last cent she had to pay it. He went away very much pleased, and told some of their other creditors of his success; and this caused them to go when Walter was in his office and try their success, but of course they would get nothing when she had nothing to give them. Then they would turn and leave the house, after breathing out oaths and execrations upon people for not paying their debts. This was repeated day after day, and week after week, but she said nothing about it to Walter. She knew it would cause him more pain and sorrow than it did herself. The only relief she found was in rushing to her room to shed bitter tears of sorrow. It was probably well for these men that Walter did not know of their thus entering and desecrating his house, for it is hard to tell what he in his impulsive moments, when driven to the very verge of despair, would not have done. He never dreamed of any one daring to enter his house to ask his wife for the payment of a bill, when it had always been his custom to pay them at his office. And she never dreamed of telling him anything about it, and thus he never knew that which would have been the most poignant grief of his whole life. He never could have forgiven the man who would do such a thing, and ten chances to one he would have killed him.

Shortly after the third year commenced, when she saw the financial embarrassments of her husband, she dismissed her girl and did her own work herself, and took care of little Walter too. She thus had to do nearly all the shopping, except what Walter did. One day when she went into the grocery where they mostly dealt, the clerk (for the proprietor had not the heart to do it) told her that his instructions were to let no more goods go out of the store until at least half their old bill was paid up.

This information almost stunned her, and she faintly asked how much the bill was, and then turned with an aching heart and burning brain, and left the store and went home to drown herself almost in tears. But she was hungry, and they had

nothing in the house to eat. She had told Walter nothing about this in the morning, and she therefore knew he would be expecting his dinner. So she went to her jewelry-box, and taking one of her gold rings, turned down the street and sold it for a nice little sum, and then went to another store and purchased what she wanted, and returned home with a light and happy heart.

This stormy and eventful year was drawing to a close; and again there was another little stranger come to visit them, and Walter said he must name it, and it was agreed, at his suggestion, to call it Blanche. And a bright, blue-eyed, dear little thing she was. Notwithstanding the dark shadows that gather deeper and deeper around them, still, they were happy, and felt rich for the little treasure they had received. But their joy was soon turned to sorrow; for scarcely had Blanche become able to go around, when the stern officer of the law came, and left her a summons for her husband to appear on a certain day, to answer a plea of debt. Oh, if there is anything in this world that so strikes terror into the heart of the young wife, or the old one either, it is to see the generally hard-hearted officer of the law enter their home! If they were a set of hangmen, they could not strike greater terror to their hearts. When he turned and had left the house, the reality of their situation burst so fully upon her mind that she almost fainted to the floor. The idea of their being sued was so revolting to her exquisitely sensitive nature that she almost cried her eyes out, and was so weak and heart-broken that she could scarcely do anything.

When evening came, and her husband returned home with an aching heart and almost ready to sink down in despair, she tried to be as lively as she could; but, in spite of herself, he saw the traces of tears in her face, and it burned into his very soul. But he could not trust himself to speak. After tea was over, and he had seated himself in the library, she brought him the summons. As she handed it to him, he seemed to guess its import; and when she saw the terrible pain and agony written in his face, it was quite too much for her, and she burst into tears as she sank down in her chair. Oh, it was a terrible blow to both of them! Walter, after reading the paper, leaned back in his chair and covered his face with his hands as, it seemed, he breathed from his very soul, "At

last! at last! the fearful summons has come; and what on earth to do is more than I can tell."

After the silence that followed, he exclaimed again: "Oh, my dear wife, this is more than I can stand! It tortures the very life out of me when I see your sad pale face; but indeed I cannot help it. My worst, yes, the very worst fears that my vivid imagination pictured are now more than realized, and I am surrounded with a mental darkness that almost crushes me to the earth. Indeed, I cannot help it! I have attended to every particle of business placed in my hands correctly and promptly, and my clients said they were pleased. But still there are so few that know me, and thus it is only now and then I can get a case that pays me anything."

When she heard his plaintive voice and saw the tears rolling down his cheeks, it nerved her own heart, and she became stronger, and spoke words of cheer, saying that it was always the darkest hour before the coming dawn; but her own words almost stuck in her throat, and she could say but little more. Her fortitude of soul almost had failed her, and she covered her face to hide the tears that would force themselves down her cheeks in spite of every effort to restrain them.

After they had both given vent to their feelings, and had become calm again, he said, "I can easily arrange all this, but, then, there are others who, I know, will sue immediately. I can take what they call the stay on this bill, and they cannot collect it for nine months, and by that time there may be a change for the better. I could easily borrow money, but I hesitated to do so until the last extremity. It does so torture me to be compelled to mortgage our house, and the most fearful pang of my heart is the thought of asking you to sign it. When I think of it, my head swims, and I almost sink down to the earth. But sometimes I think there is no other alternative. It seems that fate is against me, for I do the best I can, and still there is no chance to succeed. All the older lawyers get the business which I could do as well as they can, if I only had the opportunity."

Blanche was silent for a few moments, and then looking up, —her face bright with the old look that used to be there,—she said, "Suppose I write home to father, and he will send us all the money we want. If I would name a certain sum he would send me twice that sum."

Walter looked at her in the greatest astonishment, as he exclaimed, "Oh, my dear wife, I would not have you do such a thing for the world! I do not wish your father to know anything about our adverse fortune, for I could never look him in the face while poverty and dependence stares us in the face. No, no; if we are driven to the last extremity, let us mortgage our house, and hope for the best. I could write home myself either to father or Tom, and have all the money I need; but that pride of soul is so strong in me yet that I would almost as lief die first. And I know you have this same spirit of pride yourself, for the characteristics of your soul are the same as mine. Now, tell me truly, if it would not be the most painful act of your life to write home to your father for money after what he has given you?"

Blanche was forced to admit the truth of what he spoke, and said, "Yes, you are right. Had it not have been for this same spirit I would have written long ago unbeknown to you; but once or twice I took my pen to do so, but my heart failed me, and I laid it down and rushed frantically from the room. But since now I think of it, if the worst comes to the worst, let us mortgage our house. Do not think so much about me; I am stronger in adversity than you think I am. I can stand quite as much, if not more, than you can. I have not given up yet in despair, for hope is ever strong within me. Even in this intense darkness methinks I can see some bright beams of coming day; and who knows but that ere long the light may break through and burst full upon you, and you will rise to the sun-crowned heights of success? In the mean time, if we have to mortgage our house, what difference will it make? Had we the ten thousand dollars in bank, do you think we would not use it? Of course we would; and why, then, scruple to borrow some money on the credit of the building which that money has reared? The rent that we would have paid will more than pay the interest. And then, besides all this, I do not give up; I still hope. I know the time will yet come when you will be successful. Father said that for years and years he has known young men to wait before they ever got a single lawsuit, and then that they would still crown themselves with success. Yes, my dear husband, cheer up, cheer up; light begins to shine even in the darkness, and the full dawn of day will soon beam upon us. Then what will we care for

the gloom that is left behind when we will be enjoying the present, and still be looking as happily as ever to the mysterious future? Yes, I have no more doubt of your success in the end than I have that the stars are now shining in the heavens. All people have their dark days and intense hours of sufferings; but do you not know that the darkest hour is just before the dawn of day? How can we expect to have joy and sunshine continually in this world of iniquity and sin? Do you not remember that our divine Saviour suffered more than mortal man can ever suffer, and yet he was the only Son of our Creator? And if it were his decree that He whom He clothed in human shape should be without sorrow and grief, He would have shielded his dearly beloved Son from all the terrors of this world. But see He did not do so,—and the only just One that was ever on the face of the earth suffered more than we can ever suffer. If He, then, were not shielded from gloom and intense pain and agony, oh, how can we, weak and erring mortals that we are, expect to be? Why, just try and remember that this is the only year we have ever had any sorrow at all. Our whole life, so far, has been one perpetual ray of sunshine and joy; and can it be possible that we are to have no dark days and no hours of intense pain and suffering? No, no; we cannot be so favored by Him who thus far has showered blessings after another upon us! We are young now, and can stand it better than we could when we are old and infirm; and, sooner or later, our portion of grief and sorrow will come. But, oh, when it is over, and we emerge from the darkness of gloom that surrounded us, we will then be all the more happier, and the joy we will experience will be all the sweeter for having endured heroically the disappointments and sorrows and burdens that were imposed upon us! Yes, I say again, my dear husband, cheer up, cheer up; light begins to shine, and 'we must work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.' We will soon reach the gilded heights of prosperity, where sorrow will never come to us again, but all will be joy supreme."

When she ceased speaking, her face shone with that divine nature which portrayed the deep and priceless soul within. There was nothing of sadness in her face, for all was swept away, as it were, by some hidden and immaculate power; and she sat before him, her eyes beaming with that heavenly light

that seemed to come from on high, the very personification of all that is grand, noble, and sublime in mankind. He was looking at her the whole time she was speaking, which seemed to him as though he were in a sweet dream and was listening to a stream of heavenly music; but when she ceased, and he came to himself, and realized the reality of the scene, he impulsively and passionately clasped her in his arms, as he murmured, amid his blinding tears, "Oh, my dear wife, thou art brighter than the brightest star that shines in the heavens! If I have any hope at all, it is only the hope which thy divinest self inspires, for all else is darkness and gloom!"

Two human hearts were never joined together in a sweeter and stronger bond of love; and after they had become calm again, she opened the piano, which had remained closed since her illness, and played many of the old songs that they used to love so much. Then he joined her, and they played some instrumental duets; and thus the evening passed away. When they were about to retire for the night, one would not have thought that there was ever a cloud rested on their young and hopeful hearts. The mental and moral attachments—that true platonic love—bound them together in the strongest ties of affection that the mind knows or the human heart can feel. May the blessing of Heaven prosper a married life begun with the favor and benedictions of God himself! and, in his own good time, may he dispel the clouds that now overshadow them!

## CHAPTER XI.

If hearty sorrow  
Be a sufficient ransom for offense,  
I tender it here; I do as truly suffer  
As e'er I did commit.

SHAKESPEARE.

AFTER the interview recorded in the last chapter between Walter and Blanche, the former, in the suit brought against him, entered bail for stay of execution as soon as the judgment was entered. Then, making out a full statement of his liabil-



ities, he calculated what sum of money it would take to liquidate the whole amount. Having obtained the loan of this from the bank where he did his business, by having one of his clients indorse for him, he went around to his different creditors and paid them off. Had he known of the insult one of the grocers, through his clerk, had given his wife, he would, no doubt, have been very angry, and would have said some very hard things to him. He could endure almost anything that might be said to him for not paying his debts, but it stung him to the quick when he heard of their saying anything to his wife.

When he had these little vexatious matters all settled up, he had a very nice sum left, and the thought came into his mind that he would go home on Thanksgiving, as he knew that his wife longed to be at her childhood's home again, although she had never mentioned the fact to him since they moved to the city. When he mentioned his purpose to her, she was so rejoiced and overcome that she threw her arms around his neck and cried for joy; and when she had become calmer, she said, "Oh, it will be so pleasant and happy for us to sit around the fireside of our own old home, and how glad will they all be to see us! I can never forget you for being so kind!" And she kissed him time and again.

He could not have done or said anything that would have contributed so much to dispel all the gloom from her soul as when he announced the fact that they would eat their Thanksgiving dinner at home. Yes, the words rang in her ears both day and night, and she could scarcely think of anything else. She dressed her two little children very nicely,—Walter in sailor fashion, and little Blanche—a perfect picture—was one little mass of feathery-like dresses. Oh, the happiest moment she had ever known was passed in making preparations for their visit home!

But we cannot pierce the future, and frequently our most cherished objects fail. Minnie Hall, the girl who worked for them until their hard times, went from the house to a factory, where she remained six months. Her uncle, who had only one child, of whom he was very fond, wanted a companion for her, and, therefore, persuaded Minnie to come and live with them.

She was reluctant to go at first for some cause or other, but

finally consented to do so. The two cousins learned to love each other very much, and thus became warm friends. When the father and uncle went away, he would always bring them home something for presents. If he got his daughter a dress, he was sure to get Minnie one; and during the six months she remained with them, he had given her a great many presents. But his daughter was one of those narrow-minded, soulless creatures, whom no one could really love; and when gentlemen would call on them, they would pay more attention to Minnie than to her, and for this reason it was not long till an insult was given the factory-girl, and a quarrel ensued, and Minnie was ordered to leave the house by an incensed and enraged uncle. When she left she took with her a silk dress which he had purchased for her in his clever moments, and many other little articles which she considered hers, from the fact of their having been given to her. As soon as her uncle had found out that she had taken these things, he became so enraged that he went immediately to the alderman's office and made an information for larceny. A warrant was issued, and she was taken into custody by an officer of the law on the charge of theft. The very idea of such a thing struck terror to her heart, and she almost fainted. However, she regained her presence of mind, and asked the officer what she had better do. Being a kind-hearted man and fascinated with her beauty, he informed her that she ought to consult with a lawyer immediately. She then requested him to take her to Walter Ludwick's office; but he replied that she should procure a more experienced lawyer. She, however, would not listen to him, and insisted on seeing Mr. Ludwick. When they arrived at the office, Walter was surprised to hear of the crime with which she was charged; but after he had inquired into the facts, he directed her to waive a hearing and enter bail for her appearance at court at the next term.

When Walter came home in the evening, he related these facts to Blanche, and she was very sorry that such a thing had happened; but he kept the most painful announcement to the last moment. He well knew that her whole heart was set on going home; and he knew a disappointment would be a terrible blow to her. It was now only two days from the time they were to leave, and she spoke so joyously, while they were taking tea, of their going home. As she was helping little

Walter to his supper, she would say, "Now, my little boy, in a few days more you will see your grandpapa and grandmamma; and they will say you are the nicest little boy that they ever saw." She would talk in this same strain to little Blanche, until the thoughts of crushing her new-born hopes almost pierced Walter's heart like a knife.

Disappointments are always terrible things, but no one can tell, except from experience, the real depth of that keen sense of pain and sorrow which must pierce the young mother's heart when so suddenly disappointed from visiting the home of her childhood, which she had not seen for years. Walter, knowing the terrible disappointment it would be to her, delayed the dread announcement until the last moment. When he had finished his meal and was sitting at the table talking about general matters, he said, calmly, though nervously, "I know that I have something terrible to announce to you, and which will disappoint you wonderfully; but, indeed, it cannot be helped."

Kind of half surmising what it was, she faintly asked, while her face became as white as the driven snow, "What is the dreadful news of which you speak?"

"I have made an engagement with a client to-night at my office, and I must go; but that which I have dreaded to tell you is, that we cannot go home on Thanksgiving. This case of Minnie's——"

He could not finish the sentence for the pain and agony that was in her face. She soon covered it by leaning her forehead down on her arm, which rested on the table, and broke into tears, as she cried, "Oh, I must go! It will kill me now to remain, since I have had my mind on going during all this long month! Oh, yes, I must go!"

She uttered these words without looking up, and they pierced Walter to the heart. He tried to explain how necessary it would be for him to remain, so that he could prepare this case thoroughly, as it would no doubt be the key to his future success; but it was all to no purpose.

She would hear no explanations, and in great sorrow he arose from the table and went to the library and sat down. He only remained seated a moment, and then rising quickly, he went to his private drawer and took therefrom a pack of letters. After glancing over them hastily, he took three therefrom, and

then returning to the dining-room, laid them on the table beside her, where she was still crying, and, without saying a word, turned and left the house. When he regained the street, and was on his way to his office, one could have seen in the moonlight a tear rolling down his cheek, as he said to himself, "I am a fiend for thus disappointing her, for I know she had her whole heart set on going. There is not another woman in all Christendom who could have remained away from home half so long. She shall go, for I will not disappoint her, no matter what the consequences may be."

After he had finished his business with his client, he stepped into another lawyer's office to make arrangements to attend to Minnie's case in his absence. The lawyer said that he would attend to it, but suggested, if he had time, that they look up some of the points this evening. Walter assented to this, and they sat down to look up some of the points of law that would have bearing on the case.

As his last footfall died away in the distance, Blanche looked up, and was greatly surprised to see three of her own letters before her. After she had wiped her tears away, she hastily looked at the dates, and then laid them aside until she had rid up the dining-room. Having then seated herself in the library, she commenced to read the letters. After she had finished the first one she turned to a passage and read it again,—“I am positive,” she wrote, “that that is only true genuine love which can endure the pangs of adversity with that resignation that so becomes a true Christian woman. She who willingly and cheerfully shares whatever of sorrow and misfortune you may have, as well as your joys and prosperities, can only be considered as the true and faithful wife. If she should fail to lift your soul out of the darkness that may sometimes surround you, by the strains of sweet music and her smiles and hopeful words of encouragement,—little kindnesses peculiar to woman,—she would only retard, rather than advance, your progress. Yes, I would take this to be that pure ‘platonic love’ which fitted our souls for each other from the first, and which I have always considered and believed is the only true basis of the marriage relation. For it is only when vicissitudes of fortune gather thick and fast around our pathway that this love grows stronger and stronger, and thus cements more firmly the affections that make twain one flesh. And if it

indeed stand the test of this too fiery ordeal in which it is tried,—if when weighed in the balances it is not found wanting,—how sweet, how heavenly, must be that peace of mind and that supreme joy which will thus fill two faithful and devoted hearts!"

And thus, in another letter, there was a paragraph she read again: "How could you love me, I repeat, if you thought in your darkest hours that I would impede rather than aid you in your future career? and what could you think of me after we are married if I should think so much of having my selfish wishes gratified in preference to yours at the very time you were, perhaps, toiling and struggling for the future happiness of us both? Could you love me then as now? Oh, I know you could not! It would be impossible, when you would reflect upon the little sordid soul I had. You could not admire such a being; and where there is no admiration there is no love."

And then as she re-read the closing words of the letter which the reader has read in full, her tears flowed fast, and she read it again and again: "Yes, let me be like the tender vine of which you spoke the second time we met, that gently and softly winds itself around the giant oak and holds it there amid the wildest storm! When clouds of gloom and sorrow gather thick and fast around us in this hard and real world, let us fly away on the wings of love and music to the ideal world and roam at leisure amid its green fields and garden-lands; and then, when we come back, damp with the dews of inspiration, you will feel stronger and will go forward with renewed impulses and brighter hopes for the life to come. Yes, let us walk through this life side by side together, and if there are any ills and burdens to bear, they will be all the lighter for having been borne by us both; and, at last, when we emerge into the clear sunlight of prosperity, as I know and feel we will, then we can look back over the scenes of the past with that exquisite joy which knows no bounds, and we will then love each other the more for having shared our misfortunes together. And even when old age comes and we are approaching that unseen land beyond the shores of time, we will love each other as devotedly, as sincerely, then as we do now."

She could read no more, and she let the letter fall to the floor, and wept bitter tears of sorrow as she exclaimed, in the

agony of her soul, "Oh, I can see now why he loved me then! He adored the magnanimity and nobility of soul which is portrayed in these letters, and which in my whole manner I professed to have in the days of our courtship. But have I not now fallen from that throne of glory on which his enthusiastic imagination and his deep love had enthroned me?"

Yes, she saw now how she had portrayed, years ago, to a perfection almost astonishing, her very present position, and that she was now doing the very act which, by all the vows and promises that one holds most dear and sacred, she had voluntarily declared years ago that she would not do.

Little Walter was crying, and wanted to go asleep; and after he was put in bed and little Blanche was placed in her little cot, she got some of his letters and read them over time and again. The letter which the reader has read in these pages, and which probably would pay a reproof, was read with great and heartfelt interest. In one letter he wrote: "If there ever should come a time when I could not gratify your every wish,—a time when I would see you sad and careworn, and, perhaps, weeping for that favor which I could not grant from my inability to do so,—oh, you cannot feel, you could never imagine, the deep, intense pain and anguish that would torture my very soul out of me!"

"As for myself, I would not care for all the ills and sorrows and griefs and disappointments and miseries that earth is heir to, for I could stand them all, and more too. Yet, oh! if you would be compelled to share them, and would look, as I said, sad and careworn, it would crush the very life out of me. You see it is this feeling, this great consideration I have for your future happiness, that so harasses my soul. And now in your heart can you blame me for hesitating, as I do, to name our wedding-day?"

Many other extracts she read, until she was almost heart-broken with grief and sorrow and remorse. She arose and put all the letters away, and then looked through her tears at the clock, as she murmured, "He will soon be here," and then sat down in her arm-chair before the fire. She arose after awhile and went to the gate and looked up and down the street, but as she could not see nor hear anything of him, she turned and went into the house. After another hour had passed away, she went out to the gate again, and looked up and down the

street until her eyes were aching, and then she again returned, and with a weary and heavy heart lay down on the lounge, and amid her tears fell into a disturbed sleep.

Time passed so rapidly away when Walter and his colleague were looking up their law case that he took no note of it; and finally, when they had finished, and Walter looked at his watch, he was surprised to see that it was nearly one o'clock. He arose quickly, and bidding his friend a hearty good-night, soon found himself upon the street. As he was walking rapidly along, he said to himself, "It may be a great opportunity lost, for this case may win me fortune and fame, but I will not disappoint her for any consideration whatever. I repeat, that there is not another woman in all Christendom who could have endured so long without a murmur the trials and sufferings that have been forced upon her; and therefore I will not disappoint her now, great as the sacrifice to my future career may be."

When he entered the room and turned up the light and saw her quietly and peacefully sleeping, but also saw the traces of tears on her cheeks, his heart smote him, and he sat down by her side and raised her gently up in his arms and folded her to his heart, as he feelingly exclaimed, "Oh, my dear wife! forgive me, for it was indeed cruel that I should think of disappointing you so much. I have made every arrangement to go the day after to-morrow morning. Now, as you told me one time, cheer up, cheer up, and we will be happy again."

When she had become fully awake, she passionately threw her arms around his neck, and kissing him affectionately, exclaimed, "Oh, my dear husband! it is you who must forgive me! You have done no wrong, but I have been so cruel and heartless. Why, it almost breaks my heart when I consider how much pain and anguish I have caused you. Oh, forgive me! forgive me! this one time, and I will never act so cruelly again. I am now the girl I used to be when you first won my heart. I am not really changed, but was only a little so this evening. Now tell me me if you still love me as you always did?"

She was now looking into his face with her eyes shining through her tears; and he was so nonplused and surprised that he did not know what to do. He tried to explain that she had done no wrong, and that it was cruelly wrong in him to disappoint her so much. But she insisted that the fault was

hers; and not until he assured her time and again, was she satisfied that he still loved her as much as he always did.

It is needless to say that this first little quarrel—it can hardly be called by so harsh a name—was settled, and their reconciliation was complete, and their visit home was indefinitely postponed. Oh, they were as happy now as they always were, and they could retire with light hearts and hopeful thoughts! And as they were about leaving the room, he encircled his arm around her waist and pointed away in the distance, as he tragically said, "Look, I see beams of the glorious victory already, and soon the bewildering grandeur of prosperity will shine in matchless splendor upon us."

And she looked as steadfastly and earnestly as though it were possible to see the tokens of the coming victory of which he spoke. It was two faithful hearts standing side by side looking for the first bright beams of the morning, as the night of intense darkness was passing away.

## CHAPTER XII.

There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

SHAKESPEARE.

It was a cloudy and disagreeable morning with a drizzling rain, which makes one think that the heavens are trying to rain and cannot. The criminal-court room was literally jammed. It was generally supposed that the case of Minnie Hall would be tried; and, as a consequence, every particle of space was taken up, and it was with great difficulty that the tipstave could keep order and prevent the crowd from leaning on the railings of the bar. The sympathies of all were in favor of the pretty young girl, and many were the execrations breathed upon the fiendish and unnatural uncle. There was also a great deal of interest manifested by reason of the fact that a young lawyer—Walter Ludwick—was going to try the case, and that he would make his first speech in the criminal court.

Quite a number of his intimate friends were in the audience, awaiting with eager anxiety the commencement of the suit.

However, the long anxiously awaited moment arrived, and the case called, and the defendant took her seat in the criminal-box. As she did so a shiver ran through the entire audience, as if looking upon some scene that was not natural and which shocked their sensibilities. When the name of the old man was called and he took his place as prosecutor, a feeling of indignation ran alike through the audience, and it was the predominant impulse of their hearts then and there to hang him at once. When the judge asked Mr. Ludwick what the defendant's plea was, and as he answered, in a clear, full voice, "Not guilty," a feeling of relief and satisfaction, as if all were going right, pervaded the audience, and they felt more composed and kept more quiet than they were after the case had been called.

The evidence of the old man was in substance that he had requested the prisoner to come and live with him as a companion for his daughter: that having complied with this request, it was not long till they commenced to quarrel, owing to some inconsistency, as he thought, of the prisoner; that when it had become so annoying, both to himself and daughter, that they could not endure it any longer, he ordered her to leave the house; that when she did leave, she took, without any authority from him, a silk dress which had not been made up (and which was shown to the court), and many other things that he had given her, which she was to have while she remained with them. "All these articles named in the indictment," he said, "she took away with her, with the intention of appropriating to her own use, contrary to law."

This evidence was corroborated by the daughter. The officer who made the arrest was called, and testified that the goods shown the court were the identical goods which he had found in her trunk when he made the arrest; that she first denied having them, but that she soon afterwards admitted that she had taken them under a claim of right.

This evidence of the officer was considered strong against her, from the fact that it showed a guilty intent, which was difficult to disprove.

When the Commonwealth had ceased, Mr. Ludwick's colleague explained the nature of their defense, which he

thought would convince them of the innocence of the prisoner, but which he would take occasion to say was a difficult matter to prove. He then called the defendant, who was allowed to make a statement of the facts in the case, which was in substance that she supposed the articles were hers when she took them. Some half-dozen witnesses were then called to testify as to her general good character, after which the defense rested, and the counsel were directed to go to the jury.

When Walter Ludwick arose, a deathly stillness reigned throughout the large court-room. Each could hear the other breathe, the silence was so perfect, so intense. His face was pale, and his embarrassment was too apparent for the most insipid not to notice. Yes, well he might feel embarrassed and nervous, for many a sharp-eyed critic was watching his every movement. Besides, there was the young girl, pale and trembling, whose fate now depended upon the words he was now about to speak. If he failed to do his full and ample duty, she would be confined to a felon's cell,—a life worse than death itself. None but he who has experienced the same can adequately imagine the awful responsibility that he felt resting upon him as he, for the first time in his life, arose to address a jury in a criminal case.

But in addition to the inborn ability of Walter Ludwick, he had that complete and thorough education, and that natural expression of language, rendered more elegant by diligent culture, and that full-toned and sonorous voice, combined with an expressive and dignified manner, that could not fail of itself to enlist the attention of the audience, no matter what the subject might be upon which he was to speak,—all of which combined to create the impression that the words he was about to utter were of thrilling interest and transcendent importance.

It had been trying to rain nearly all day, and now about the middle of the afternoon it thundered some, and was raining fast when he arose to his feet to address the jury. Stretching himself up to his full height, he said, in a slow, solemn, yet slightly tremulous voice,—

*"May it please the court and gentlemen of the jury:*

*"It is fitting when a scene like this, with all its fearful consequences, on which you now are gazing probably for the first time in your lives, and in which you, in the providence of God,*

have unwillingly become some of the actors, is now being enacted within, that the elements without should be in harmony with it; that the heavens should be veiled from our eyes, as they are veiled at this moment; that the lightning should flash and the thunders roll, as they are now doing; and that earth itself should be shrouded in gloom, and that all nature be clothed in draperies of woe. Yes, 'tis well that the glorious sun—that lucid orb of day which sheds its divine light on the peasant in his cot as well as the peer in his palace—should not shine to light up this misty room, where this dark and almost damnable scene, on which kind heaven now so justly frowns, is being performed, so that you and an incensed public might not see the enormity of that almost unpardonable sin which one human being can commit when he violates that awful, that appalling mandate, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the ever-living God.' For otherwise, an incensed and wronged people would spontaneously arise to the dignity of a true manhood and put an end to a tragedy which cannot fail to make the most callous heart bleed and his face blush for shame. Here" (pointing to the pale and trembling yet still beautiful girl) "sits a being fashioned after the image of God himself, who still preserves the elements of that divine nature which distinguishes mankind from the lower order of creation, and in whom still lives all the better angels of our nature. There" (pointing to the old man with the finger of scorn; and, after an emphatic pause, continued:) "the skeleton of the man who too was made in the image of his God, but in whom the fountains of the man are dried up; in whom all that is glorious, all that is godlike, have been crushed out, and he is the miserable wreck of the man without a soul. For bring your minds to bear, if you can, upon the startling and astonishing spectacle of the degradation of the man who would wantonly, and to gratify his unnatural thirst and cravings for revenge, bring the flesh and blood of his own mother into this court of criminal procedure, and, with a cruelty that better becomes the wild savage, who, with the blood still dripping from his hands, sings his demoniac songs of victory over his ruthlessly slain victim, endeavors to consign it, in the form of this lovely orphan girl, who should rather have found a friend and protector in him, to a felon's cell, and thus crush out from one pure and unsullied heart the last hope, the last ray of sunshine,

which the friendless and neglected orphan has in this cold and callous world,—a good name. Oh, gentlemen, does it not seem to you, who have the hope, and look forward to the time when you shall stand above the angels, and whose voices shall swell the chorus of the redeemed in heaven, that the man who was once created after the image of the God of hosts has indeed fallen to the very lowest depths of perdition when he would commit a crime for which, if but a just retribution were meted out to him, there would be stamped upon his brow the portrait of that terrible, appalling decree,—not only doomed, but damned?

"I regret exceedingly, gentlemen," he continued, in lower tone, "to say that I am surprised at the vindictive spirit manifested by the State's attorney in the prosecution of the case, whose duty it is to see that the rights of the defendant are preserved, as well as those of the Commonwealth.

"Why, in the course of the trial, when I once or twice spoke of the prisoner's mother being a widow, he objected to the court, and said that I ought not to use that word, as it had a tendency to prejudice the minds of the jury in the prisoner's favor. And again, when I once spoke of the defendant here as being an orphan girl, he made the same objection, and said that such a manner of conducting a case was all wrong. Why, I have no doubt but that every man in this jury-box was surprised and vexed and mortified when he heard the attorney of state make such futile and ridiculous objections to the use of words which are properly used in this great, free, and Christian land of ours.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, in a full, sonorous, and solemn and impressive tone, "if the Everlasting himself had not intended that this widow and orphan child had rights which would be protected, he would never have drawn the bow which sent the shaft to lay that husband in his grave! For he that hears the young ravens when they cry, will hear with willing ears the voices of the widow and her orphan child pleading at his throne for justice and a safe deliverance from the hands of her would-be destroyers! Yes, and further, I appeal to my unusually generous-hearted friend" (bowing slightly to and looking at the State attorney), "if he does not feel a remorse of conscience when he reflects upon the astounding fact that he is endeavoring to take the very bread from

this widow's mouth and child? I know full well his duty, but there is such a thing as transcending the limits of justice.

"Yes, gentlemen, I desire to call things of whatever nature by their right names, and I have the right to call this weeping and sorrow-stricken mother—widow; and I have also the right to call this trembling and innocent girl here—*orphan*; and there is not a decree or power in all the State to prevent me from so doing."

He next referred to the evidence in the cause; and taking up that of her uncle, he riddled it through and through with his shots of contradiction and keen and cutting sarcasm. He turned around, and with his eyes flashing and with his face all in a glow with the inspiration that filled his soul, would breathe such a storm of indignation upon him that one would think he would wilt right down before them. One time he put his head under the table so no one could see him, and when he could stand that no longer, he jumped up quickly and rushed out of the court-room at the top of his speed.\* Then referring to the evidence of the daughter, he feelingly said, "It has been said that woman is that golden link between man and the angels, and I sometimes think, when I see the true and Christian woman ever pointing upwards and directing our minds to the life beyond, that is indeed true, and I honor and glorify her as some ethereal spirit who was sent on this earth to minister, in her own peculiar and gentle way, to fallen man, so that he might raise himself up from the darkness of soul in which he is enveloped to loftier fields of usefulness and glory. But, alas! gentlemen, what a sad and mournful spectacle meets our astonished eyes when we see her descend from this throne of glory on which our enraptured imagination had placed her,

\* The incident from which this scene is taken actually occurred several years ago in one of our Pennsylvania courts. The old man, the prisoner's uncle, induced her to come and live with him just as recorded in the text; but she and his daughter could not agree, and he ordered her from the house. She took the articles beforementioned, believing them to be hers, and her uncle had her immediately arrested for larceny. When her able counsel was arguing the case, he was so severe on her uncle, that once or twice he put his head under the table; and when he could stand that no longer, he reached for his hat and rushed out of the court-room at the top of his speed. Of course the niece was acquitted, and was borne by her friends in triumph and joy from the court-room. Her uncle left the town forthwith.

and endeavor thus to consign one of her own sex, and one of her own companions, to a life of shame and degradation! What must be our feelings when we see her deliberately trying to send into an already broken and shattered home that fearful messenger which would sweep, as with a besom of destruction, the last vestige of happiness from an already too sorrowful mother, and her almost heart-broken and suffering child? In view of the enormity of such a crime, well may we exclaim, 'O shame, where is thy blush? O death, where is thy sting?'"

He disposed of her evidence thoroughly, and then, in his usual happy manner and logical way, explained the cause of her denial to the officer of having the goods. "This," he said, "if you are acquainted to any extent with human nature, will not at all lead you to think that it in the least possible manner shows or displays any guilt on her part. Why, it is the most natural thing in the world for any innocent person, who would thus be so shocked with the enormity of the crime of which she was charged, to say something to avert the least suspicion attaching to her. I tell you, gentlemen, the strongest and most innocent men will quail with fear when a warrant for such a fearful crime as this is shown to him, with a demand that he must forthwith come up and answer the charge preferred against him. I have seen, in my brief life, the strongest men, though innocent, turn pale when they were charged with any crime which would tend to cast the least suspicion upon their good name. And I bring the case home to you yourselves, and ask you what you would do under like circumstances, when an officer of the law had laid his hands upon you and showed you the warrant charging you with a crime, of which you were perfectly innocent, that would tend to blemish that which you hold of more value than all the gold of the Orient,—a good name? If any of you do not grow pale and tremble with fear, then you are different from any other human being on the face of this green earth."

Then, after impressing upon the minds of the jury the most important facts in the case, and explaining to them that the defendant is entitled to every reasonable doubt, and also referring to her undisputed good character, which, he said, was as pure and white as the angelic robes that float around the immortal throne in heaven, he closed in the most impressive and thrilling

manner possible. Drawing himself up to his full height, he said, in a full and solemn tone, "And now, gentlemen, I leave this case with you, feeling confident that you will do justice between the Commonwealth and the prisoner now before you. I have referred as convincingly and as clearly as I could to the evidence in the cause; but the strongest evidence is that which shines forth from the face of the person whom this miserable wretch would have you condemn.

"God himself, gentlemen, writes a legible hand, and I say that he has written upon the face of this young girl the evidence of her innocence as plainly and with as much certainty as you can see the milky way across the starry heavens. And I ask you, gentlemen, to bring to your recollection the face which but a short time ago was before you, and then look upon this face which you see before you now, and then tell me in your 'heart of hearts' if you believe her guilty. Try her by the finest test you may desire, and if you can find one scintilla of evidence in her whole manner and countenance that would even point to a suspicion of guilt, then I do confess that my judgment of human nature, or yours, is most miserably and egregiously at fault. But the least doubt of such a conclusion does not enter my mind, and I commit this poor, trembling, and orphan girl into your hands, to be dealt with according to that judgment of justice which you are sworn to render, with the full assurance that the light of truth will so shine in upon your minds as will enable you to see her innocence as clearly as He does who sits upon his lofty throne and rules the world. For I know that away in the suburbs of this prosperous city stands a little cot, rude, but clean and neat, in which sits a widowed mother, with her hands clasped in earthly despair, but with her heart and her eyes turned heavenward! She has approached the Holy Evangelist, in whose strong arms and great heart she rests for that protection which no earthly friend can give. Driven as she was from this court-room by the monstrous and astounding evidence—every word of which she knew was false—of an enraged and revengeful brother, she almost lost faith in mankind and in human judgment! She is now, no doubt, on bended knees, praying for the intervention of the Divine Saviour to save her poor, weak, and suffering child. The fire, this cold and dreary day, burns slowly enough, for the



"She is now, no doubt, on bended knees, praying for the intervention of the Divine Saviour to save her poor, weak, and suffering child."



last stick of wood has been placed thereon, and she sits beside it shivering with cold, awaiting in dread suspense, through fear that in a few more moments the awful, the appalling tidings may come that her only child—the only companion and friend she has in this cold and callous world,—yes, the very last hope of her existence—is doomed to a felon's cell; her own flesh and blood to a life of ignominy and shame. Oh, of all men in the world, this old man himself and his daughter should rejoice in her acquittal, to the end that their own blood might be cleansed from the shame and degradation which, in their moments of blind infatuation of revenge and malice, they would blemish it. She may be poor in this world's goods; she may have to earn her bread by the sweat of her brow; she may be looked down upon by some and passed by others as a waif upon the sea; but, oh, her spirit—that immortal part of her which is beyond the power of human hands to tarnish or condemn—is still white and pure, and will so remain; as the ambrosial robes that float around the immortal throne in heaven! And should it ever occur to you, in after-life, when you have mingled more with the world, and have learned some more of its mysterious workings, that you had wrongfully, though unintentionally, condemned a poor and innocent girl to a felon's cell, think ye then that you can lay your head upon your pillow and not see the ghostly form of this innocent and outraged girl haunting you in your dreams, and making you feel as though some ghostly spectre from the lower world was hovering over you and filling your soul with all the torments of the damned? Oh, think ye that, in the calm twilight of your life, when your race is nearly run, and you come to approach that awful Throne with trembling and in fear, where the burden of your song will be, 'A little mercy! a little mercy! Oh, righteous father!' what will ye think when you hear that damning proof from the Throne of Glory, 'How canst thou hope for mercy here, when on earth thou renderedst none?' Oh, if there will ever be a time in your lives when you would remorsefully wish that you had never been born, I think it will be then, when, by your own ruthless and wanton hands, you have done an act which merits the frown and damning curse of Heaven! But, gentlemen, I do not apprehend any judgment of this kind. Thank God,

we have men in this world,—in this great land of ours,—men whose minds are unprejudiced, and whose souls cannot be touched by a shameful bribe! I leave this poor, trembling, and almost heart-broken young girl with you, feeling in my heart of hearts that you will approach the Holy Evangelist with clean hands and pure hearts, and acquit her of this most fearful and astounding crime, and thus do an act which will deserve the benediction of Heaven. And in after-years you will look back to this as the crowning act of your lives, and your children, after you have passed to the land of dreams, will point to the record of this act with pride, and, on bended knees, will thank God that they had a father so good, so noble, and so true to mankind!"

When he ceased and had taken his seat, almost exhausted as he was, a profound, deathly silence reigned throughout the court-room. Every one seemed lost in amazement, and by a sense of the wrong which was being perpetrated. But as the court directed the State's attorney to go to the jury, the large audience seemed to gain their self-possession, and there arose therefrom such a burst of applause that was deafening in the extreme. It was so intense that nothing could be done until the judge ordered the tipstaves and policemen to clear the court-room. As they became silent, the State's attorney commenced to address the jury. His speech, however, was listened to with a great deal of impatience; and when he at last concluded, a feeling of relief escaped from the audience.

The judge's charge was clear and concise, and logically explained the law fully in reference to larceny, and then instructing the jury that it was their province to apply the facts of the case now before them to the law, and ascertain whether the prisoner was "guilty" of the crime of which she was charged, or "not guilty." The officer was then sworn, and took charge of the jury, and they all retired from the court-room. Some of the ablest lawyers complimented Walter highly, after the jury had retired, on the very able manner in which he had conducted the case; and when the judge, who had known him merely, came down from the bench, he grasped him by the hand and said that his speech was the finest he had ever heard in the forum of the bar for a young man to make. Said he, "I cannot see why there is not a brilliant future in store for you."

And it is needless to say that these congratulations were as manna to his famished soul, for I may safely say that the whole effort of his heart had been centred in this trial, and should he have failed, it would almost have killed him. There is nothing to the weary soul so sweet as to receive from the honest friend that compliment and approbation which shows that his effort was appreciated. Yes, he could not restrain a tear from rolling down his cheek as he saw the one ambition of his life now being almost achieved; and he inwardly thanked God that at last the light of success was beginning to dawn upon his pathway.

### CHAPTER XIII.

"Praise  
Is the reflection doth from virtue rise;  
These fair encomiums do virtue raise  
To higher acts: To praise is to advise.  
Telling men what they are, we let them see,  
And represent to them what they should be."  
ALEYN.

WHEN the jury came in, all was silent as the tomb. Not a foot moved, not a stir was made, and the breathings of that immense court-room could be distinctly heard when they filed into the box, and the clerk of the court asked, in his usual manner, with the difference that his voice on this occasion slightly trembled, "Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon your verdict?" The foreman, in a full and resolute voice, answered, "*We have!*" The clerk then, in the same voice, continued: "What say you, then? Do you find the defendant guilty of the crime whereof she stands indicted, or not guilty?" As he ceased, and as they were awaiting their answer, a profound and breathless silence reigned supreme; and when the foreman, in the same tone, answered loud enough to be heard all over the court-room, "*Not guilty!*" such an applause as went up from that vast and enthusiastic assembly was never yet witnessed in any court-room in the land. The judge rapped and pounded, and the crier of the court cried for order, and the tipstaves and policemen were busy in trying to restore order, but it was like

battering with the fearful elements of the flood or the raging and destructive storm, for they could not do anything with them. Some of Minnie's recent companions in the factory, who had watched the trial with great solicitude, rushed into the bar and clasped her around the neck and almost smothered her with kisses; and then they caught Mr. Ludwick and shook him by the hand until his arm almost ached. When he could stand it no longer, he slipped out of the door and went to his office and sank almost exhausted into his chair. Minnie being so overcome, was so weak that she could hardly rise to her feet; and when she had become stronger, she arose and went out with her companions and went immediately home. The news, however, had preceded her there,—for one of her friends ran quickly out of the court-room when the verdict was announced, and went immediately to her mother to tell her the glad tidings of great joy. When she entered, the mother was sitting almost heart-broken in her rude cabin, and when the news was announced to her she let one piercing cry and blessed her heavenly Father for restoring her lost and only child. When Minnie entered she rushed into her arms, and then followed a scene which almost beggars description. They both cried for joy, while the tears rolled down their cheeks. Such supreme and perfect joy is only once in awhile witnessed or experienced in the human heart.

After Walter Ludwick had become rested, it was late, very late for tea, and he closed his office door and hurriedly walked home. His wife was eagerly waiting for him, and when he announced the acquittal of Minnie, her eyes brightened up, and she expressed herself as being so pleased and delighted. Blanche did not know the wonderful interest that the public manifested in the case, and therefore he concluded not to say anything about it until after tea, and then he would give her a full account of the whole tragedy. But they had only been seated in the library a short time after tea, when the bell rang, and on opening the door, the mother and Minnie and two other girls rushed in, and upon the mother seeing Walter, she rushed frantically to him and threw her arms around his neck, and amid her sobs and tears thanked him for delivering her only child from the hands of the destroyer. Oh, it was such a scene as over which the most callous heart could not restrain a rising tear! They remained more than an hour, and when

they finally did leave, it was amid over-protestations of their love and gratitude, which they said they would never cease to shower upon him.

The scene was too much for Blanche, and she could not restrain her tears, and after the mother and Minnie both had thrown their arms around her neck and kissed her time and again, she pleaded an excuse and left the library. After they had gone and she had returned, Walter said, "Now you have a kind of an idea of how I passed the time since the trial was ended. The mother and child are not alone in extending to me their congratulations, for men whom I have only seen, but with whom I had no acquaintance, came up to me and grasped my hand as they complimented me in the kindest and most affectionate manner possible. Now you see that the darkness of our lives has been to a certain extent dispelled, and light begins to shine upon our pathway."

"Yes," Blanche said, softly; "at last the dawning of a bright day has come, and I praise the Divine Saviour that it is so."

A fair report of the trial appeared in the *Tribune* on the following morning. After stating the main facts of the case, and a brief sketch of the evidence, the editor closed by saying:

"This is another instance of the case where circumstantial evidence overrules positive evidence. Some have even doubted that such a thing were possible. In this case, the positive evidence was all on the side of the Commonwealth, and the circumstantial evidence was one part of the defense, and thus the matter was submitted to the jury, and they, no doubt, gave a just and correct verdict. From all the facts, however, that we have been enabled to obtain of the trial, we are induced to say that the acquittal of the defendant is more due to the able and earnest manner in which her cause was tried by her young and efficient counsel. The argument he made to the jury was one of the finest specimens of oratory that has been witnessed in the court-room since the great murder trial that occurred a great many years ago. For beauty of arrangement and elegance of diction, and for logical and convincing argument, combined with the earnest and impassioned manner in which it was delivered, produced an effect upon the feelings of the jury and large audience which almost beggars description. And when he ceased speaking there burst

from the audience such an immense applause that it was not until the court ordered the room to be cleared that they became quieted. And when the verdict of the jury was announced, there followed such a scene as is almost impossible to portray. Old men waved their hats, and the young men, too, were louder still in expressing their approbation as to the result. Some of the defendant's lady friends even rushed into the bar and threw their arms around her neck and cried for joy. And then they turned to her counsel, who had to undergo an ordeal which, had he been an unmarried man, he would probably have enjoyed very much. We here take the occasion to say that this was the first case of any importance that Mr. Ludwick has ever tried, and the strangest fact is, that he has been in the city now a trifle over three years and has not yet obtained a paying practice. That he tried this case with the skill and ability of an old practitioner is admitted on all sides, and some of his older legal brethren greatly regret that he has been, through the force of circumstances, kept in the background so long. It shows, however, the sad and singular fact that to-day there are young men with brilliant minds and thorough knowledge of the law who are only eking out a mere livelihood because they have no opportunity to display the ability that is in them. It is strange that so many men will run to old lawyers for their most trifling cases, when a young lawyer could attend to their business just as well, and, probably, would not charge them half so much. But in this world some strange things occur, and this is one of them. There is one thing certain, however, that in this case Mr. Ludwick has obtained a starting-point, and if he continues to be attentive to the profession for which he is so well qualified and eminently fitted, his fortune and future career is made."

The *Avalanche* concluded a very fine editorial in the following language: "The result of this trial shows that he is a successful man who is equal to his opportunity. Mr. Ludwick, for over three years, has realized but little money from his practice; and the cause of this was not owing to the fact that he had not the ability, but because he had not the opportunity. When this opportunity did come, however, he found himself equal to it, and this makes him one of those shining lights which gives proof to the maxim that 'every man is the architect of his own fortune.' We do not, of course, know the

amount of labor the preparation of this case required; but we will say this, that the argument alone, which occupied only about two hours, or perhaps not so much, has raised him to the sun-crowned heights of his profession, and he need never fear in the future of not having enough of business to have his time fully occupied."

When it was known by Minnie and some of her factory friends where she had resumed her work that Mr. Ludwick was in stringent circumstances and was hard pressed for money, they got up a paper and went around to solicit a subscription to pay her lawyer. The proprietor of the factory, who was a kind and generous man, subscribed one hundred dollars; and with that as a starting-point, they soon raised the sum of one thousand dollars. When they presented this sum to him, he was surprised and greatly affected. He said to them that he never dreamed of anything of the kind being done, and would only take the sum on the condition that they would also give him the paper containing the names of the contributors, with which request they complied. After looking over it, he said, "Some of these gentlemen I know, but the others I do not; yet I will preserve the paper, and it may be that in some future day I can repay it with interest. They shall never be forgotten."

And when they had left the office, he went around to the grocery store and settled some small accounts that were standing against him; and then found that he had enough left to lift his note in the bank, which he did at once, though it was not yet due.

And it would be difficult to portray the joy that filled his heart when he went home that evening and told his wife that they did not owe a dollar in the world. She was rejoiced to hear it, and they both knelt down and thanked God that it was so. And when they were about to retire, he said, "Now, you see the clouds have all dispersed, and the sun shines in full splendor upon us. I do not think that we will have any more hard times. The papers, and the judge himself, and many old lawyers say that my fortune is made. Fate, you see, has at last smiled upon me."

She studied for a few moments, and then looked up sweetly in his face, as she said, "Oh, my dear husband, do not say that fate has smiled upon you! Say that it is Heaven that has

heard your prayers and has now answered them. Always in the future look upwards, and whatever of success and glory you may achieve, consider it as a boon from Him 'who,' as I said one time before, 'will not see the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread.'"

Oh, they were happy in the love for each other that filled their hearts!

#### CHAPTER XIV.

There falls to manhood's lot  
A joy which youth has not;  
A dream more beautiful than truth,  
Returning spring, renewing youth.

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

ANOTHER spring had come with all its brightness and glowing and inspiring hopes. Walter had been wonderfully successful during the winter, for his practice had increased tenfold. Persons who never went into his office before now came by the hundreds, and intrusted him with their business, and he had all he could do. When he would enter his office in the morning, he would be busy until noon, and then from noon till night; and, whenever he could do so, he would bring his evening's work home with him, so that he would not have to return after tea. As soon as his business increased so that he could afford it, he hired a girl; for he told his wife one day that she had washed the last dish she would ever wash again, until adversity should come upon them. "I never want to see you tired again with work." And soon after this, when he had so much copying to do, she volunteered to help him. Seeing how well she could do it, he hired another girl to watch and take care of the children; and thus Blanche had nothing to do but oversee her domestic affairs and aid her husband whenever she desired to do so.

Thus their days passed away until the rosy month of June came, when, as the flowers were in full bloom and the birds were singing, and the air was soft and fragrant, they turned their faces homeward bound. Oh, the supreme joy that filled

their hearts no pen can portray nor tongue can tell! After nearly four years' absence from their childhood's home, they were again soon destined to tread the old beaten paths of the days gone by. Oh, their hearts were filled with that wild and enthusiastic joy, boundless as space and endless as eternity!

Walter had made every arrangement so that he could remain as long as he desired. There was a young lawyer, just admitted to the bar, who intended to go farther west, and he made an engagement with him to remain until he would return.

Minnie and her mother were engaged to live in the house and take care of it, so that there was nothing on their mind to give them uneasiness about their own house.

Walter had mailed many copies of the trial in which he was engaged home, and thus they knew of the success which at last crowned him, and the applause and congratulations that had been heaped upon him. Blanche looked well in the joy that filled her heart. Little Walter was dressed in sailor-fashion. The baby—the dearest little thing in the world—was one mass of all the feathery-like clothing that a fond mother could bestow upon her. And as they were seated in cars which were running at the top of their speed, they felt the time long until they would join the dear ones at home. "I feel now," said Walter, "that I can go home with that assurance and that sense of pride which comes from a feeling of achieved success. Had we gone home before, there would still have been hovering over us a dark cloud, which would only have become darker when we would have reflected how matters stood behind, at our own home. But now, you see, all is joy and sunshine, and we can meet the friends we love with that feeling and assurance that we have done something, at least, which should meet with their approbation."

With this feeling his young wife was entirely in harmony, for she said, "The most that troubled me before when I thought of going home was how to meet my father with the dread thought that you had not yet been successful." Thus the same impulses and the same thoughts and motives filled their hearts.

I forbear to portray the scene which followed, when they at last reached Claremont, and hastily entered Judge Alpen's barouche, and were driven to his mansion, where the daughter who had been absent so long was clasped in the arms of her overjoyed and weeping mother. Neither will I attempt to por-

tray that which followed when the father enfolded her in his strong arms and kissed her time and again. It is one of those scenes—the sweetest, yet the most affecting, of which the human heart is capable of feeling—which only those who have realized the same can have a full conception; and those who have not done so can only know by employing their imagination to portray the scene for them. Then they probably can have some idea of the joy that filled the hearts of these, parents and daughter, as the absent one again returned home.

They remained two weeks at Claremont, and many were the changes they noticed,—some for the better, others for the worst,—which makes one feel how foolish it is to build our hopes of happiness alone in the affairs of this world. Fannie Murdoch lay for one month with brain fever, almost bordering between life and death; but at last a change took place for the better, and in another month she was convalescent, and in course of time regained her usual health. But her pride and arrogance, and also that of her mother's, had considerably fallen, and they came to look at the world in a more common-sense view than heretofore. Grace now was the leading one of the household, and there was more regard paid to her wishes than was usually done in days gone by.

But there was still nothing in common between her mother and her sister and herself, and in this manner her affections were still blighted; and to see her in her reflective moments, you would say that a dark shadow had passed over her young life. But the cause of it all was, that her affections had been blighted by the cruel conduct of her mother, and she did not know what it was ever to have a kind and affectionate friend. It is true that her father loved her, and she had an unbounded love for him; but then he was with her so little, that it was but a waif in the sea in comparison to the depths of affection her soul craved. Thus she was starved for that love and praise which her soul longed for; and she was growing old and callous in heart before she was out of her teens.

What might have been if Grace's home had been so pleasant and cheerful and congenial, that when she had first met Walter Ludwick, she could have invited him to call on her frequently? They were really congenial, and if they had only become better acquainted, how Walter's enthusiasm and ambition would have aroused her sleeping affections, and would

have infused within her new impulses and a new life! If she could have invited him home some evening for tea, where he could have seen her domestic life, where he could have heard her music, and where he could have seen the books she read, what new hopes might she not have infused into his soul at that very dark period of his life! Yes, what might not have been had these two really congenial spirits become better acquainted with each other!

But misfortunes never come singly. Six months after Fannie was entirely well, Mr. Murdoch came home one evening very much flushed. He took his bed, after he drank a cup of tea, from which he never rose again. Typhoid fever set in, and after an illness of more than a month, his soul took its flight to Him who gave it, and left a bereaved and almost heart-broken family behind. Mrs. Murdoch cried wonderfully at the funeral, and Fannie almost screamed herself to death. But a few tears only stole down Grace's cheek, for her grief was that deep and sincere grief that burned the tears before they came out from her eyes. Oh, it was a terrible blow to her! for now the only one on this earth that she really loved was gone. When she returned home, it was with a bleeding and aching heart, which almost crushed the very life out of her. She went to her own room, and bowed her head in that deep sorrow that scarcely knows no wakening.

Thus time passed on. Fannie and Mrs. Murdoch, as people always do who make great lamentations at funerals and over the death of a dear friend, had quite forgotten their sorrows which occurred only six months before. But the grief in Grace's heart was as great as it was the very day he died. But the end was not yet. As these six months passed away, the estate was fully settled up, and it was found that he would not have enough of assets to pay his liabilities. The consequence was that all his property, both personal and real, had to be sold. It was a terrible blow to Fannie and Mrs. Murdoch, but Grace took it all in her usual matter-of-fact way. From a conversation which occurred between her and Fannie, it would seem that she did not care how the matter did end. "You see," she said, "that you and mother are probably as much to blame for all this as any one else. Time and again I have been heartily sick of the extravagances in our house, and have wished in my heart for a change from the worthless and profitless life we

have been leading to something more useful and meritorious. Now that we will soon have to quit this mansion, make up your mind to go to work and support yourself, for now you have no one to attend or wait upon you but yourself."

When the last household furniture, except those few articles necessary for family use which the law exempted, was sold out, and they had commenced to sell the piano, Grace burst into tears and ran to her own room to cry. This had always been her comforter in her sorrow, and now that it was gone, she was left sad and lonely indeed. When those dark moments would steal over her sad soul, she would fly away to her piano and fill her heart with the ecstasies of song. But now the opportunity was lost forever.

When the last of all had come, Mrs. Murdoch rented a little cottage in the suburbs of the city, and they took their remaining furniture and moved therein, and commenced life again upon as small a scale as she had done when she was first married. There was only one brother of Mr. Murdoch living, but he never darkened their door after the funeral, for he had always been treated with a great deal of contempt by Mrs. Murdoch, so now it of course gratified him that she was reduced to poverty, and he never came near her again. Mrs. Murdoch had some relations living, but she had had no intercourse with them for years on account of their being poor. Thus she was now cast upon the world poor and—worse still—friendless. Grace, soon after they moved, put an advertisement in the papers that she would give music lessons; and, as she was a most proficient performer on the piano, it was not long until she had a large class and was making enough to support them.

Mrs. Murdoch and Fannie between them did the cooking, and thus their domestic life was moving along when Walter and Blanche arrived at Claremont. One time when Grace came home tired Fannie scolded about her not coming sooner, as she had thus to get a second dinner; but her mother promptly told her not to say another word, "for Grace was privileged to come and go when she pleased, and you have nothing else to do than to get her meals ready for her when she does come. Have you not got common sense enough to know that she is the main support of both of us? And then, what could we do without her?"

She could say nothing in reply, and thus it was that Grace was now the supreme ruler in the household, and they both implicitly obeyed her. She could save enough to make some small payments on the piano; which she had rented in such a manner that when she paid a certain sum it was then to be hers absolutely. I believe it is true to say that she was happier now than she had ever been in her life before.

It was not quite a year since Charles Spencer had become well and was at his old place in their store again. But he was indeed a changed man. Instead of the smiles and sunshines that used to light up his genial countenance, a shadow of gloom was written thereon, and one scarcely, if ever, saw him smile. He was very attentive to his business, and nothing seemed to detract his mind from it. He never gallanted any ladies, and it was only once in awhile that he walked home with Grace Murdoch, when she would come of an evening to give his little sister lessons on the piano. But whatever his intentions may have been, people would talk, and they were free to say that it would be a match. The general expression was that it would be a good one, for they were at heart good people.

One morning, about a week after Walter had come, Charles met him just as he was passing his office adjoining the store, and he caught him by the hand and almost pulled him into the office, as he said, "There are only two things in this world I desire,—your forgiveness and your wife's. Tell me now that you forgive me, and say whether I can go to her and ask her pardon for the black and fiendish crime I committed."

Walter looked at him for awhile in profound astonishment, and being convinced by the earnest manner in which he spoke, and by the gloom and sorrow written on his face, that he meant what he said, replied, "I have forgiven you, Mr. Spencer, long ago. The sufferings you have endured have atoned for the sins you committed, and therefore I take it upon myself to say that my wife also has forgiven you."

"But I want to hear it from her own lips. If you will allow me the privilege to call on her to ask her if she will do so, I would consider it a favor always to be remembered."

Of course his permission was granted, and he called, and of course Blanche told him that she had forgiven him long ago. He went away a happier and a better man.

## CHAPTER XV.

Once more let God's green earth and sunset air  
 Old feelings waken;  
 Through weary years of toil and strife and ill,  
 Oh, let me feel that my good angel still  
 Hath not his trust forsaken.

WHITTIER.

BACK again to the scenes of his childhood,—back again to the home where his heart lingered with delight,—beneath the old elm-tree, where he could frequent the trysting-places of the days of long ago, and wander along the babbling brooks and amid blooming meadows and the sunny and flowery hill-sides! One can better imagine the joy—a peculiar kind of joy—that filled Walter's heart as he neared the place of his boyhood's days than the tongue can tell or the pen portray. As he met the father who had protected him and the mother who had watched with miserly care over his infancy and admired, with a mother's pride, his approach to manhood, on the threshold, after an absence of years, it was with difficulty that he could restrain the feelings which animated his heart. It had been the father's wish that his son might rise above his own common sphere in life, and make for himself a name to which he could point with that pride and satisfaction which only a father's heart can feel, and say, "*He is my son!*" It had been his mother's wish that her son should become a great man,—not great in the ordinary sense of the term, but great in the good that he might do. Walter felt that he had, in some manner or to some extent, gratified their wishes; and he felt, in the warm grasp of the father's hand and in the affectionate embrace of the mother, the blessings they had unintentionally bestowed upon him. And when he met the obstinate though warm-hearted brother, with whom he had quarreled about the dreamer, and who was always telling him to cease his nonsensical and ridiculous ideas of looking at the stars and dreaming over the moon, he felt, in the grasp of *his* hand and the look in his face and in the tone of his voice, the pride and satisfac-

tion which filled his soul at the brilliant success which had crowned him.

But above and beyond all, he was more pleased with the consideration and love which was showered upon his wife, for they could not do too much for her and the children. Little Walter made up friends with Tom and grandpa, and Mrs. Ludwick, Sr., would scarcely let little Blanche go out of her arms. "She is the dearest little being," she would say, "that I ever saw in my life." Tom even condescended to take her in his arms, and said that she was indeed a beautiful little creature. And when night came and they gathered in the parlor to hear Blanche again sing and play, as she did the last time she had been there, they all felt—as her sweet voice filled the room—that their joy was a foretaste to that which is anticipated when we join the "ransomed" in heaven.

The next day Tom and Walter took a stroll to the village, and many were the old acquaintances they met; but sad he was to learn that many of the familiar faces of long ago had passed away and others had come in their stead. Of the Drayton family, he heard that Mrs. Drayton had died a year before. "She died peacefully," Dr. Patterson said, "trusting to the mercy of that divine Saviour who died that all might live. Her last words were, 'There is only one purpose of this life,—to prepare for death,—all else is vanity and vexation of spirit'; and then sank peacefully to sleep in the faith of him who saith, 'I am the truth, the life, and the way.'"

The girls recovered from their sorrow, and about a year afterwards Eva and William Montague were married. It was generally the opinion of every one that they would be married as soon as he graduated at the seminary.



## CHAPTER XVI.

The love that seems to light the heart  
 With joy and bliss entrancing,  
 Is but an ignis-fatuus lamp  
 Across the heather dancing.

ANON.

ONE evening Walter and Blanche were driven in the barouche to Dr. Patterson's, where they had been earnestly solicited by them to take tea. Lizzie was just as friendly as ever she was, but was a little pale and careworn. She had one little girl, who was not quite two years old. The doctor wore that same affable countenance that he always did; but his smiles were not so lively, nor his face so sunny as it had always been in the days gone by. Every time Walter had seen him since his return home, he thought he saw traces of grief and disappointment written in his face, which were not there the day he stood by his side at Claremont over three years ago. But he said nothing about it, concluding he would tell whatever it was, if he desired him to know it.

They had a very sumptuous supper,—fit for any king to sit down to. Whether Lizzie did the superintending of its preparation or not was easily decided in the negative, from the fact that the doctor had told Walter one evening, or the same evening he invited him to take tea with them, that he had a neat and excellent cook. So the real praise of the supper should be given to the cook, and not to his wife, for all she did was to tell her what to cook and how to arrange the table. The meal, however, was a good one, and they did it ample justice.

After tea was over and they had indulged in quite a general conversation, Walter said to his wife, or rather to both of them, "As the doctor is obliged to go to his office to prepare some prescriptions, I will go with him. We will then return when we think that you and Mrs. Patterson have finished talking over the scenes of long ago. I suppose you would not care to let us know what you were talking about."

They both laughed, and said their absence was quite desirable.

After they had gone to the office, and the doctor had finished writing his prescriptions, he handed Walter a cigar, and they went back to his private office, where they could look out on the green piazza and flowers that still were in full bloom.

Not long after they had been seated, the doctor said, "I have heard of your success, Walter, and now I would like to hear of your adversities, for we all had the impression here that you were not doing well or you would have written home often, and would have spoken more about your business. I was speaking of this to Tom one time, and he shook his head and said, 'There is something wrong, I am sure. I venture to say that his failure to succeed results more from that sometimes dreamy disposition of his than anything else. I have often reprimanded him for not checking and crushing it in the bud.' But when I saw him after you had mailed us the papers containing the account of the trial, he was very much pleased, and said he would now throw up the sponge, as he never should find any more fault with your dreaming about the stars, etc."

Walter was surprised at the unexpected manner in which his friend addressed him, and then commenced and narrated to him all the incidents connected with his married life; and he dwelt with a peculiar pride—a pride as only such a husband can feel for such a wife—on the heroism and fortitude of his wife. He also told him of the ten thousand dollars, and how it was disposed of, and then added, "But that saddest part of my life was to see my young wife toiling and working as hard, or harder, than any servant-girl I ever saw. I had nothing to do with dismissing the servant-girl; she was gone nearly a week before I knew it. Yet my wife, during all those dark days, worked heroically, and we never had an angry word except one time when I had every arrangement made to go home; but when this case of Minnie Hall engaged my attention, I told her how utterly impossible it was for me to go. She was so disappointed, as you know the best woman in the world would be, that she burst into tears and said 'that she must go.' As I was on my way to my office I thought how cruel it was to disappoint her so much, and so I made my arrangement to go, and by so doing did not return until near one o'clock.

"I had left lying on the dining-table some of her old letters,

W\*

written to me in her moments of enthusiasm before we were married, and I do not know what reformation or change they wrought; but when I came back I told her every arrangement was made to go, but she had changed her mind and admitted that she had acted very cruelly in wanting to tear me away when I had such an important case coming up. 'We will wait,' she said, 'until you have ample time.' Of course I was delighted, and now look back to that moment as the happiest in my life. This was the only little difficulty we ever had in our happy, and yet dark and adverse, married life. But now you see my success; you see that my future career is made. My practice increased tenfold the first month after this trial, and I am on the way to fortune and, it may be, fame. But the joy I feel for all this is nothing as compared to that when I look back into the past and see the pure love and heroism of my wife. Yes, as I now at this twilight hour look back to the last year of our life, and see how pale and careworn she was, yet when I would go into the house how she would spring up and, probably brushing a tear of sorrow away from her eyes, would throw her arms around my neck and kiss me as passionately as she did when our first love was in its full bloom; when I reflect how many hard days she had worked, and the many cares that must have been upon her young heart which she had never known before; as I remember how nobly, how heroically, she endured it all, even emerging from our adversity brighter and purer than before, if indeed that were possible, oh, my dear friend! the grandeur and sublimity of that great and noble soul rises up in such bewildering splendor that its beams shine far into the future, and I see away ahead of me the reflecting light shining from that almost angelic orb of glory by my side. You may think that I am probably too enthusiastic, as probably almost any husband who has a good wife is; but if you had just been with us, and passed through what we did, then you would not wonder that my love for her now almost amounts to an idolatry, which, perhaps, knowing the mortality of this life, is wrong, but which indeed I cannot help. You know the admiration one feels for a friend even who has stood by you in adversity and has proved himself faithful until at last you would emerge into the clear sunlight of prosperity. How much greater, then, must be that admiration for your own wife, who embodies all the glory and admiration of your very

soul! This is the way affairs stand at the present time, and can you blame me now for thinking that my wife is among the best women in the world?"

"But it seems strange to me that you did not write home for money, when all you would have had to do was to name the sum you desired."

Walter looked at him in some surprise, and then said, "I wonder, doctor, when you have known me so long, that you ask the question. My pride and dignity of soul would not let me do such a thing, for I would have almost starved first. Many a time I have almost cursed the spirit, and then have prayed that it might depart from me; but no adversity, however torturing and humiliating, would ever crush it out; and I now, and even in my darkest hours, feel that it was so much of a part of my being as life itself, and for which it seems nothing but death itself will ever extinguish. My wife shares this same spirit, for twice she told me she had taken up her pen to write home for money, but as often it fell from her fingers, and she rushed from the room. Thus you see our fates are linked together by the same impulses and motives and purposes of life, and we go along its journey hand-in-hand together, and thus share its shadows and sorrows, its sunshines and joys, whatever they may be. Her happiness is the predominant motive of my life, and to please me seems to be the single purpose of her heart."

When he had ceased, the doctor was silent. After a long while he drew a deep breath and looked, it seemed, away into space. Then turning to him, he said, "I do not wonder, my dear friend, that you look upon your wife as the pride and admiration of your soul. There is nothing that so enlists all the better angels of our nature as that which is inspired by one who has proven faithful through the fiery ordeal of affliction, and at last comes forth purified and even better than before. I can very well imagine the pure, deep, and boundless love you bear her, and to what you have just said I should add that she is a jewel much to be admired, but rarely to be found."

They were both silent again. There had a dark shadow crept over the doctor's face, which Walter did not notice until he looked up again and said, "I have a secret, Walter, that I have half a mind to tell you. I have revealed it to no living

being,—not even to my wife,—and I thought to carry it with me to the grave; but since I have met you now, I feel the shadows of other days creeping over me, and I feel the same confidence that always existed between us returning with strength. It seems to me now, if I could impart this secret to my bosom friend, and should thereby receive his consolation and sympathy, a great burden would be taken off my heart and the world would not look so dreary as it now does. It seems to me that my sorrow would then, to a certain extent, be shared by another. Of course I have known you too long to exact a promise of profound secrecy as to what I am going to tell you, and I will therefore pass that by. You would probably suppose, from what I have so often told you about my desire and longing for domestic life, that I must now indeed be happy; but it is truly the reverse, for I am the most miserable man living. There were never truer words uttered by any human being than those which you spoke the time that you delivered your discourse on matrimony to Dewitt Lu-Guere and myself, viz.:

*“For the social faculties when once disarranged, embitter every other pleasure of life.”*

“The fact is, I am miserable in my domestic relations, for I do not now and never can love my wife as I thought I did once. As I told you, one time I thought I understood the subject of marriage so well that I considered it impossible to be deceived or disappointed. I did not learn the lessons your words should have taught, and still retained the idea that the intellectual faculties had nothing to do with the affections of the heart. Love I considered as blind to everything else save that fascination which the very presence of the adored one inspired, and the consequence was that my intellectual faculties had nothing to do in the affair of our marriage at all. I was attracted by the beauty of Lizzie, who was, as you know, very gay and lively, and made a fine appearance in society. It seems to me now that, during our courtship, I was in a kind of blind, infatuated state of mind, so that if any one should have asked me why I loved Lizzie, I could not have told them. ‘Love is blind,’ I hear so many people say. I have not the least doubt that, if it were such love as mine, it would be completely blind indeed. I do really now pity the victims of such love from the bottom of my heart.

But we were both so imbued with this sickly and infatuated love, the consequence was that we were married, and after a tour with Dewitt Lu-Guere and his wife for a month in the South, we returned here and settled down to real life. Then it was, as always is the case with these love-sick matches, that, after the fine ideas and fairy notions of wedded life had worn away, and all the romance that was thrown around our courtship disappeared, that I could see how totally unsuited for each other we were. Then it was that my eyes were opened, and I could see the barrenness of her mind and the littleness of her soul, which was mostly filled up with the pleasure of dress; and when this desire was satisfied, she seemed generally happy. As an instance of the little of nobility of soul she had, you can observe when I state to you the startling fact that she was not contented with a house containing six large rooms, which I rented when we commenced housekeeping. She was always complaining that the house was not large and nice enough; and that she wanted a house of our own, so that the landlord would have nothing to do with it.

“In compliance with her wishes, and partially because I had contemplated building, I let the contract for the residence in which we now live, and which I consider a very fine one for a place of this size. It cost more than I had anticipated, and it was with difficulty that I could meet all my payments. I expressed this fact one time to her, with a hint that it would be well to cut down expenses, but there was not one sympathetic word escaped her lips; thus I was harassed all the time with the useless expense of a nurse and dining-room girl, and many other things which she could have greatly economized if she had desired. But I do not now care for the expenses, as my practice in the last year has increased greatly by reason of a very difficult operation I performed in surgery. I have had many great inducements to go to the city. I have not decided yet whether I will go or not. But she thinks no more of me for all this than if I was a mere pensioner on my father's bounty, or should have inherited all my wealth from a distant relative. So her wishes are gratified she is happy, and thinks I am the best man no doubt in all the world. Her intellect is very small, and she cannot appreciate any of the pleasures of science, of literature, or of the beauties of nature. There is

no doubt in my mind that should adversity come upon us, she would wither away like the tender plant before the scorching sun. Thus you see that while, in a worldly sense, I have everything that heart could wish, yet there is a void—a dreary, aching void—in my mental and social being that she can never fill. Oh, if I could but look back in the past as you can, and place my finger upon one heroic act, upon one redeeming attribute of soul, that would call forth my admiration; if I could call to my memory the time when I thought she was even willing to put her hand to the wheel of life and help roll it along; or if I could look back upon a time when by her cheerful smiles and encouraging words she lightened the burdens of life and cleared away the clouds that will ever and anon gather around the pathway of the most fortunate; yes, if I could behold her as you say,—a bright, shining star, ever beckoning me onward, a hand and heart ever willing to help me, a mind and soul full of sympathy and love,—oh, how I could take her up in my arms and almost worship her! I would then have a jewel worth possessing,—a treasure that all the wealth of Golconda could not buy.

"How poor and weak and meagre is that love of a woman for a man who has always been kept in luxury and who has not known one pang of adversity, compared with one who, as you say, has been your companion in vicissitudes of fortune and dreary hours of sorrow, but who has come through it all with a will and an energy that a hero might envy! But what is my position here to-night? Simply tied down with a shallow-brained woman, who has not one congenial thought, nor one enthusiastic and noble impulse of heart!"

"And does she know nothing of it?" inquired Walter.

"Nothing whatever. How could she? I never told her, —never told any one save yourself. I am reconciled to my fate, and of course it would be the greatest nonsense imaginable to bring our domestic troubles and difficulties into the world. I can tell you from experience that a man will almost do anything rather than give any one the least chance to glance behind the scenes for a view of his domestic relations. That is something of which he desires the world to know nothing, and he will keep it, if he is a gentleman of dignity and self-esteem, locked up in his own heart forever. But I am so disgusted with these hasty and love-sick marriages, that whenever

I hear of any of them occurring, involuntarily the words escape from my lips 'that one or the other has been victimized.' I am now thoroughly convinced of the truth and consistency of your position that you took several years ago, to which I have referred that the true basis of the marriage relation is that platonic love which you defined as being 'a pure spiritual affection subsisting between the sexes unmixed with carnal desires, and regarding the mind and heart only, and their excellences.' Ah, if I had but given some heed to these words, how well it would have been for me to-night! But, again: if my wife cared anything about music, it would cover a multitude of her faults; but, as it is, my grand piano, which she would insist on having after we were married, more for appearance than anything else, stands there, and is scarcely now ever opened, save when some of my friends come who are excellent musicians. Music would drive a mountain of cares away from my mind. She could and did play some when we were married, but, like so many other young wives, she has completely forgotten it now."

"You just recall to mind," interrupted Walter, "the most singular and astounding fact that so few ladies play the piano, —that wonderful instrument that is so popular and whose strains are so sweet and soul-stirring. To think in their education that they give it so little attention is to me a matter of the most profound astonishment and regret. Music! Who can estimate its power and effect? Even the untutored savage is held entranced by its sweet strains. When the mind is burdened with care, when the body is worn out with business, and some cherished project in our worldly affairs has failed which blights and crushes our hopes, how the weary heart is lifted up and cheered by the heavenly strains of music! How the husband's heart, on his return home, weary and careworn, would be gladdened to hear his wife strike up a cheerful tune on the piano! She would thus throw a halo of joy and sunshine around him that would make her a lucid orb in his house priceless as all the gold of the Orient."

The doctor looked at him for a few moments in silence, and then softly and mournfully said, "Oh, I know, my dear friend, that you speak from experience. I can very well imagine what a supreme joy and admiration must fill your heart when you look back over the past and realize the fact that the one

you most love has proven faithful, and has stood by you in your dark hours of adversity, and never once wavered in her love and devotion to you. It seems to me, if she did stand by you as you have just awhile ago stated, and which I do not doubt in the least, that if your devotion for her now would not almost amount to idolatry, it seems to me that you would not deserve the name of a man, and that your very existence should be blotted out." Then straightening himself up, he continued, in his usual tone: "I have often thought about your objection to persons of different dispositions ever marrying. I was disposed at the time to disagree with you, but I perceive the folly of it now. In some instances it might probably do, but it is an exceedingly dangerous experiment. Talent, and anything below mediocrity, should never marry. How can any one who is not educated be a companion of any one who is? How can an educated and talented man have a companion in the form of a shallow-brained woman? (Or, how can a talented and accomplished woman have a companion in a block-headed man?) On the same basis, then, we may ask, how can one ill-natured and passionate being make another of a good and mild disposition happy and contented? Why, it is the most ridiculous thing in the world! And yet I have heard hundreds of people assert that it is the only true basis of the marriage relation. And, again: is it not strange how really little the young ladies of the present day endeavor to cultivate their minds? Some, or, I may say, the great majority of them, go away to school, and come back with less sense than when they started. I have noticed my wife's friends spend half their time in dressing and painting and powdering, until I would become so disgusted with their vanity that I have often of an evening put on my hat and left the house. There is no end of the utter ridiculousness of their dresses. They would have a bundle, as it were, stuck on behind them, and would go pinching along as though they were walking on thistles. They never endeavored to accustom themselves to an easy and graceful and queenly manner of walking."

Walter laughed outright at the manner in which he spoke, and then said, "All-you say is very true. I have never felt so much pained as when I sit down beside a lady to converse with her and can notice at the same time the scales, as it were, of powder and paint on her face. The poor, simple, and de-

luded mortals! To what depths of ignorance and stupidity must their minds have fallen, if they think that any true gentleman could admire any such imagined beauty! And then, when they are on the streets, what a ridiculous figure they make! There is scarcely any finer accomplishment a lady can have than an easy and graceful gait, and yet you will not see one out of a hundred who will give the subject any consideration. If you observe a lady who has a good mind and who is educated, it is very seldom that she ever paints or powders. There may, perhaps, be some few exceptions, but they are very rare indeed, for they have better accomplishments to go on than a pretty face. A man who marries for a pretty face will be wretched, ninety-nine cases out of a hundred."

"I have often been ashamed of myself when I think of the time I have passed with young ladies whose only accomplishment was small-talk, and who could not for five minutes at a time carry on a sensible conversation. So few of them read anything but some sickly, romantic love-stories, that it is impossible, let them desire ever so much, to have anything to talk about. I tell you what it is, Walter, life is too short to spend it with such ladies. Had I my life to live over again, I would pass them by entirely."

"I never feel so bored with such ladies," Walter replied, "as when I am first introduced to them. When I become well acquainted, I can always find enough nonsense to talk about, and make them laugh; but I never did like to make myself so familiar with a lady, on my first acquaintance, by such nonsensical jokes. Yet, when she does not know very much, and therefore can say but a very little, I find myself always in a very embarrassing position. But what a sweet treat it is, when you are introduced to a lady, to realize that she is so intelligent that you will have no difficulty at all in carrying on a conversation! I always thank my stars that I have been so fortunate. But, as it is growing late, we had better return, as they expected us home before this time." As they arose to go, he continued: "I am exceedingly sorry, my dear friend, if you are unhappy in your domestic relations. I can very well imagine the dark shadows that, in such a case, hang over your pathway. To me, I could not picture anything more miserable than if I were not happy in my home circle. There is not a sorrow through which I have passed that I would willingly

erase from my memory, for in every sorrow I perceive the heroic soul and priceless heart of my wife,—the recollection of which is dearer than anything in the wide world. I thought and felt convinced, my dear friend, when I heard of your marriage, that you had made a mistake, but it did not surprise me much when I considered the notions and ideas you had always had of the marriage relation. But there is one thing I must say that I admire,—your good sense and judgment in keeping your sorrows and domestic troubles from the world. The man or the woman who would willingly do so must be a poor, miserable being, and should receive the reproach and condemnation of the world. I never could imagine that kind of dignity that must be in the husband or wife who would give the eager and curious public a chance to glance in at their domestic life. Of all people in the world, they should be the last to say one word that would ever lead to the least suspicion that there was anything unpleasant in their domestic relations."

Nothing more of much importance was said, and the two bosom friends walked leisurely to the doctor's residence, where their wives were waiting for them. The doctor said that he heard so much about Mrs. Ludwick's musical accomplishments that he must hear her play and sing. Of course she complied with his request, and played him some of her finest instrumental pieces, and then sang a very lovely song. He expressed himself as very much delighted with the music, and thanked her very kindly for it. Soon after this, Mr. Ludwick's barouche drove up, and they took their departure for home.

## CHAPTER XVII.

The joys of marriage are the heaven on earth,  
Life's paradise, great princess, the soul's guest,  
Sinews of discord, earthly immortality,  
Eternity of pleasure.

JOHN FORD.

AFTER leaving Riverbank, they went immediately to visit Mr. and Mrs. Lu-Guere, at their beautiful home on the Hudson. How much they were rejoiced to see each other can better be imagined than told, and therefore I leave to the reader's imagination to portray a scene that would require too much space in this book.

Toward the last of the week, Tom Ludwick arrived at Mr. Lu-Guere's, and remained over Sabbath with them. On the following Monday morning, Walter and Blanche took their departure, amid tears of regret and sorrow, for their own home in the Garden City of the West, accompanied by Tom, who intended to remain a fortnight with them.

They found things about as they had left them. Minnie and Mrs. Hall had kept the house clean, and there was no perceptible change whatever. When Walter went to his office, he found his clerk busy transacting business and answering letters. Then when he had finished he handed Walter a brief of the business that he had transacted. As it was near supper-time, he put it in his pocket, and he and Tom returned home, after stating that he would not return till morning.

Tom was with him nearly all the time. In his office, he was busy from morning till night. The papers generally gave a notice of his return in their local columns, and the result was that many old clients and friends called to see him, and also many new clients came on legal business. When he would return home in the evening, it was a pleasant and beautiful picture to see them sitting around their own fireside. Walter generally brought his letters with him, and answered them after tea. Blanche would take the daily paper and read over the news, and thus keep herself thoroughly posted on the current events of the day. Then she would take up some literary

work and resume the reading; at other times she would finish her embroidery; and at other times she would sew and attend to her domestic arrangement; and when a Saturday night would come, she would take up her *Harper's Weekly*, and as she would glance over its pages, a feeling of refreshing delight would inspire her soul. And when Walter would have his letters answered, or had laid down the paper, he would ask her to play the last music he had purchased her. She would go to the piano and play and sing with infinite delight. Little Walter was always busy doing something, either with playthings or his letters printed on blocks of wood; or would take his book and interest his father by reading out of it such things as he had memorized by hearing his mother repeat them. Little Blanche—the dear, precious jewel!—whose angelic beauty was the delight of every heart—was lying in her cot peacefully and sweetly sleeping. Then when they had surfeit of music, Blanche would sit down, and they would talk over some scene of the past, and then look hopefully to the future.

Thus passed the two weeks during Tom's visit, and it is needless to say that he was delighted. He and little Walter had become great favorites, for they were almost constantly together. One afternoon, when the two brothers were sitting alone in the office, after Walter had just finished up some business for a wealthy client, Tom said, in his usual manner, "I see now that you have an eye to business, and I am convinced that your reputation is not very much over-estimated. I just thought I would come out here and stay a fortnight, to see whether you let your dreamy moments interfere with your business. But I have realized the fact that those dreamy sentiments of which I reproached you so often have disappeared, and you have now a sharp eye to business, and intend to make all the money you can."

Walter laughed, and said he thought he would never cease to talk about money-making. Nothing more was said until the evening previous to his departure. After Blanche and the children had retired, Tom said, sadly,—yes, mournfully,—“I see now, my dear brother, the great mistake I have made,—a mistake which can hardly, if ever, be rectified. I censured you in my own mind, and also expressed to you my dissatisfaction in your getting married until you had established a business; but I see now how right you were, and

how utterly wrong I was myself. I have money now, to be sure, and have had these many years; but to get a congenial wife is quite another matter. You know that there was a time when I could have married well, but I was too proud to do so until I was wealthy. That day in which I loved that lady has gone by; and I have now reached that age in my life when I do not think it will ever return. Perhaps during these latter years, after I had become established in business, it would have been well for me to have given the subject some attention, or else have gazed upon the stars and carried ladies bouquets of flowers, if that is the way you obtained your wife. But it is useless in talking about this now. I have only to say that I have, as you know, money; but where is my happiness? Alas! it is something I doubt if I will ever experience. There is no real happiness in the world outside of domestic life. There may be a semblance of it, but after all it turns out to be a fleeting shadow. At my age now, and with my experience of human nature, it is almost impossible to get a wife who would be congenial. From your domestic life, I now see the folly of the ideas I always advanced, that a man only wants in a wife a good cook, and one who will keep his domestic affairs in order. I see now how sweet a treat a wife is who can be a companion to you. I can now very well tell the reason that you have left the many social clubs to which you belonged and came home to spend your evenings with your family. Yes, this is true happiness,—that supreme, unalloyed happiness which exists in no other place on this green earth."

Walter was very much surprised when he heard his brother speak thus, and it touched the finer feelings of his heart as he realized that he was not happy. After some reflection, he said, "You and I did not really differ so much in the question of early marriage as my position would infer. It was always my belief, and in some respects still is, that a man should be in an established business before he marries, or even thinks of it. But in this matter of love and its long train of tributaries, I am often reminded by a remark of my wife 'that in an affair of love each human heart is a world of its own,' and therefore I find, even now, the marriage relation to be more of a mystery to me than ever before. When I see so much sorrow where one would imagine joy, I feel that I am more mystified

than ever. In my own case, I was over-persuaded by my own wife to marry at the time I did, when I could give her no other reason for the delay other than the want of a paying business pursuit. Many a time during the dark hours of my adversity I have rued the day I married, for the reason that I no doubt caused my wife great sorrow and unhappiness. But now I rejoice that it was so, and also rejoice that Heaven sent the adversity through which we passed, for I can now look back upon the past and realize the fact that I have, as I have often expressed it before, 'a jewel in my home priceless as all the wealth of the Orient.' This alone is the brightest recollection of my life, and makes her the morning star of my memory. So then, I would say in regard to these early marriages—it all depends on the kind of wife you get. If she be one who is willing to share your sorrows and adversities, as well as your joys and prosperities, then you will be happy indeed, and will look back to that time as the most auspicious moment of your life. Otherwise it will be the darkest and most dreadful day of your existence, and your future life will be nothing but foreshadowings of untold misery. It is all so much of a mystery and so very uncertain, that I cannot tell whether you did wrong in not getting married at the time to which you refer or not; but I will say that you have done wrong in devoting all your time to the pursuit of gain, instead of giving the subject of matrimony some consideration. But I will say further, that you do also wrong in thinking that there is no hope of your ever retrieving your great neglect. You have a long life before you yet, and may experience many years of domestic happiness. I would, therefore, impress on your mind this ever-memorable saying, 'Hope on, hope ever!'

Tom did not dissent from what he said. On the next morning he bid them good-by, and took his departure for his own home.

And thus we leave this young, happy family. Years may pass away before we shall see them again; but who will say that there will be any perceptible change in their love for each other? Ah! methinks I hear no voice raised, but a voice instead which says that where platonic love is the basis of the marriage relation there *can* be no unhappiness."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.  
THE BIBLE.

How fruitless and profitless the attempt of any human being to take in his own hands the prerogative of God himself! Man may indeed desire and, in fact, achieve the revenge he seeks, but when or where does the anticipated joy come from its achievement? After all his long labors and cherished hopes of being avenged, he finds that even when he has succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations his victory is but as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." Ten chances to one his soul is filled with a sense of shame and degradation, and sometimes dark and unfathomable remorse. It is always so when a man oversteps his province, or trespasses on that which belongs to, and is reserved by, the most high God himself.

A sickening and aching sensation of having done wrong filled the heart of Augustus Belmont when he saw his revenge complete. For ten long years this had been the ruling passion of his soul, and at last victory perched upon his banner, and he felt its first sweet whispering of joy. One time after they had moved into their little cottage he met Fannie in the depot alone, and as he passed her he whispered, loud enough for her to hear him, "Revenge is sweet," and passed on, only noticing the flushed cheek and weakening and fainting aspect in her whole appearance. All the agony and misery of her whole soul was so stirred up, and she felt so utterly exasperated and so forlorn, that she sank down on the first seat and covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

Yes, Augustus Belmont, thou hast been wonderfully and fearfully avenged. When a young lady loses her honor, the last vestige of respect and admiration is swept away, and there is scarcely any hope of redemption to that position from which she has fallen. It was impossible to keep the story of her reception of Dewitt Lu-Guere from the public, and hence it was



generally known in the social circles why she had discarded him. And while there were those who denounced him and Mr. Belmont for doing so, yet almost in the same breath they said, "It served her right." He had invented the wrong, but she perfected it, and its perfection was the downfall of herself. For after this was made known, the gentlemen who had admired her before now turned away in disgust, and the gallants she had were few and far between, and she was, even in her mansion, with all the enticements of wealth, left solitary and alone. But even yet the hand of fate was still raised, ready to strike another fearful blow; and when at last it came down with all its gathered strength and utterly crushed and blighted the last hope to which she clung,—the pride and prestige of wealth,—it was too much, and her sinews relaxed, her hand weakened, her heart throbbed, and she felt that the end of all things had come. Broken down in body and spirit, she turned away from the friends she had always loved, and was scarcely if ever seen in the streets.

Augustus Belmont saw all this, and he felt that he had in some manner been the real cause of her losing that which nothing else could give back,—her honor. "For," said many men of character and ability, "where is the honor of a lady who will cast away the loved one of her heart merely because the winds of adversity have but too strongly and fiercely blown around him and swept away, without any fault of his own, the fortune which he had thought would make her happy?" Thus this act of hers was universally condemned, and those who respected her heretofore now passed her by with a mere nod of the head. Mr. Belmont saw how fearfully he had been avenged, but where was the promised relief? He had thought, as he once expressed himself to Dewitt, that if he could but see her humbled he would then feel happy and contented. But his most sanguine expectations, through a strong fatality, had been more than realized, and now he felt more miserable and more unhappy than ever before. When he was deeply reflecting over the matter one evening, and realized, it seemed for the first time in his life, that the cruel fashion of this revenge had been upon a poor, frail girl, who really at best had nothing in this world but her honor, he felt so utterly miserable that he almost cursed the day that he had been born. Yes, ever and anon he would exclaim, in the deepest agony of his soul, "Where now is my

contentment and happiness? Where is the promised relief?" But echo only answered, Where? and he sank into deeper and more agonizing grief and sorrow.

At one time, when he was thus brooding over all the troubles of his stormy and tempestuous life, the almost prophetic words of Blanche, on the day of the excursion to the Haunted Falls, came ringing in his ears like some solemn monitor of the past: "I am surprised, I am amazed, to find such a disposition in a man whom I always admired so much! You, who are so eloquent in the cause of truth and justice! You, who endeavor, I am told, to point your clients in the right path of duty! Who are so gifted in mind and prosperous in wealth, and all that heart can wish,—are you not surprised yourself, when you consider that you are pursuing a delusive phantom,—striving to accomplish a something from which you would advise your best friend to desist, to abandon, if he wished to be a man? You say your life is a wreck! Oh, believe me, it is not! If it be so, you have made it so yourself. Turn your eyes to the Cross! There you will find a balm for every wound. Approach with clean hands and a pure heart the Holy Evangelist, and he will wash all your sins and cares and troubles away. Oh, my dear friend, look to Calvary! You have a great work there. Look on the brazen serpent, and be healed."

Yes, as these prophetic words came ringing in his ears, and pierced the inmost recesses of his soul, he felt how weak and sinful he had been, and he bowed his head in deep and sincere repentance to Him who said, "Cast your burdens on me, and I will bear them for you," and offered a sincere prayer for the forgiveness of the sins he had so often committed.

Being worn out in both mind and body, he concluded to take his long-contemplated tour around the world. To this end he arranged his business and gave his office in charge of a good and reliable attorney, and perfected every arrangement for an absence of two years. And then on one mild day in September he bade farewell to his host of friends and turned his face towards the Pacific coast,—the land of gold. He always thought he would like to see this great country bordering on the wondrous deep, and at last, when he found himself in its great metropolis, the brightest anticipations of its beauty were more than realized; and he made up his mind, after

forming many whole-souled friends, that he would remain a month and enjoy its beautiful climate.

But there is only one incident in his life here to which I desire to refer. One day when he was in the drawing-room of the hotel, he was glancing over some old papers which the landlord had laid on the table.

His eyes by chance fell on an editorial entitled *Lineal Gray*. The name sounded indeed familiar to him, and with a beating heart he read the editorial through. After some deep reflection he was convinced in his heart that he was the same Lineal Gray who had married Ina Clayton,—his own Ina, whom he had once loved, yes, still loved! And when he looked at the date of the paper, was surprised to learn that it bore the date of two years ago.

It is needless to portray the anxiety that filled his heart to know where his widow lived, and the utmost exertion he made to find her. He ascertained how fruitless it was to endeavor to trace out her present residence, even if she were still in the city; and to make her discovery certain, he employed two sharp, keen detectives, and they went to work in earnest. After a fortnight's search they found out where she lived, and one of the detectives, to convince himself beyond the possibility of a doubt that they were right, went into the house and conversed with her himself. He also ascertained the fact that they were in stringent circumstances.

Mr. Belmont paid his detectives and thanked them for the assistance they had rendered him. The difficulty or barrier which now loomed up before him was, how to ascertain her feelings towards him, and then, how to introduce himself; for they had never met since he turned his back upon her, and left her weeping on the sofa.

For days and nights he studied over this problem, and at last he hit on this idea,—knowing her fondness for music and literature, he concluded to purchase some of the finest music, together with some of the favorite songs she used to play and sing for him, and also some of her favorite authors, and then enter the house in the disguise of a book peddler. The more he thought about this, the more he was convinced that it would be a success. To this end he entered a second-hand clothing establishment the next day, and purchased a suit very much becoming that of a peddler, and ordered it to be

sent to his hotel. He then went to the music-store, and, after considerable difficulty, selected the music he desired, and then went to a book-store and selected some of her favorite authors, and directed them to be sent to his hotel.

The next afternoon as he stepped from the hotel with his carpet-sack in his hand, he was so completely disguised that the most intimate friend could scarcely have known him. He walked briskly along the street, and at last, when he entered the gate and rapped on the door for admission, his heart throbbed as though it would leap from his bosom. Finally the door was opened by a little girl about eight years old, who, in a very pleasant voice, invited him in. After showing him a seat, she excused herself, and said that she would tell her mamma that a stranger wanted to see her. When she returned, she said her mamma would be in in a few moments, as she had just returned from giving a music-lesson.

He had thus an opportunity of looking around him, by which he observed some few relics of former prosperity, but which now but too plainly spoke the sad tale of adversity and poverty. The chairs, once, no doubt, beautiful, were old, and bore the traces of long-continued use, without being replaced by new ones, and also were the other few articles of furniture in the room. The piano, however, was well preserved, and stood there in painful contrast with the balance of the furniture.

He was thus sitting almost lost in reverie, when the door was timidly opened, and the being he once fondly loved entered almost noiselessly, made her obeisance, and took her seat near the window.

Mr. Belmont's heart quivered and his whole frame trembled from top to toe. He was almost unable to speak, for there sat before him the only being he had ever truly loved,—yes, his first pure love,—slightly pale and careworn, showing a face over which a great grief had gone; but, with all, as beautiful and as fascinating as before. Recovering his self-possession, in a trembling voice he said, "I have some very fine selections of music here which I wish you to examine. I would like to sell you some of them should they please you." He then handed her several waltzes. After she had looked at them, he handed her a couple of songs, and then, when she had looked at them, he handed her the song she had sung for him

an hundred times, as he said, "There is a song that I very much admire, for I think the sentiment is so rich and the harmony so exquisite."

As she took the song and glanced at the name, a shiver ran over her, and she leaned back as if some acute pain had pierced her heart. Then, as the blood rushed to her face, she put her hand to her forehead as if to quiet and ease a dizziness there, which seemed to tell her that she was almost fainting. To relieve the embarrassment that she no doubt would feel when she would observe that he no doubt noticed her confusion, Mr. Belmont commenced to take out some of his books, saying at the same time that he had some very fine literary works. Thus her confusion passed away without her being compelled to make any explanation.

After she had looked at them all, he said, "Now, madam, I would like to sell you some of this music, for I know I can sell it to you cheaper than you can buy it elsewhere."

She looked up to him sadly and sorrowfully enough, still holding this song in her hand, as she said, "I would be glad to have some of your music and literary works, but it is impossible for me to pay for them. My quarterly rent was due this morning, and it took all the change I had to pay it." And then looking at the song, she continued: "I would like, though, to have this song. I used to sing it, but I lost it many years ago, and have never seen it until now. If you will please tell me the price, I may find enough to pay for it."

He named the price, and then she told her little daughter to bring her mamma's pocket-book, with which she complied; and, after taking out all there was in it, she turned to her daughter and said, "I will have to borrow some money from your box, my child, but I will give it back to you this week again." The little child ran and got her box, and she took therefrom the number of pennies that she desired, and then handed it to the peddler.

The incident was so touching and so peculiar that it affected Mr. Belmont very much, and he wiped a few tears away that would force their way to his eyes. The being he once so devotedly loved—ay, still loved—reduced to such poverty and want! It filled his soul with sorrow.

After he had placed his books away, he said, "I see, ma'am, that you have a piano, and would you pardon me if I should

ask you to sing that song you have just purchased? It is indeed a favorite of mine, and you know that the poor peddler very seldom has the opportunity of hearing a lady sing."

Her heart being touched with that sympathy so natural among the poor, she arose and took her seat at the piano; and as her fingers ran tremblingly over the keys he thought of the sweet days of the past, when he sat listening to the self-same song under circumstances, oh, so different!

She sang the first two stanzas very sweetly, but when she commenced on the third,—the sweetest of them all,—she threw her whole soul into the sentiment of the song, and when she had finished it she silently took her handkerchief and wiped a few tears away that would persist in rolling down her cheek. When she turned around she was surprised to see her auditor looking vacantly upon the floor, while a few tears were rolling down his cheek. He brushed them away shortly after the music ceased, and, with averted face, said, "That song is so expressive that it quite overcomes me when I hear it. You sing it with that whole-souled expression which I have seldom, if ever, heard before."

She was too much affected herself to make any reply. A little while later, as he was glancing over the table, he saw some literary works, and said, "Would you pardon me if I should look at some of your literature?" And as he picked up a copy of "Gray's Elegy," he said, "Here is a very finely illustrated work; I very much admire your taste in literature."

"Yes," she faintly and tremblingly said; "that is a present from a very dear friend of mine whom I have not seen for years, but whom I still, notwithstanding some sad scenes, hold in dear remembrance."

The words pierced his very heart's core as he realized that it was the very copy he had presented her. He laid it down, while his face was as white as death, and to cover or conceal his agitation he commenced to pack up his music, while his mind was almost whirling around with the embarrassment of his position. Would he make himself known right then and there? This was the agonizing question in his mind.

He had everything packed, and was standing in the threshold with hand on the door, now looking on the floor in painful anxiety and dreadful suspense. Twice he had the words on his lips to pronounce her name, but his tongue failed him, and

his next impulse was to now go out through the door which his own hand had opened. But he again paused and looked around to her, as he said, "I am surprised at myself when I think that I was about going away without thanking you for singing me that song." Then, without giving her time to reply, he closed the door, and on returning to the room from whence they came, he impulsively said, as he hurriedly commenced to open his carpet-sack, "And besides thanking you, I must make you a present of this copy of Tennyson, which you said you admired so much."

As he handed it to her, she modestly said, "I could not in honor accept your book for the slight remuneration of singing you a song. Besides, believe me that the song gave me quite as much pleasure as it did yourself."

Something surprised, and now driven to the very verge of anxiety and suspense, he handed her some music with the same request, but she shook her head and said, "Nay." Then he handed her another book and implored her to take it, but she as persistently refused. Then taking the whole carpet-sack of books in both hands and handing them to her, while his face was burning with the confusion that filled his soul, he exclaimed, almost at the top of his voice, "*Then, if you will not take what I have offered you, take them all, for, Ina Clayton, I am Augustus Belmont, of Claremont!*"

The shock was so sudden, and so unlooked for that she fell almost fainting in the chair near which she was standing, and throwing her arms on the table, she rested her face on them, while the boiling tears rushed from her eyes so that she could not utter a word. Mr. Belmont, tearing off his disguise, rushed to her side, and, raising her almost fainting form, encircled his arm around her waist and pressed her affectionately to his heart while he passionately kissed away the tears that rolled down her cheeks.

After she had become calm and looked in his face again, undisguised, and saw that it was her Augustus of the days gone by, she rested her head on his manly bosom as she murmured, through her tears, "At last! at last!"

But little more is to be said. The past was explained, and when he told her how he had suffered and how he still loved her, she said she was satisfied, and on the following week they were married without any ceremony worth mentioning. It

was their first impulse to return home, but when Mr. Belmont took a second thought he said, "Why should we return home when I have made my preparations to be gone two years? Besides, I see you are pale and careworn, and I know a voyage on the ocean wave would be the life of you and would bring back to your face the freshness and beauty of youth."

She, of course, was satisfied with this, and after he mailed several papers to Walter and Dewitt and many other friends, containing a notice of their marriage, they made preparations for their tour around the world.

He left an order, after having taken the measures, for a complete wardrobe of the costliest character, and when she had one suit on she looked like a queen.

Little Birdie, when her mother told her that this was her new papa, who would never leave her any more, threw her little delicate arms around his neck and cried for joy.

In a fortnight from the day of their marriage they embarked on the "Baltic," and turned their faces for the distant lands across the briny deep; and as the last glimpse of their native land faded from their straining eyes they still felt that they could be happy in any clime, since the same love that had filled their youthful hearts came back, and that they would now never be separated again.

And may joy continue with the happy pair forever.

## CHAPTER XIX.

For there is no disparity in marriage so great as unsuitability in mind and purpose.

CHARLES DICKENS.

As was announced in a previous chapter, the rumor in general circulation that Charles Spencer and Grace Murdoch would be married, proved true; and, when it was least expected, the Spencer barouche drove up one day to their little cottage, and Charles Spencer and his father and little sister and the clergyman alighted and went into the house. As soon as the

ceremony was performed, they came out, with Grace leaning on Mr. Spencer's arm, and got into the barouche again, and were driven to the depot, where they took the Eastern-bound express on their wedding-tour.

People, or those who had anything to say about the match, pronounced it a good one; but there were others who shook their heads and thought it very doubtful. I am inclined to say, for several substantial reasons, that the match *was* a good one, and yet it was accompanied with some very singular circumstances, the most prominent of which was the utter absence of those gushings of joy with which the marriage-day is hailed. Charles, up to the morning of their marriage, was almost constantly at his office, and Grace, up to within a few weeks, continued to give her music-lessons; and, beyond the necessary preparations for the wedding, gave it but little thought or consideration.

It is difficult to tell or explain the cause of this singular and, to a certain extent, unnatural feeling on this most momentous and important subject. There was scarcely a fault in the life or character of Grace upon which the most fastidious could lay his finger, other than that cold and unimpassioned nature which had been caused by the blunting of her affections. When in her presence, almost any one felt that she was in one sense an iceberg which froze, or at least chilled, the atmosphere all around her. It was seldom, if ever, she was known to take up a little child and kiss and caress it. Such a thought never entered her mind or heart. Yet, notwithstanding all this, one was pleased and, to a certain extent, delighted in her society. She had read so much that she could converse on almost any subject; and her musical accomplishments were so great and perfect that there was scarcely a new piece of music published which she could not readily play after some practice. But her blighted and wilted affections were the only, or, at least, main deficiency in her whole being; and for this her mother is to blame. Yes, there is now being meted out to her that fearful retribution which, sooner or later, every mother will receive for the manner in which they raise up their daughters.

When Grace was ten years old, there was not a more promising or fairer young girl in the land, and up to the age of fourteen she was all that any fond mother could desire. It was at that age her good common sense began to exert itself, and,

seeing the extravagance and folly of her elder sister, she, in a kind and gentle manner, mentioned the fact to her mother, but only met with that abuse now too well known to the reader. There was none at home upon whom she could bestow her affections except her father; but he was in her presence so little, that she felt that she was alone in the world, and that no one cared anything for her. Not being allowed to go from home except on rare occasions, the affections of her soul were thus so stunted and blighted that she grew void of that warm and gushing nature which would have made her a shining light in any household in the land. And when her father died, that last tie which bound her here on earth was suddenly broken, and since then she has only been filling a sphere which her good sense and judgment denominated her duty. In thus supporting her mother, she knew that she was doing right; and in this she was happy, and never gave the future one anxious thought. In her face one could see a cold, hard look, which only once in awhile, when she smiled, passed away, and for the time being it threw a halo of sunshine around her. But in the next moment all was darkness again, for the same raven shadows came over her face again.

When Mr. Spencer proposed to her, she looked at it in a business-like manner, and, after studying the matter over, told him one evening that she accepted his suit. He expressed himself as being pleased, and in a very business-like manner they agreed upon their wedding-day, and neither thought very much about the affair until the time arrived. After they were married, they started on a wedding-tour for a month. When they returned they commenced housekeeping in his father's house, and lived, to all outward appearance, a happy and contented life.

A year of their married life passed away without any perceptible change, and during all this time they never seemed to get into the confidence of each other. Charles attended to his business in the store, while she attended to hers in the house, and thus matters moved on pleasantly enough, though there was no communion of soul with soul; and they did not look hopefully to the future together. Each one took their own way, and there never was a cross word passed between them. But when something more than a year had passed away a child was born, and then their relations changed.

They both felt that new channels of their souls heretofore unknown had been awakened, and they found a treasure which both could mutually love and adore. From this day forward they were more in each other's presence and thought more of each other than they had ever done in the past.

A few months after this child was born, Grace was driven down to her mother's, and she found them very sad and discontented. They had just eaten dinner, and now Fannie said that she had to commence to wash the dishes. Her mother was not very well, but she said that she was compelled to finish the dress she had commenced, for the lady was in a great hurry, and would call for it the next day.

Grace's heart, when she saw how sad and lonely they were, was touched, and after giving them some money, as she always did, she took her departure with tears in her eyes; something that, up till the time her child was born, she had not shed for years.

Mr. Spencer had been for some time talking about building a most magnificent dwelling, but his wife never said anything that tended to show that she was pleased with the prospect of a new and magnificent mansion. One evening, when they were sitting alone, he said, "I have been speaking so much about a new house, but you say nothing, and it seems to me that you do not care whether I build one or not. I thought that it would so please you, but it seems that you care nothing about it."

Grace looked up at him in a very surprised manner, as she said, "I never once thought, Charles, that you were building the house, or intended to build it, to please me. It cannot be possible that you would go to that expense and trouble just to gratify my wishes! Now," she said, with a smile, "to prove to you beyond a doubt that you are only jesting and would not do so to gratify my wishes, I will tell you that there is something else you could do which would please me far more than to build a new house. It has been on my mind for the last year, but I could never work up courage enough to ask you. Now, before I make known to you my request, tell me whether you will grant it or not?"

He looked at her face in silence, and then kindly said, "Of course, Grace, I would grant you any reasonable request that you may ask. Now tell me, and see for yourself."

"Then my request," she sorrowfully said, "is, that you purchase our old homestead and furnish it as elegantly as it was, and then let Fannie and mother move therein and give them so much per month, so that they will not have to work and slave any more like they have done for the last five years. Now," she said, after a short pause, when she saw him reflecting on the question, "I knew you would not grant my request, and was only jesting before when you spoke about desiring to please me."

Charles, whose heart was touched with the feelings which animated her soul, looked in her face lovingly, as he said, "I was not reflecting, my dear wife, whether to grant your request or not. I was only wondering why you had kept it locked up in your own heart for one whole year without your telling me. Of course I will grant your request, and will go right to Mr. Burbank's to-morrow and purchase the house at any price, and furnish it in the best style imaginable."

Scarcely had he ceased speaking until she was by his side, and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him passionately, while the tears were streaming down her cheeks. And when she had become something calmer, she exclaimed, "Oh, my dear husband, I did not think you loved me half so much as I now see that you do. From this time forward I will be a different kind of a wife than I have been; and hereafter, when you come home, perhaps tired and weary, you will see the face of your little wife all sunshine, and she will throw around you a halo of glory that you never will forget."

Charles Spencer's heart was touched, and he mingled his tears with hers. They both were so happy that they did not know at the time whether it was real or not.

But their hearts were now open to each other, and thus there sprung up between them a mutual confidence that tended to make them love each other the more, and they walked along the journey of life hand-in-hand together.

Charles Spencer, true to his word, purchased the old homestead the next day, and possession was to be delivered to them in a month. The sale was kept quiet, so that no one but the parties themselves knew anything about it. After they had moved out, the house was beautifully furnished by some parties whom the gossips did not know.

It was near the Christmas-time, when Grace was driven to

her mother's one afternoon, and told her she would have the barouche sent down to bring them up to take dinner with them. With tears in her eyes, Fannie replied that she was very glad to get out of their little hut a short time. "But, then," she said, "it is so tiresome when we come back again. Oh," she exclaimed, "it is perfectly dreadful!" If Grace had not known what awaited them she would have felt very sorry, but as it was, she said nothing, and soon took her departure.

On Christmas noon Charles and Grace were driven down to the old homestead. After they had alighted, the servant drove to the cottage and took in Mrs. Murdoch and Fannie, who were perfectly delighted when they sat down on the soft, velvety cushions. But they were very much surprised when they were approaching the old homestead; but they were more surprised when they saw their old porter open the gate to let them drive in. When they stopped in front of the steps, the door was thrown open, and this same old porter, whose head was now almost white, helped them out, and they went up the steps and opened the door, where they met Charles and Grace. They were dumfounded, and could scarcely say a word. When the dinner-bell rang and they went out to the old dining-room, where the same old dusky maid was in attendance, there was that supreme amazement written on their faces which no language of mine can portray. But when all was over, and they had returned to their elegantly-furnished parlor again, and when Grace had explained to them how it was to be their home as long as they lived, and that they would never have to work any more, the transition from the hovel of poverty to the palace of prosperity was so great that poor Mrs. Murdoch sank down exhausted in her seat and murmured a prayer of thanksgiving,—something she had scarcely done in her life before. But Fannie's enthusiasm knew no bounds. She threw her arms around Grace and kissed her time and again. Then she threw her arms around Charles and kissed him, and then she aroused her mother from her stupor and kissed her, and then sank down in an arm-chair almost exhausted. They all cried and laughed together, after which Charles and Grace returned home.

A year passed, and we see them now still in their old home, with no change whatever. Mrs. Murdoch has joined the

church, and has become a great Christian. Fannie is thinking about it, and her mother tells her not to delay the matter one moment.

Mr. Spencer built the elegant mansion which he contemplated, and the same fall they moved into it. She had now almost all that heart could wish in a worldly affair; but there was an aching void in her heart which nothing in her present surroundings could fill,—congeniality of soul and a suitability of mind and purpose. They were in the main different in their tastes and sentiments. Charles was a sharp, keen, business man; but beyond this there was but little else that would inspire any admiration. As for literature and science and history, he knew nothing,—and worse still, cared nothing, while, on the other hand, Grace was a great reader, and could talk on almost any subject that was mentioned. As years passed on, she realized that she had a better mind and knew more than her husband. A painful sensation stole over her as she was convinced that this was indeed true. Knowing that she was superior in mind and its accompaniments, her husband did not inspire that love and enthusiasm which are essential to the happiness of the marriage relation. She could not sit down of an evening and pour out her soul to him, for there was very little in common between them. His mind went in one direction and hers went directly in another, and thus there was no suitability of mind and purpose between them. She gave vent to her soul by writing in her journal, and in writing on any subject that seemed to interest her; but she never allowed or desired anything to be published, for she had no cravings whatever for notoriety of any kind. She was a good wife, by reconciling herself to her fate and in keeping her household affairs in perfect order. She never breathed a word of her discontent to her husband, but, on the contrary, was as kind and obliging to him as she could be. Hers was purely a domestic nature, and with a husband with the impulses and characteristics of Walter Ludwick, she would have been the happiest woman living. A talented man was always the beau ideal of all her hopes, but she had never yet seen him. It was on this point she hesitated when Mr. Spencer proposed. She meditated on all the gentlemen she had ever met, and could she say that she admired them any more than Mr. Spencer? In her very heart she felt that there were gentlemen who filled her ideal, but

would she, could she, ever meet them now in her abject position? As these thoughts filled her mind, she finally gave the matter up in despair, and gave her promise to him the next time they met. And to this day she has never seen any one whom she loves any better than her husband. Of course there is a good reason for this, because a woman with her inherent ideas of propriety and constancy would never give the idea of another husband one passing thought. Such a thing as loving or forming an attachment for any one, other than her husband, would have been so monstrous that she would really have been frightened. No; such a thought as a change never entered her mind, and she gave her husband her entire attention and all the love he inspired. She is not to blame if she did not love him with that entire devotion which ought to be inseparable from the marriage relation, for she gave him all she could, and who could do more?

But how foolish it is for a man to marry a woman who has a mind superior to his own! It seems to me like reversing the order of things. How can a woman with a fine mind and fine sensibilities love a man sincerely whom she knows to be inferior to herself in mental accomplishments? Mind, on almost every occasion, will conquer; and therefore, if the husband desires to be looked up to and admired by his wife, he must have a mind superior to hers, else his wishes and his commands in most cases will never be respected or obeyed. Even untold wealth will quail before the approaching grandeur of mind! With a husband like Walter Ludwick or Augustus Belmont, Grace would have been perfectly happy and contented. She could have looked up to either of them with admiration, and in her books, and in her music, and in all those intellectual accomplishments which she held most dear, she would have had an enjoyable and interesting companion. But as it is, she never can experience the real bliss, the exquisite joy, of the marriage relation.

The same spring that Charles Spencer let his contract for a very fine residence, Augustus Belmont and wife returned home. Soon after, he let the contract to build a magnificent residence on the lot, in a very pretty part of the city, that he had purchased shortly after his engagement to Fannie Murdoch. While across the briny deep at Florence, a little boy was born, who added a new joy to their already happy hearts.

As Mrs. Belmont did not like boarding at the hotel, they rented a little cottage, in which they intended to live until their home was completed.

## CHAPTER XX.

Through the shadowy past,  
Like a tomb-searcher, memory ran,  
Lifting each shroud that time had cast  
O'er buried hopes.

MOORE.

Yes, come thou to my aid, O sweet Memory! and bring a few more scenes to view, and then I am done. Back into the shadowy past let us go, and linger awhile among its unfading beauties. Let us bring to our recollection events that long since have passed away. Yes, back let us go again to the sylvan scenes and lovely landscape of Riverbank! A sad and solemn funeral procession has just returned, and have dispersed to their homes. Yes, one little, white-winged angel has been taken up to join the "ransomed of the redeemed," and will never know anything more of the sorrows here on earth. Dr. Patterson's little girl took the fever, and in one short week its spirit fled to the unknown world, and the doctor was left almost heart-broken, for she was the idol of his heart; and often said that she was the only being on earth on which he could lavish all the affections of his soul. This would probably warn him against placing too much devotion on anything here on earth, and not placing his reliance on Him who hears the young ravens even when they cry.

A short time after his child's death, he wrote Walter Ludwick the following letter:

"RIVERBANK, June 10, 18—.

"MY DEAREST AND BEST FRIEND WALTER,—I think, as I take up my pen this lovely evening in June, that this world is not so dark and dreary after all, when I feel the sweet consolation that fills my soul as I commence to write to him whom I can in truth call my friend. Oh, if there be one consolation



which above all others fills my soul with that sweet, rapturous joy which nothing else can now give, it is the reflection that in you I have a true, dear, and warm-hearted friend!

"I suppose you have learned ere this of the death of my only daughter. I hope you may never feel that unfathomable grief which will fill your soul as you see your own flesh and blood suddenly become as cold as marble. Yes, truly, the sorrow for the dead is the only sorrow from which we do not seek to be relieved. I can now fully appreciate that passage in the Bible referring to 'Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they were not.' This is indeed a terrible stroke to me, and I feel that it is almost greater than I can bear.

"But I should not fill up my letter with a rehearsal of all my griefs. You wanted to know some of the news about Riverbank. The changes are not great or many. William Montague and his wife moved South three years ago, and I hear they live not far from the Draytons' old home. William's mother told me this morning that they were very well and seemed contented. They have one little girl, and they think that there is no one in the world like her. William has charge of a small country town congregation, at a salary which makes him a comfortable living. As you know there is but little change in a minister's life in a country town with such a modest salary, you can realize the fact that if they do not hanker after the fashions of the giddy world, they will be happy; otherwise, they will not be. I think, though, that they are now happy, and will lead a pleasant and contented life.

"Benedict has gone to the city, and is now engaged in a very extensive business. You know he was always a sharp, keen business man, and considered, as does your brother Tom, that the chief end of man is to make money. He is not married yet, but when I say anything about the subject of marriage, he always answers me, 'Barkis is willin', and then adds, after a hearty laugh, 'but I am waiting for something to turn up.' It is doubtful whether he will ever marry. Men at his age do not relish a courtship as the youth does, and thus the affair is most always neglected. I would like, though, to see him congenially married, for I know that he would then be happy.

"Your brother Tom has just completed arrangements for going into business in the city; and thus, you see, there are but

few of your old intimate friends left. The Climaxs and the Frothinghams are still rushing along in full blast, with the idea, no doubt, that but for them the world would cease to revolve.

"Your father and mother are well, and always speak with pride of their absent son, who is making his mark in the world, and will soon be a great man. 'If he is only good as well as great,' your mother will say, 'I will be the more proud of him for that than all his greatness.'

"And now I must close. I have said nothing of my domestic life, for it is always with pain and regret that I refer to it. I never knew what it was to have dark and dreary days until since I am married, and now I have enough of them. I have quit, however, gratifying all my wife's whims and notions, and when she wants anything that is not convenient for me to get, or that is beyond my means, I put my foot down when she insists, and say determinedly that 'it must not be.' She has now learned that it does no good to be obstinate and ill-natured, for I do not mind her; and thus she gets over it the best way she can. I attend to my own business and she attends to hers, and thus, having nothing in common, you see how our domestic life is. You can imagine all when I say it is anything but pleasant and happy, and I should still feel better contented if I were absolutely certain that it would get no worse. I dare not look to the future to endeavor to see what there is in store for me. When I do so, all is darkness and gloom.

"I am, ever,

"Your sincere and affectionate friend,

"PATTERSON.

"P. S.—George Langton, your early friend, and former gallant of Miss Cordelia Drayton, is dead. He died very suddenly, in his room one morning.

"P."

When Walter received this letter he was very sorry, for he knew how much he thought of his little girl; and when he referred to his domestic life, he knew how unhappy he was. "Yet," as he said, after Blanche had read his letter, "there are hundreds and thousands of such marriages in this broad land, and their victims drag out a most miserable existence."

Of the changes at Claremont but little remains to be said. Nancy Spriggins at last reached the goal to which her ambition aspired, by marrying a clerk; and as he had not money enough to commence housekeeping in the kind of style she desired, they boarded for a long time, and as it took nearly every cent they could make to keep them they laid up but very little, and when she finally agreed to commence housekeeping, it was on a small scale, and he had to go in debt for most of the furniture he purchased. Her husband, who was a quiet, easy-going kind of a man, always managed to keep very quiet when she was in a rage and made things fly around her. But when the passion was over she was all good again, and thought he was a very good husband. Whether they experienced any happiness, or whether there was any love existing between them, as one would think there should be in the marriage relation, I suppose no one could tell but themselves. It is well for the peace and advantage of the family, which they will soon have, that the husband is good-humored, and sometimes laughs when his wife reaches the height of her passion; but where the real genuine love can come in still remains a mystery, which will never be solved to my satisfaction. And yet there are some persons who say, time and again, that they love each other; but if this be love, what is there on this earth that is not love? or where is the being who is not lovable?

As has before been observed, the parents of Ophelia Brandon finally succeeded in breaking off the engagement with Benton Rushwood; but they never succeeded in rooting out her deep, impassioned love for him. For years after their final separation she became very weak and delicate, and for a time it was thought she could not survive it. But her father took her on a voyage to the Pacific coast, and thus a change of climate and new scenes refreshed her body, and when she returned she found herself stronger, but the same sadness was in her face, and the same deep sorrow was in her heart. Years passed away, and through the over-persuasion of her mother, and feeling that her own life was a blank which could never be filled, she married a business man whose chief aim was to make money. He was a very clever man, but he had none of those fine sensibilities of soul which are so admired by persons of a literary cast of mind. There was nothing congenial between them, and thus she drags out a miserable

life, only praying for the time when the summons will come for her to appear in another world. Her husband is wonderfully pleased over a good dinner, or a clean shirt, or anything, in fact, which pleases his animal nature; but of literature, or science, or poetry, or any of those finer feelings, his soul is so utterly destitute that there is not one bond of union or sympathy between them. If he comes home of an evening and brings a friend with him, their whole conversation centres on horse-trading and fast horses and business the whole evening. There scarcely ever is anything in his conversation congenial to her. It is true, he is kind and gratifies her every wish as far as the wealth of this world will contribute thereto; but then, what signifies all this—her elegant home, her gorgeous surroundings, her marble halls, her silken velvet couches, and everything that the most fastidious could desire—when there is in her soul that dreary, aching void, caused by the utter want of genuine love which her heart so longs for? And then when the thought so solemnly rushes into her mind that she once had this love, but that she so ruthlessly cast it away, her soul is filled with deepest remorse. You see her in the morning pale and careworn; you see her in the evening the same, except that she is weaker and fainter still; and thus passes her daily life away amid a gilded palace, whose most gorgeous surroundings are naught to her but draperies of woe. Oh, thou cruel-hearted mother! thou but needs to get down on thy knees and clothe thyself in sackcloth and ashes, and pray to the God who made thee, day and night, for forgiveness! And if this deep and damnable sin which thou hast committed can be washed away, then there is no doubt but that the vilest sinner may repent and be saved.

It is indeed monstrous enough for the murderer, in the dark hours of the night, to steal noiselessly into his victim's room and thus in almost an instant send him whirling from time to eternity; but it is even more monstrous when she who has the power blights the affections of the immortal soul, by which her victim drags out a most miserable existence and only prays for the time when her spirit will take its flight to the land of dreams. Better, far better, that she would raise her tyrannical hand and stab her to the heart and send her to the grave at once, rather than murder her by inches,—as she most truly does. There is no death so sorry—there is no

death that so strikes the imagination with all that is horrifying and heart-rending—as that death which results from a broken heart. Yes, Ophelia loved Benton Rushwood with her whole heart, and he loved her with all the powers of his soul; but she, not having that strong will which would have shielded her from the fearful vortex towards which her mother was apace hastening her, allowed her solemn engagement to be broken,—and thus sent from her side, into the dark and dreary world, the only being she had ever loved. She was, of course, some to blame; but, oh, the fearful crime rests with her own mother! When we consider these things, is aught but retribution due? “Oh, when I see such things being done, I thank God that there is a judgment and that there is a hell; for such beings, unless they repent, are not only doomed—but damned.”

Benton, at the time he left Claremont, as before mentioned, was never heard of again. Where he went, or what he did with himself, no one ever knew. He has long been a myth of the past in that beautiful little city.

Theodore Thompson married a very pretty little lady, with a very shallow brain; but as he has a very ordinary brain himself, they are very well suited for each other. Neither one has very exalted ideas; and being both quite conceited on their good looks, they are sometimes one substantial mass of egotism. Sometimes they are jealous of each other, as both take delight in flirting with other ladies and gentlemen; but then this soon passes away, and they are as loving with each other as two little children. The only habit that is sometimes disgusting is their kissing each other in public, when they meet after a brief absence, and in otherwise displaying their affections to the world. This is always disgusting to sensible people, for it looks too much like whited sepulchres.

Marmian Marlan married at last, after looking around a great deal for his wife. The most sickening and disgusting thing, however, in their courtship was the verdant habit of continually hanging on to each other when they would be out at any social gathering, or a ball, or party of any kind. It is said that on several occasions they have commenced to dance when the music struck up, and were never separated during the whole evening. She gave as an excuse for being so green, that he did not allow her to dance with any other gentleman. How

this was, of course no one could tell; but it was the general opinion of every one that they presented a very verdant appearance. After they were married, however, for awhile things changed, and sometimes they were so angry at each other that they could have torn their eyes out. But their passion would then subside again, and they would be as loving as ever before. All she thought about was her dresses and going to parties, and as long as she was satisfied in this respect she was happy. Neither experienced any genuine happiness in the marriage relation. He spent nearly all his evenings at the social club, or among some of his boon companions, and then when he would come home he was sure to receive a lecture from her. She never gave his business or his finances the least thought whatever, and thus she did not know whether he was making any money or not. There were very few questions on which they agreed, and thus there was a continual contention always existing between them. Finally, when they saw that matters were becoming quite serious, they were forced, for the peace of their household, to adopt that cold, hard resolution,—to agree to disagree. Many a time have I talked with persons who believed that those of opposite dispositions should marry, and when I ask them how they will get along when they are continually quarreling with each other, I am something amused when I hear them reply, “Let them agree to disagree. That is the way my husband and myself did after we were married.” I look at her curiously enough, as she ceases speaking, but I say nothing in reply; and only wonder where can be the bliss, the unbounded joy, of their married life. It seems to me so much like a civil contract, that I cannot help but think of a man who has a partner in business who does very well as long as he is kind and obliging to him. But some time when he is tired and almost worn out with business, and forgetting himself, speaks in an angry manner to his partner, he is wonderfully surprised to find him fly into such a storm of anger, by which he smashes everything before him. Of course, when the storm passes away, he thinks of getting another partner. So it is with the husband and wife. It is all so much of a civil contract, that when one or the other flies up in a tremendous passion, it is no doubt true that when it all passes away the good-natured one would very likely think about swapping her off for a more congenial companion.

This thing of agreeing to disagree is all right enough, and is no doubt for the welfare and peace of their family; but then it is all supreme nonsense to say that such a married couple enjoy the exquisite delight, the unbounded bliss, of domestic life.

As was anticipated by some of her friends, poor Mrs. Murdoch did not live very long to enjoy her new possessions. For five years she and Fannie lived in their old home with every comfort and luxury that they desired, but at last the grim messenger came, and summoned her to appear in another world. As was mentioned in another chapter, she had repented of her sins and joined the church, and thus obeyed the divine fiat, "Prepare to meet thy God." On her death-bed, among the last words she said were spoken to Fannie: "Remember, my dear child, the debt you owe your sister Grace, for she was right all the time, and we, being wrong all our lives, never bestowed upon her our affections. But you see her generous soul, for she has long since returned good for evil, and has thus heaped coals of fire upon our heads. But I rejoice to have lived to see the day in which I have realized my folly, and to feel in my soul, which will soon take its transit for another world, that she has forgiven us both. Even now I see that her sufferings, and ours too, have all worked together for our own good, by leading me to the Cross, and I hope shortly that you will find that shelter and comfort in the arms of the Divine Saviour which nothing in this world can give you."

In her last moments she pronounced on them all a dying mother's blessing, and then her spirit took its flight amid rejoicings in her Redeemer. Her mortal remains were interred, that they might return to the dust from whence they came. "Truly there must be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over the ninety-and-nine just ones that went not astray."

Charles Spencer and Grace were as happy as could be expected. Seven years of their married life had passed away, and they never had a quarrel. A little girl came to add comfort to their home and give them something more to love. If there were times in which Grace felt sad and lonely, she cheered herself up when her husband came home, and thus never let him know that there was a shadow on her soul.

She felt happy when she had obeyed that divine command which rushed down the sides of Mount Sinai, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

It is scarcely necessary to say that Mr. and Mrs. Belmont are happy in their new home after a married life of five years. Little Augustus thinks himself quite a little man, and says that he will have to take care of the little sister who came to live with them one day. Little Birdie is a very pretty little lady, and is admired by all who know her. Mrs. Belmont looks younger, in fact, than she did when we last saw her on the Pacific coast, and she makes a most exemplary wife. Mr. Belmont has often studied over the matter, to solve the problem as to how it came that there was thus so much happiness vouchsafed to him after leading such a wicked and sinful life. In a conversation one time with Dewitt Lu-Guere on this subject, he said, "I believe, as firmly as I believe anything, that it comes from my not betraying my absent friend. I think there is nothing so pleases God himself as an act of gratitude, and that if there be anything on this green earth that merits so justly his righteous indignation and terrible anathema, it is that judgment which should be passed on him who does an ungrateful act, or stabs his friend behind his back. Among the brightest thoughts and recollections of my life now is the time that I arose to the dignity of the true man and told your wife of your constancy and your deep, impassioned love. And to this day I never can forget the exquisite joy that filled her heart, and the sunlight and glory that were so apparent in her face."

Yes, they were both truly happy for repentance, and a conscientious desire to do one's duty brings and merits all the pleasure there is in this world.

Dewitt Lu-Guere and Marian are still living at his old homestead; but the mother who loved them so well has passed to the silent tomb, and now they have only the father left, upon whom they bestow their love and kindness together. Of course they cannot help but be happy, for there has never yet a cloud passed over their young lives since they have been married. All has been joy and sunshine and supreme happiness. But no doubt the question will occur to the reader, as it does occur to my mind at this moment, whether any love can be pure,

deep, and genuine which has never known any adversity? For, as has been truly said, there has thus far in their earthly pilgrimage not one shadow crossed their threshold. Can that love, then, which has never known one pang of adversity be so sweet and priceless as if they could look back to a dreary spot, where they were tried in the fiery ordeal of affliction, and come forth purified and redeemed? Can they look back to a dark and dreary time when it tried their very souls, and yet they stood by and loved each other, as much, if not more, than when they were married? Has there yet been a period in their lives when the inner being was so tried and exposed that all its hidden glories would so shine that they would approach that perfection which is almost akin to the angels? No, the question must be answered in the negative, for that time has never come which would lay open their hearts to each other; and until it does come, they can never know that pure, deep, unsullied, and impassioned love which would bind their souls together in that sweet harmony which no human power on earth can tear asunder. There is nothing which makes the heart of a pure woman so much purer as being tried in the fiery ordeal of affliction, for then in fate's own proper time she will emerge from the darkness and gloom that enveloped her, and, flinging off the draperies of woe that may have hung around her, she will shine forth tenfold brighter and purer than before, and with a kind of a magnetism that no one can portray, she will draw around her those whom she most loves with that irresistible charm which is said only belongs to the nymphs of fairy-land. But they are both so happy in each other's love that they take no thought of to-morrow, and no doubt if the question were ever addressed to Dewitt concerning her fortitude, he would reply as emphatically in the affirmative as he did concerning the constancy of her love during the last conversation that he had with Mr. Belmont at Claremont, previous to his departure for Europe. And as far as any one's judgment of human nature would go, I do not think the most credulous would hesitate to say positively that Marian Lu-Guere would endure the most chilling and scathing winds of adversity and would even come forth purer and brighter than before, because she has within her that spirit which is expressed in the one word,—*soul*. I do not mean that signification which the word only implies; but I mean a soul in which truth

and love, and faith and hope and charity, are all predominant elements in the whole character.

Fannie Murdoch did not remain long in her old home, for it was too lonely, she said to Grace one day, and desired to go and live with her, which she accordingly did. She made her home there until she was married, which occurred about a year afterward. But Fannie Murdoch was one of those ladies whom adversity and misfortune never teach anything. Notwithstanding her most consummate round of folly, and the many years she had passed so fruitlessly, and which really brought her all the sorrow she had ever known, yet, when fortune smiled upon her again, there was nothing in her past life that seemed to teach her one single lesson of prudence and common sense. She was now as proud and haughty as before, and still hankered after wealth and persons of birth and position. She rejected the suit of a grocer, who was in fair circumstances, and would have made a good and kind husband. Several other suitors she rejected, any one of whom she would have done well to have accepted, for her beauty, which was still powerful, drew around her many admirers after she was reinstated in her old home, and allied to the richest family in all Claremont.

Time passed along until she met Colonel Winsor, who was reputed to be a man of wealth, and also was highly and honorably connected, and with whom she became very much fascinated and pleased. The consequence of all this was that in the course of an acquaintance of about five months, they were married, and she entered into all the joys and pleasures of the marriage relation. When six months of their married life had passed away, she realized the startling fact that "all is not gold that glitters." Her husband was, indeed, honorably connected, but, being a man of low and reckless habits, he had squandered a large estate which had been given him by his father, and he was now almost penniless upon the world, with nothing but his hands and a limited mind to gain a livelihood and support his beautiful bride. After all the romance which clustered around their courtship had disappeared, and they were enabled to see themselves as others see them, they realized that a great change had taken place in their hearts for each other, and the stern fact rushed into their minds that both had been victimized. He had been under the impression all along that she possessed a large estate in her own right, and when he ascer-

tained the true state of affairs, he was so exasperated and disappointed that he scarcely knew what to do about the matter.

It is needless to say anything further about their married life. Neither having any charity for each other, of course their future life could be nothing but utter misery and woe. Mr. Spencer gave him employment in his store as clerk, and thus he was enabled to live, and nothing more.

Three years of married life have passed away, and we find her seated in her room of the long winter evenings, solitary and alone. Her husband never comes in until late, and then when he does come, nine times out of ten he is shamefully intoxicated; and then she becomes angry and scolds, and in return he swears and curses; and thus their daily life passes away. Sometimes the last stick of wood has been put on the fire, and at other times the last piece of bread has been eaten. Frequently he goes to a restaurant for his dinner, and she is obliged to eat whatever she can get. Ah, truly, Augustus Belmont, thou hast been fearfully avenged! I do not think that on this earth the lot of woman can be more miserable or heart-broken than to be poor and to depend for her support upon a drunken husband. Do as she will, all the forebodings of her life can be nothing else than the most utter misery and woe; and the saddest and most piercing pain that lacerates her heart is that she herself is all to blame for it. As Dewitt Lu-Guere and his amiable wife Marian drove by their cottage one day in Judge Alpen's silver-mounted barouche, the stinging words, "It might have been," involuntarily escaped her lips, and she sank back in her chair in the deepest and most piercing agony of soul. As she passes Augustus Belmont's magnificent residence, a feeling of bitter remorse fills her soul, and she almost sinks down on the pavement. Alas, Augustus Belmont and Ina Clayton, ye have both been fearfully and wonderfully avenged!

## CHAPTER XXI.

Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,  
And fondly broods with miser care;  
Time but the impression deeper makes,  
As streams their channels deeper wear.  
BURNS.

ONE more scene, and then all is o'er. Again we approach the home of Walter Ludwick. Ten years have gone by since we last saw him, thus making a trifle over thirteen years of married life that have passed away with the roses and flowers of the spring-time. As we see him now, older of course in years and in appearance of the body, yet as young in spirit and stronger in vigor of mind than ever before. By hard and unremitting study, and a close application to business, he has now reached the height of his profession; and by his fair and dignified and honorable manner of transacting his legal business, has inspired the unbounded confidence and high regard and admiration of all who know him. Naturally loving his profession, it was his delight to thoroughly investigate every intricate question that presented itself to his mind; and thus gained that accuracy and thorough knowledge of the law which gave his opinion great weight among his legal brethren. The guiding rule of his life was, that he would never resort to a mean and dishonorable trick or act to accomplish any end, no matter how much he desired to succeed. He considered his honor and his integrity of more value than the filthy lucre he would thereby acquire for so doing. It was as much his aim to aspire to that position in life which would induce even his enemies to say, "He is an honorable and upright man," as it was to reach the sun-crowned heights of his profession. So pure and spotless was his reputation, that he would have been the last man in the world whom any one would have approached with a bribe. His reputation for truth was undoubted; and if his client received from him an opinion on a question of law, he felt convinced that it was such an opinion on which he could rely with the utmost confidence. He was scarcely

ever known to take a case for a man whom he thought was endeavoring to defraud another; and, although he was mostly concerned for the defense in criminal cases, his excuse for taking the cause of those whom every one almost considered guilty was, that no man in this land had the right to be condemned except by a fair and legal trial, where all the truth on both sides was elicited. And when his client was convicted, and he then from the evidence in the case believed and was convinced that he really was guilty, he was the last man who would raise his voice in the court and plead for mercy when sentence was to be pronounced on his guilty head. That he always considered was beyond his province, and further than stating any extenuating circumstances clustering around the case, he left the whole matter to the court, who are sworn to render judgment in mercy. And by thus adhering to this strict line of duty, he merited and received the confidence of the court; and when he thus did plead for the mitigation of a sentence, his arguments had great force and weight.

One day, when he had gone out of the bank after depositing his money, the president, who happened to be in at the time, said, "There is a man whom I consider the architect of his own fortune. He came here just after he was admitted to the bar, and by industry and integrity and a close application to study he has now gained himself a practice second to none in the city. I care not how important a case I had, I would rather go to him than to a lawyer who has practiced three times as long. He is what I call an honorable lawyer, and in whom I have the utmost confidence and the highest esteem and admiration."

This is the reputation that Walter Ludwick has made for himself, after a close application to his profession for thirteen years. Although his many political friends have endeavored time and again to persuade him to allow his name to be used as a candidate for Congress, yet he has as often declined, and declares that he has no desire for political distinction; that he has neither the time nor the money to spend; nor does he desire to stoop to the degradation of the successful politician. "But," they say, "politics must be elevated; we want men who are above and beyond the least suspicion of the shameful bribe; men who can grapple with the great questions of the day with nerves of steel and with an iron will, and thus de-

vote their time and the brain which God has given them to the elevation and amelioration of mankind."

But to all these entreaties he would shake his head and say, "Not yet, not yet; and I am very doubtful if the time will ever come when I will have the least desire to leave my quiet and happy home for the troubled and tempestuous sea of political life."

There is no doubt but that his mind is thoroughly made up now never to enter into public life, and whether he will change is only a question of time. It would be a regret, however, if his country should lose his valuable services, for it is sorely in need of upright, honest, and talented men, who will give tone and dignity to politics. But his friends so far succeeded as to induce him to accept the political editorship of the leading political paper in the city. He studied for some time before he consented. But when he reflected that the true party organ is to a great extent independent; that it is not bound to uphold and encourage any party in chicanery and fraud; but that, on the contrary, its chief province is to expose corruption, to criticise its blunders, to maintain and labor for the good of its country, to instruct and elevate the masses, to point out and draw those main landmarks of good government which will insure the perpetuity of our American institutions, and in fact to advance the cause of truth and justice and the best interests of humanity,—he decided at once to accept a position by which he could devote part of his time to the amelioration of mankind. It is difficult to estimate the great influence of the press; and the editor whose brain is clear, and whose heart is right, can wield an immense power, and can wonderfully advance the best interests of our country. He who does the most for humanity is above all others the most to be honored and loved; and when the last day comes, "he will receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Walter devoted a certain portion of his time to this new vocation, by which he drew around him some of the leading men of the nation. His strong, forcible, and elegant editorials gave his paper tone, and they were read with eager delight. When any new question arose, their first impulse was to see his paper, and ascertain the editor's views. Often, when many were undecided, his editorial was so much of a

weight as to turn the scales, and it therefore made them decide at once, and thereby strong advocates were enlisted on the side of truth and justice.

Thus we see him now performing the mission of his life. In the morning he devotes a part of his time in his editorial chair, the balance of his time is spent in his office. He has two good active law-students and a clerk, and thus nothing in that department is neglected. Here he lives, surrounded with all that makes life desirable and happy,—his beautiful home, his affectionate wife and children,—yes, here he lives, amid his books, his pictures, his paintings, and noble and exalted friendships,—yes, his ideal home has been more than realized.

There is no doubt but that it was the thought of being torn away from this happy home that made him utterly refuse to have anything to do with politics. As was before said, he was eminently a domestic man, as will be observed from the beauty and luxury with which he has surrounded his home. Two years ago he had his house repaired, and after selling off most of his old furniture, he refurnished it in the most gorgeous style possible. His large double parlor he covered with the finest velvet carpet and furnished with the costliest furniture he could obtain, and then adorned the walls with the very finest and choicest selections of paintings. When one went into his parlor and sat down on the soft, silken, velvet-covered arm-chairs and sofas, and glanced at the exquisitely-beautiful curtains and pictures and paintings which surrounded him on every side, he felt as though he were in a paradise where he would fain linger forever. His library was no less gorgeously furnished, and the grounds surrounding his residence were beautiful in the extreme.

And of his amiable and angelic wife! What can I say of her that the reader does not already know? If that bloom in her cheek, which youth alone can give, has faded, and if she is not as gay and lively as when we saw her last, oh, she doubly makes up for all these deficiencies by the heavenly smiles that beam from her face, and by the pure and noble soul which shines through those soft and tender dark eyes, full of their sweet and lambent beauty! There is nothing of sorrow resting on her heart, and her spirit is as joyous and free as the birds that fly the air. And then her whole manner and bearing are that of the true woman, whose mind is above

and beyond the mere fashionable things of this world, for she has those fine sensibilities and warm-hearted feelings, and that sincere and affectionate nature, which truly become the pure Christian.

Master Walter Ludwick has become quite a little man. It is no difficult matter for him to sit down of an evening and read his father and mother the news from the daily paper, or anything else they may desire. He is one of those boys with whom even a man can talk with pleasure and delight, for anything that he does not understand you can sit down and reason the matter with him, and then the enthusiasm is very transparent in his face, when light shines in upon his mind and he begins to understand your explanation. If you ask him what he intends to do when he grows to be a man, he will tell you that he has not positively decided yet, though he has given the matter considerable thought and reflection. "He intends," he says, "to fill some important sphere in life."

And then comes little Blanche, who is now a lovely little girl, ten years old, a most perfect blonde, with soft, tender blue eyes and beautiful waving hair. She has all the grace and fine sensibilities and amiable nature of her mother, and is thus the admiration and delight of all who know her. Even when she was much younger she could remember the lessons that her mother would teach her. If a gentleman would ask her to kiss him, she would politely tell him that it was in very bad taste for little girls to kiss any gentleman, no matter who, except her own father and uncles and nephews. If any one called, she would show him into the parlor with all the politeness imaginable, and would then inquire their mission in that courteous manner which shows that she has a mother eminently cultivated and refined.

And little Edwin Alpen Ludwick! what shall I say of him, of whom the reader has never yet heard anything? He has dark eyes and dark hair, with his father's brain and the fine mental temperament of his mother. His father says that he is the coming man, who, if he lives, will carve his name on the reflecting walls of fame. The only main question on which Edwin is posted is that of eating candy. "No little boy," he will say, when some one offers him candy, "can ever expect to be a great man if he eats candy." For his part, he says, he will never touch it at all; and what is more, never does.



Thus we see Walter Ludwick and his amiable wife and little family as another happy new year dawns upon them. Mr. Ludwick has just read the editorials in *Harper's Weekly*, and looked at and admired the engravings, and then handed the paper to his elder son. His wife is completing the last new book he purchased her, and little Blanche is finishing a new piece of music she has taken, and little Edwin is riding at a great rate on his rocking-horse. Thus we see the family group on this clear moonlight New-Year eve. Oh, his home is indeed an ideal home, in which peace and joy and love reign supreme!

Walter has been looking in the fire since he quit the paper, and his mind seems to have taken a retrospect backwards, for he is again living in the past. Blanche finishes her book and then speaks to him, and he is aroused from his reverie, and they each talk about subjects interesting to both. Then Walter looks up at her as lovingly and affectionately as he did in their courtship days, and tells her that he would like to hear some of the old songs she used to sing, and also some of her fine selections from the classic composers. She goes to the piano and plays all the pieces he desires, and then he sits down with her, and they play duets together until they are satisfied with music.

And thus passes their daily life away. Such a thing as cross words and sour looks are never witnessed in their household. Nothing like discord in the remotest degree is witnessed in their domestic life, but, on the contrary, all is the sweetest harmony and bliss. Their married life has thus far moved along without one jar or flaw, save that which was recorded in a previous chapter, and that was so trifling and unimportant in its character that it is not worth mentioning.

One time, in a conversation with Tom, Walter said, "I thought I loved my wife when we were married; I thought if we, by the stern and relentless hand of fate, were separated, that it would almost chill the life-blood in my veins and blight forever the cherished hopes of my life. But when I compare the love I had for her then with the almost idolatry which I feel for her now, the former sinks into utter insignificance. Why, when I look back now to the many years that have passed away, at a time when adversity came upon me, and when the clouds gathered thick and fast around my pathway, and there was not as much as one ray of hope to pierce my darkened



Oh, his home is indeed an ideal home, in which peace and joy and love reign supreme.

soul; when I reflect upon a time of which she told me a long time afterwards, when the butcher came to the house and craved her for the payment of our meat bill, and that it took almost the very last penny she had; and as I now think of many other hardships that she endured, which could not have been any less than those utter heart-burnings and misery, which were enough to blight the fondest hopes and strongest affections of womankind and almost make her sink down, crushed in body and spirit,—I say when I think of all this, and then remember how heroically she endured it all,—how of an evening, when her heart could not but be almost broken with grief, she would wipe away whatever of tears there may have been in her eyes, and would meet me on the threshold all bright and cheerful, with her eyes, it seemed to me, dancing with happiness and her face full of heavenly smiles, and would then throw her arms around my neck and would thus kiss away the tears and darkness and gloom that overshadowed my own soul, and fill my heart for the time being with the sweetest joy that imbued within me brighter hopes and renewed strength for the coming day,—oh, do you wonder, now in my prosperity, that I could almost bow at the shrine of her idolatry and worship her! You may perhaps wonder at this, and think I am over-enthusiastic, and perhaps say that it is all easy to talk about; but I wish you could just see her with my eyes; I wish I could paint to you these scenes in living reality, as they occurred, and then you would realize how but poorly and meagrely even my words portray the heroism and fortitude and strong affection and deep impassioned love that fills the soul of, to me, the dearest and most cherished being on earth."

One day during the harvest-time one of his clients came in and took her and the children out to remain a week; and it was the arrangement that Walter was to go out on Saturday evening and remain over Sabbath. It was during this week of her absence when he felt so lonely that he wrote down his thoughts in his journal: "Is it possible that she has not been gone a week? And yet the time seems more than a month! Oh, Blanche, the dearest idol of my soul, I never knew how inseparably you were bound to me, or how much that happiness which has filled my heart these many years is dependent upon you, until now! Oh, thou bright, shining star that always

allured me onward and upward! thou bright beam of light that shone along my pathway, clearing away all the gloom and darkness that may have gathered there! thou who art so good, so kind, so noble, what could I be without you? Away back in the dusky channels of my soul I see thee still, with thy face radiant with the glory within, and thy dark, loving eyes more brilliant than the stars, standing there amid the stormy and tempestuous sea of this varied life, like an angel from the spirit-land, with thy finger pointing upwards, and thy sweet voice speaking words of cheer and bidding the troubled waters be calm. I would take up courage, and would thus be infused with stronger and more lasting hopes, and thus lay my bosom bare again to the withering and blighting storm, cheered by the light shining from thy divine face, and nerved by the fortitude of thine own priceless soul. If there were ever a time when I felt sad and gloomy by the many misfortunes of life, thy angel smiles made me bright and cheerful; if there were ever a care on my mind or a burden to bear, it was alleviated and lightened by thy kind words of cheer and the almost heavenly strains of thy exquisite music. And now, when the thought, sometimes so unwilling, comes into my soul, that we are indeed but mortals, and that, sooner or later, we must by the strong and unrelenting hand of fate be separated here on earth, to take our transit to the spirit-land, my eyes are filled with tears, and I lay my pen aside and weep like a child."

And now comes the last sad task of saying farewell; yet still o'er these scenes my memory wakes and lingers with that fond delight and tender association, that it seems like snapping the tender cords that bind me to this mundane sphere, and I almost lay my pen away and close my eyes in sorrow. And as I see these congenial companions, formed by my imagination, recede farther and farther from me, as I think that the time will soon come when they will no longer be mine alone, but will be the companions of others, I feel that this mystery of the marriage relation is more of a mystery than ever before. Why is it that this divine boon,—domestic happiness,—the richest, sweetest blessing given by God to fallen man,—is so rarely to be found in this wide world, when the opportunities are so manifold, so numerous? As some writer somewhere so beautifully said, "It might be so different; the adaptations

for harmony so wonderful,—the elements of happiness so manifold, so rich, so exhaustless,—yet how often, how miserably, sometimes it all miscarries,—the waters of paradise turned to fountains of bitterness,—the gifts of heaven perverted to curses on earth."

Yes, the highest state of bliss, of supreme happiness, of which the soul is susceptible, is that enjoyed in the marriage relation when so identified in each other by the immortal bonds of platonic love,—the only pure, unselfish, and divine love on this side of the tomb. When I speak of this domestic happiness,—this new glory that day by day grows brighter and brighter, and never for a moment becomes dim or tasteless,—and desire to show you its picture in all its living reality, my mind flies, and my finger unerringly points, simultaneously, to the home of Walter Ludwick. There you see the happy, happy family, pervaded by that sweet harmony which is never broken by discords, but where all is as immutable and changeless as the heavens themselves; where the material is imbued with its intangible affinities and wondrous magnetisms, and where the immaterial principle within blossoms and blooms when all earthly things have faded away. Yes, I speak of it as felt to be such by this happy pair, for they have reached that period when it blesses and calms and satisfies them,—and a period, too, when, as we have seen, there remains in the way of earthly need or acquisition nothing save the daily bread for which they pray. Oh, if there be anything on this green earth that is in any manner—in the remotest degree—akin to that glory which fills the souls of the redeemed, it is that which is only found in the domestic circle where a charm from the skies seems to hallow us there!

But there are those who say that there is no such bliss as this found in this cold and callous world,—no such flowing together of soul in such sweet harmony,—and I try to explain to them how sadly, how miserably, they are mistaken. But then the thought occurs to my mind: "How fruitless and profitless the task, when I remember that the entrance to this temple is only open to the few, and that none of these skeptics dare cross its threshold, for there is no room there for any but those who believe!" And as I now say the last words, and thus lay my pen aside, and am thereby impressed with the sad thought that these sweet companions are gone from my

presence forever, and I stand in the world solitary and alone,  
my soul is full of sorrow, and it seems like the ceasing of ex-  
quisite music. For,

"Still o'er those scenes my memory wakes,  
And fondly broods with miser care:  
Time but the impression deeper makes,  
As streams their channels deeper wear."

THE END.