

GRACIE AMBER.

BY

MRS. C. W. DENISON,

Author of "Home Pictures," "What Not," "Carrie Hamilton," &c.

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*"Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished."*

—HOLY WRIT.  
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GRACIE AMBER.

CHAPTER I.

THE TREASURE.

It was a room in the humble home of a day-laborer. The autumn sun stole in through the half-open blinds, and brightened the straight locks of a little girl who sat reading at the window. She had a thoughtful, an agreeable, but not a pretty face, and was the eldest daughter of John Holden, the stevedore.

"O! we're going to have such fun in the old meeting-house!" she suddenly exclaimed, rising.

"Fun in a meeting-house; upon my word, Letta, you choose a strange theatre for your operations."

"Theatre! that's just it;" exclaimed the young lady, demurely, as she placed a mark in her favorite book, and sprang to the window to watch Hart cut the dead leaves from a vine, "that's just it. We've got an elegant play already. I'm going to be the Armenia, that's a young lady just from boarding-school, and Sis Merrill is to take the page. Sis is pretty, you know, and a real romp, just the one for a harum scarum fellow; wouldn't you like to see our dresses?"

"Well, no; I don't care about it just now," replied her brother, reaching over to catch a stray tendril, that like a forlorn hope, hung drooping and unsupported, "but I do think it's the queerest doings. The idea of acting nonsense on sacred ground—Shakspeare and sermons!"

"Now, Hart, don't tell of us," exclaimed Letta, earnestly. "I do believe you'll go right to father, and I wouldn't have

him know it for the world; how silly I was to say a word about it!" she added, with a vexed air.

"But you shouldn't do anything that your father wouldn't like," persisted Hart, now drawing himself like a snail within the window, and wiping his heated brow. "I declare! how warm it is; but my arbutus is finished; isn't it elegant? See—why! what's the matter?" he asked, viewing the disappointed face of his sister, who would not look up. "Come, come," he continued, "don't be afraid of me; if it was given in confidence, I won't tell of you, because, after all, it isn't such a dreadful thing. But what is it? let's know; what is the play, and who got it up, and what's it all about?"

"Why, you see Gracie Amber has written it," said Letta, brightening, "and you can't think how beautiful it is. We call it the 'Disowned Daughter,' and there's a cross old father, a fashionable mother, a poor, persecuted, boarding-school girl, who likes her page, you see, and——"

"In what place is the scene laid—I mean in what country?" interrupted her brother.

"Why, in this country, of course—what makes you smile?"

"At your page, child, what on earth should we do with pages here?"

"There! you are making fun of me now. I suppose Gracie made a page so as to be as near like Shakspeare as possible."

"Shakspeare!—ha, ha," shouted Hart, overcome by the novelty of the idea, "why! Gracie Amber's ambition must reach as high as heaven itself."

The girl did not seem as much elated as before, but she determined to tell the whole story.

"I don't care how much you laugh," she continued, "if you could only see it you'd say it was elegant. Old Ingerson lets Gracie Amber in on Wednesday afternoon, to play the organ; and you know those beautiful spring doors that

the sexton fastens back just before meeting is done, well we rush out there, and we can scream and sing and dance, and have such fun in that great old place."

"And can Gracie Amber play the organ? What else can she do?"

"Do, why every thing; play the organ? I guess you'd think so if you could hear a whole band of music marching along; that is, she plays so one would think a company of soldiers was parading in the street, and we girls take turns in blowing the bellows."

"You must have high old times," said Hart, gravely.

"We do so; and Gracie tells the funniest story—it would make you laugh to hear it; how she got shut up in the organ once."

"Shut up in the organ?"

"Yes; some one had been working there and left one of the panels loose at the side, near the bellows, you know; well, in she got and went all over inside, away back of the great concern. Before she could say a word, she found herself all at once in complete darkness; somebody had come, locked up the panels and was blowing the bellows at a tremendous rate. Musn't she have been frightened at first? but she said she got over it in a moment, and thought she'd keep still to see how it would sound inside, when all at once it set up, and such a noise and roaring she says she can't imagine. It howled under her and thundered over her. She screamed and screamed, but no one could hear her in that ding dong, and as soon as it stopped, she would stop crying and move as well as she could round the sides to the place where she got in. By-and-bye it grew still, and then she got so frightened she didn't dare to whimper. It was Sunday, and she could hear the singers coming to their seats, and presently the minister prayed, and then gave out a hymn. The minute the old bellows blower began, she cried out—

'Oh! don't,' and he stopped. She heard the organist whisper for him to go on, but whenever he commenced, she would cry, 'Let me out, let me out,' till, I believe, he got frightened and scud—"

"What a word!" exclaimed Hart, in the midst of his mirth.

"Well, flew, then, out of the meeting-house, and almost overturned the old sexton on his way. Wasn't that fun?"

"But how did Gracie get out?"

"Why, after everybody was scared to death and had got over it, somebody unlocked the panel, and there was Gracie (she was a little thing) crouching down, white as a sheet, and her great brown eyes as big as saucers. You'd better believe she never got in the organ again. But it's two o'clock; I must go. If you could only see what beautiful dresses and things we have got."

The boy had already determined in his mind that he would see them, but not in the manner his sister anticipated. The Holdens lived in a little brown house in the rear of the gaunt old church, whose walls had ever been familiar to the children, born as they were beneath their shadow. Adjoining their thriving garden, where, at that time, though within the confines of a city, clusters of grapes and a rare show of well-selected flowers, told of happy taste and industrious fingers, was a neglected piece of ground fenced in with black and tottering walls, within whose precincts grim barrels and dust-covered boards abounded. Leading into the vaults of this time-honored edifice was a door, thickly studded with nails, one panel of which was broken, and through this door, by dint of much exertion in climbing over huge hogsheads and piles of unused timber, crept Hart Holden, just as the old clock in the tower chimed two. He had often been in the vaults, when the grim-looking keeper, who was always there in the morning, had vouchsafed him admittance; but now

that he was alone in the dark, with gagged, rough-hewn arches overhead; and the dim aisles, the narrow spaces of which were bounded by the graves of many a household, stretching along in the glimmer of light that came through the dusty windows, a thrill of fear crept through his nerves. As he felt his way along the uncertain path, his hands upraised and sliding from beam to beam, all at once there came in contact with them, something cold and hard, and down came a small iron kettle, out of which rattled hundreds of shining gold pieces. For a moment the boy's heart stood still; he remained motionless, looking down upon the strange treasure at his feet, and yet so frightened by some vague impression of thieves, that he dared not stoop to convince himself. Gradually, however, the confusion wore away; and when the silence was settled, and no human voice or footstep told that he had been heard or might be discovered, he placed the iron kettle upright, gathered the gold together, and taking the utensil in one hand, hurried along, gained one of the vestries by an orifice that, with difficulty, admitted his body, and from there crept stealthily into the main part of the church, and hid himself under the pulpit stairs, entirely screened from observation, yet able to see all that might occur. In a state of feverish anxiety, he waited, pondering anxiously upon the singular circumstance that had so lately transpired. He could not decide whether it were best for him to take the gold home to his father, or immediately acquaint old sexton Ingerson, or some of the church deacons. If he took it to his father, he argued to himself, he, being somewhat avaricious, might and probably would be tempted to keep it; and so indeed might the old sexton, or the deacons, and what right had one to the treasure above another? It was a chance fortune, and had probably been hidden there for years. It had been said that treasures laid buried under the vaults of the old church, and most likely it was a thief's

booty. And again, the church had the reputation of being haunted. Lights had been seen in the windows and noises heard, and Hart remembered that he himself had heard a window open and shut as he ran shivering along late one cold night, to get medicine for Mrs. Holden. Upon this thought, a cold sweat broke over him. The stillness of the spacious church grew unearthly; oppressive; and he had a mind to start from his covert and spring for the window, risking the chances of a broken leg or neck, when the sound of merry voices at the door assured him, and he peeped forth to see his sister and six or seven young girls enter by a side-door laughing, chatting and singing.

Gracie Amber, the leader of fun and mischief, was a fair, slender girl of thirteen, with blue eyes, and auburn hair, whose interesting though not particularly beautiful face, was the spirit of frolic embodied. She was the daughter of Tom Amber, the corner grocer; a man well known in his sphere for an open-handed generosity, that made his means much less than they might have been, but which brought a large bounty of respect and affection in return.

Hart, reanimated, watched the progress of affairs with new interest, keeping still at his side the treasure of which he had possessed himself. He saw the lively creatures flitting about like so many butterflies, while Gracie Amber, with a face all importance, moved round distributing manuscript, and giving here and there hints, and suggesting alterations. She herself was attired in a grotesque costume, of no particular age, but which might, with much propriety, have been in repute anterior to the deluge. Having unlimited access to wardrobes of ancient things, in the garrets of sundry houses tenanted by her schoolmates, she had come in possession of many strange old garments. She was that interesting character known to all play-goers as an old woman, and, considering her young face, she had contrived to look very old indeed.

The acting was a laughable affair, though carried on with the utmost seriousness. The page dropped on his knees before the boarding-school young lady, whose head was dressed with hen-feathers, and who wore bracelets and necklace of cranberries, and declared his passion, and the old woman rushed out of the green-baize doors, that opened with a spring, and broke up the match, after the most approved fashion.

The shadow of the high pulpit by this time reached nearly to the choir seats, and one deep-red sun-ray streamed across the mammoth clock, upon which stood, with expanded wings, a great gilt eagle. But the little group did not mind the gathering darkness; they danced, while their odd bits of gaudy finery fluttered again, and laughed and screamed in utter abandonment, so that but for the thick walls, the neighbors opposite might have been led to take note of these by no means unusual, but very irreverent proceedings.

As it was, the madcaps had been detected. While they frolicked, and while Hart, shaking with suppressed laughter, crouched down under the pulpit stairs, a tall man, with grizzly, grey hair, light, piercing eye, and a hooked nose, stood on the broad side-walk in front, intent on learning what "that romping set of girls" had gone in the old meeting-house for. Walking slowly forward and back, with his hands behind him, he was patiently abiding the time of their departure.

This man was one of the deacons, and commonly known as Hinges, the money-broker, a good enough sort of person in his way. He lived in Dock Square, then many years behind its present importance in a commercial point of view; and in his window hung a few remarkable looking specimens, in the shape of cracked violins, sundry silver and gold watches, a few gold chains, and a variety of little knick-knacks, once probably prized as articles of *virtu*. But Deacon Hinges did not make more than a tolerable living by this occupation.

Though singularly stern and cold in his manner, he had a tender conscience, and was by far too willing for his own interest to hear the tale of pity. Valiant for the honor of his church was Deacon Hinges, and this trait led him to observe the frequency with which the old edifice was entered by the sacrilegious tread of heedless youth. So, as the shadows of the grim walls fell like a pall across the square, Deacon Hinges, with hands locked together and thrust under his coat-tail, slowly paced the sidewalk.

CHAPTER II.

THE REPRIMAND.

THROWING aside their butterfly garments, the school-girls prepared to leave the church.

"How strangely the shadows fall on the great curtain," said Gracie Amber, addressing herself to a roguish-looking neophyte in the act of untucking her skirt from its boyish dimensions, "do you believe the church is haunted? Old Ingerson says he has heard queer noises, when he has been here late at night to make the fires."

"I don't believe it," said the other, with a light laugh; "I'm not afraid of ghost or goblin."

"Neither am I; but, after all, I should like to believe there are such things; it would be so romantic, now, to hear a solemn strain of music from the organ, or a voice out there in the dark silence."

As she uttered these words, Hart, from his corner, sounded a long, dismal groan.

Frightened and shrieking, the girls threw by their *disha-*

bille, and rushed for the door, pressing upon each other with exclamations of the wildest fear.

"Be silent, will you? it's I, Hart!" cried the boy, emerging from his hiding place; "I tell you it's I. I got in by the cellar;" he continued rapidly, at the top of his voice, for the din and confusion increased at his appearance.

"Why, Hart, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," exclaimed Letta Holden, emerging from an enormous crimson sash she had been unfolding from her waist and shoulders, and which was not dyed deeper than her cheeks; and she turned angrily towards her brother: "I'll never tell you anything again as long as I live; you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Hart's conscious demeanor said as plainly as words, "I know I ought," but he laughed off his embarrassment, and, as he was a handsome fellow, with fine, dark eyes, he was soon forgiven, and the fright was forgotten.

Before they left the time-honored precincts, Hart went back to give a look at his treasure. It was safely concealed, and likely to lay there a long time unobserved; so, being of an exceedingly cautious temperament, he decided to let it remain until he had carefully thought over how it should be disposed of.

With not a little bustle, the thoughtless company emerged from the front entrance, Hart turning the massive key, and holding a laughing colloquy with Gracie Amber; nor did either of them notice the stately figure of the old broker, who moved cautiously behind them. As Gracie Amber entered her father's shop, bidding a merry adieu to her companions, the old deacon paused, as if he would follow her, but changing his mind, he hastily tracked the footsteps of the youngest of the group, and, overtaking her, laid his heavy hand upon her shoulder.

The child started, cast a frightened glance upwards, but it

fell instantly on meeting the cold, grey eye of the deacon. She stood still, revolving in her mind whether she would fly, or jump into a coal-hole that stood open upon the sidewalk.

"Miss, what were you doing in that meeting-house?" interrogated the old man, sharply. "Tell me, miss, what were you doing there?"

"A—nothing, sir," answered the child, sheepishly.

"Nothing—hem—that's not your answer. I must walk home with you, and find out what it was. I must see your parents, miss: who is your father?"

"Please, he's the sexton, sir, Mr. Ingerson; I go there to dust the seats sometimes," she added, taking courage.

"What did you have all those girls in there this afternoon for?" continued the old man, his tones losing none of their acrimony. "I shall know; I shall see your father, miss, and find out what it means. Come along."

"Oh! please don't, sir, and I'll tell you—me and the girls was playing theatre, sir."

"Theatre in a church! in the house of the Most High!" exclaimed Deacon Hinges, stopping aghast; "did I hear you right, child—did you say theatre?"

"Yes, sir, '*The Disowned Daughter*;' Gracie Amber made it, and we hadn't no place to play it so good, because of the spring doors, sir."

The deacon was too sincerely horrified to make any reply. He strode on a few minutes longer by the side of the trembling child, then muttering, "we must sift this matter," turned away, and bent his path in the direction of Tom Amber's grocery shop.

Gracie had meanwhile arrived home in the best possible spirits; had pacified a crying baby brother, and now, with her foot on the rocker of the cradle, sat looking over her play, her pretty lip wreathed in smiles.

"Gracie," whispered her mother, putting her head in at the

door, "run up stairs, child; what have you been doing? I never saw your father so angry. Old Deacon Hinges has been talking with him; I saw him in the shop-window; run, child, for I'm sure it is something about you."

Away flew Gracie to the top of the house, and sat down cowering in her own little chamber. "What if they have complained to father?" she whispered to herself, clasping her hands in a passion of distress. "Oh! I wish I had never written the play, nor seen the organ; it will be getting poor Mr. Ingerson into difficulty; oh dear, what shall I do? And there is father's voice calling me, and he will be so angry that I have dared to write a play."

She arose in a moment, and listened at the head of the stairs. Her father had ceased calling her, but she could still hear his angry voice, and the pleading tones of her mother. Softly and cautiously she crept down in the dark, until she had gained the lowest stair, and there she sat trembling like a culprit, while unwittingly she heard every word that was spoken.

"She is ruined—she is a ruined girl!" exclaimed her father, in an emphatic voice.

"But, Thomas——"

"Don't say a word; she is ruined, and I'm sorry to say, you have had a hand in it. You encourage her miserable notions too much, mother, spending money on paints and papers, and every kind of trash imaginable. Wait till she gets older—she'll be a pretty mess of trouble to us; I've no hope of her."

"You feel wronged and discouraged, or I know you wouldn't talk so about your own child," said Mrs. Amber; "you don't see her good points as I do; she's a little wild, to be sure, but a good-hearted girl, and I will not burden her yet, young and slender as she is, with my heavy work."

"Dear mother," thought Gracie, as the tears fell fast upon her hands.

"No—you'll slave yourself to death," continued the angry man, "and let her sit at her ease, painting a butterfly or some such nonsense. I tell you she ought to work; here she is growing up, and what sort of a wife is she going to make for some poor fellow?"

"You don't know Gracie," resumed Mrs. Amber, with a little more spirit; "the girl has genius; I always saw that. And that's the reason why I get her pencils and paints, and let her write and such things. As to housework, if ever she gets strong she'll take to that; and you know, Thomas, what a puny thing she was, and what hard work we had to raise her. She would work beyond her strength if I'd let her, and, as it is, for one going to school, she works pretty hard. I'm sure I don't know what I should do if Gracie wasn't so handy with her needle; and as to her being ruined, I should not wonder if you was proud of that girl some day, and I too."

"Blessed, blessed mother!" sobbed Gracie in the entry.

"Humph! if she keeps on getting everybody into scrapes at this rate," ejaculated Mr. Amber, "we shall be anything but proud of her. I shouldn't wonder if poor Ingerson got turned out of his situation just on account of this piece of mischief."

"Oh, dear, dear!" moaned Gracie completely wretched.

"Do you think so?" asked Mrs. Amber, with distress in her voice.

"I shouldn't wonder a bit," echoed Tom Amber. "Old Hinges is a firebrand when he gets going; and the idea of playing theatre in a meeting-house! who blames him?—I'm sure I don't."

"They shan't turn out old Mr. Ingerson!" said Gracie to herself, very emphatically: and by the time she had formed a plan by which to save the feelings and the situation of the kind old man, her father had returned to his shop.

When Gracie, ashamed and humiliated, moved like a cul-

prit to the sitting room, she found her mother seated at the little sewing table, but her work had fallen from her hand, and her forehead rested on the palm, as if she was weary and dispirited. Gracie stole softly towards her, and stood for a moment undecided, then, with a burst of feeling, she threw her arms about her mother's neck, and sobbed upon her bosom.

Gently untangling herself from this embrace, Mrs. Amber, her soft eyes full of tears, gazed with a sort of mournful reproach on her daughter, and then, with a voice quivering with emotion, said brokenly—

"I hope you will repay me, one day, Gracie; I hope you will repay me."

"I will, I will, mother," sobbed the repentant girl. "I know I did wrong to take such liberties without speaking to you about it, but the girls all said it would be so nice, and they liked the play so well, that I gave up to them; I knew it was wrong."

"What do you mean by the play, Gracie? Have you been writing a play?"

The girl ceased crying for a moment, and blushes covered her cheeks as she looked steadily at her mother; then, seeing more encouragement than blame in the gentle face, she went to a little drawer, unlocked it, and taking from thence a roll of manuscript, placed it in her mother's hand, and sat down lovingly at her feet, ever and anon glancing up, with a shy, yet happy look. Mrs. Amber opened the closely written sheets, whereon, near the top, was printed in a large, round hand—

"THE DISOWNED DAUGHTER."

Dramatis Personæ:

Lilly Leighton, - -	Disowned Daughter.
Melville Welbourne, -	Her Page.
Miss Leighton, - -	Stately Mother.
Miss Crabton, - - -	Boarding School Teacher.
Miss Mercer, - - -	Governess.

Suppressing a smile, Mrs. Amber ran carefully through the manuscript, but there was a beam in her eye, a pleasurable suffusion over her delicate features that gave instantaneous hope to the erratic genius at her feet.

"Is it good, mother?" she eagerly enquired, all care forgotten, when at last her mother laid the important missive on the table.

"It is creditable to your head, Gracie, though full of faults. I should hope the day would never come when my daughter would desert her mother, as you make Lilly Leighton do here."

"Oh! but that's only a play, mother."

"Yet it has its influence, and that is not wholly pure; I cannot tell you why, to-night; I feel ill and nervous; to-morrow I will talk with you."

"And to-morrow I will work harder for you, than I have done to-day; you look pale, dear mother; oh! I have been so ungrateful to let you labor so long," and Gracie urged her mother to keep quiet, while she went into the little kitchen behind the shop and restored it to its wonted order.

Sometimes she peeped through the green curtain that hung on brass rings, over a narrow window that led into her father's place of business. There were not many comers that night, for Tom Amber kept no bar. He sat behind the counter, paper in hand, and Gracie reproached herself, as she scanned the careworn brow, with the thought that she had added one other source of vexation to his daily annoyances. The lamps seemed to burn dim; little Benny Amber went quietly around, putting things to rights, and sweeping the store for to-morrow. Gracie thought, till the tears came, how sad and worn out her father was with the struggle for subsistence, and how much more the little worker there, scarce seven years old, sacrificed for the comfort of his parent, than she, the eldest of the family; and more disheartened

with herself than she had ever been before, she sought her chamber for the night.

THE GROCER.

Tom Amber was a generous-hearted but disappointed man. He had commenced life with good expectations, and vague hopes of coming wealth. Left an orphan at his birth, no factitious circumstances of fortune had promoted him to independence. He had wedded a rich man's daughter, but the sudden failure and death of her father the week they were united, cut her off from all her expectations. Twice had Tom Amber placed himself far above want; twice through a nature too unworldly wise and trusting, had he been reduced to poverty. Now, he was a man in his middle age, with a family of six children dependent upon him for support, and he was yet struggling. He loved his children, but petty cares and the consciousness that he could not do for them as he wished, made him seem to himself morose in his nature, and cold in his affections. Yet never lived a man who regarded his family with a feeling akin to worship, more fervently than did Tom Amber. His wife understood him, while his children, accustomed to fear, angled for the tit-bits of tenderness which he sometimes threw towards them, and toiled unceasingly for him, rewarded with a smile. Gracie alone disappointed him. He couldn't understand her notions, he said. He was ambitious that she should be a scholar; consequently, when she came home one day tired and heated, and flinging her books down, declared that she *could* not study, that she hated grammar and it did her no good; that she sat crying at school all day, with pain and the affliction of a will-o'-the-wisp memory, that played her false whenever she would be true; and when, at last, on the plea that her mother's health was poor, and she must have assistance or break down, she carried her point, her father seemed to take little or no interest in her. More-

over his prophesy with regard to her good-for-nothingness seemed likely to be fulfilled, for released from her studies, Miss Gracie seemed equally disinclined to labor. If she swept the floor her heart palpitated; if she lifted any considerable weight it gave her the side ache; but she would pore for hours over old books. She would write poems with the crowing babe upon her knee; clear the litter from a corner, and disfigure sheet after sheet of letter paper with fanciful designs, or purloin the hours of the night, and pen a story or tragedy, which she afterwards distributed among her favorite play-fellows with a prodigal hand. Their sincere praise flattered her self-love, and gave wings to her ambition. She never seemed so happy as when engaged in these varied, but not very profitable pursuits. The old garret overhead, with its rough black beams, and two cobwebbed windows, was literally heaped with the cast-off finery which she had begged, and out of which she fashioned her theatrical wardrobe. Her tastes were decidedly classic, and the histrionic art seemed destined yet to number her among its devotees. Her father was a strict disciplinarian, and would never knowingly have allowed her to enter the doors of a theatre. But a favorite friend of the family, more indulgent than prudent, found means occasionally to introduce her to the tawdry blandishments of the stage; and though first Gracie was carried fainting from her seat, unable to bear the horrors of a mock murder, she eventually acquired a love for this diversion, that nothing seemed possible to destroy; thus her passion for writing tragedies. Her mother was the only check upon her errors of whatever kind. Her mother she loved with a sort of reverence, and when the pale, patient face, silently reproached her, she would fly into a fury of industry, and for a while raise the hopes of her father. It was well that Mrs. Amber saw through Gracie's apparent worthlessness; saw that under that seemingly apathetic nature, shone a gem

that would polish into value. A mother's love felt that the strange nature craved other than common food, and it was she who often said to her, "go to your painting awhile, Gracie," or, "no matter, I will do this if you are writing." It was she who hoarded the hardly earned money, to furnish her child with pencils and paints, and warded off the effects of her father's displeasure, when he found her indulging in "that nonsense," instead of learning to work, as a girl in her station should do.

CHAPTER III.

HART'S CONCLUSION.

For a long while—away into the silent midnight, Hart Holden lay looking out upon the stars. The brick south side of the old meeting-house stood opposite, with the shadows of trees and grape vines sharply defined against it. One large window, ghostly-looking, with two moon-beams centred in two neighboring panes of glass, seemed staring directly into the boy's pale face. Pale, for Hart had been watching and tossing and turning, while he thought how directly beneath that window laid his crock of gold, and of what steps he should take in its disposal.

Hart well knew that he was not the son of the vulgar, parsimonious Jemmie Holden, who had gathered what little property he possessed by the strictest economy. He had obtained the knowledge accidentally, for a tender regard had been manifested in him since he could remember, both by Jem Holden, as he was called, and Prudence his wife.

How the handsome boy had come into the possession of the

Holdens, nobody knew. And yet people marvelled that he dressed finer than his foster brothers, of whom there were two, and outstripped them in intellectual attainments. Bob and Dick were hard-featured, common-looking boys; Hart was very handsome, yet with his fine, regular features, not girlishly so. Bob and Dick were grovelling in their tastes; preferred a stolen sweet to one honestly procured; delighted in roaming the wharves, and rifling the outsides of sugar barrels; smoked segar stumps, and in their language were prodigal of oaths. Hart loved his books, and indulged in dreamy thoughts of future eminence; pondered often upon his origin, but was not of an age to feel any engrossing anxiety on that account. His influence was salutary to the rest, although like a silent river, it flowed on without much babbling. Especially did Letta benefit by his studious habits and correct tastes. She aided him in planting their little garden; she fled to him when overborne by her ungainly brothers; she recited her lessons to him, and as she knew not the difference in their relationship, he was "her *best* brother," that was all.

Very restless lay Hart in the narrow kitchen chamber. Mrs. Holden, a fair, fat little body, was still bustling among the tubs, preparing for the morrow's wash. She kept no servant, and generally worked half the night, for the sake of saving a penny. Little she thought of the busy mind up stairs, or dreamed of the good fortune in store for her.

"Suppose," queried Hart to himself, with a boyish love of adventure, "I should take the money and run off! But then what could I do with it? Everybody would suspect me, and I shouldn't know what to do with it. Besides, the Holdens have been kind to me, almost kinder than to their own children; it would be ungrateful to leave them. I guess I'll go round to mother Mott," he soliloquized, taking a fresh turn with his back to the moon; "but no; *she* would advise me

to carry the money to the church, and then there'd be a long rigmarole of a time and all that, and those who are rich might get it, maybe and so what good will it do?"

Some little time after the clock had struck one, Hart fell asleep, half promising himself that on the morrow, come what would, he should inform his foster father of his luck, destined to be for good or ill—to bless or curse.

THE DISCLOSURE.

Hart was up with the dawn. The light came dim and grey through the curtained windows of the little kitchen, and Jem, who was a model husband, was busied in making a roaring fire, that just as the boy entered, blazed up, filling the place with cheerful warmth and color.

"Halloa, boy!" exclaimed Jem, balancing the tea kettle upon an old-fashioned crane; "you're up early this morning, what's the damage?"

"Nothing, father," answered the boy, "except I've got a secret to tell you."

"A secret, hey! a secret;" and the man's face flushed—or it was the red flame playing upon his coarse features; he stood bolt upright, thrusting his hands deep in his blue overalls, and looking Hart in the face, murmured, "well, nobody can't say that I hain't always done well by ye, any how."

"'Twasn't about myself," answered the intelligent boy, coming up closer to Jem, "but about money. I've found some money."

"The!—what?" ejaculated Jem, sharply; "found money? where, when? what do you mean?"

"Under the old meeting-house," replied Hart, in a low tone. "I was going"—when he was interrupted by his foster father, who, in still sharper, more excited tones, exclaimed, as he seized his old hat—"whist, boy! be still as the grave;

don't say another word till we get where we won't be heard—but, is it safe? have you put it in a safe place? All right, then; come along—come along;" and walking at a rapid rate, they hurried down the alley.

The morning was yet dark and misty. A dim, undecided light, glimmered through the curtains of the waking day. The old alley was as silent as the grave, save the echoing tread of our early pedestrians. The one eyed baker's boy stood stretching his dumpy limbs, preparatory to lifting the long, heavy shutters from the windows of the model bakery. A savory smell of coffee pervaded the atmosphere in the vicinity of one or two sailor boarding houses. A forest of masts appeared beyond the various openings that led from that busy thoroughfare to the wharves beyond, some white and tapering, others dark and heavy. A world of silence lay upon the waters. Their depths looked dreary under the heavy mantling of a cloudy dawn. Towards a wharf, on each side of which frowned dark stone warehouses, and where the strong odor of tar, pitch, turpentine and oils, gave one prosy visions of commerce; where heavy looking vessels with dirty decks and soiled ropes, unrelieved by the hurry and excitement of business, stripped all poetry from the contemplation of "a life on the ocean wave," Hart and his foster father silently took their way. Passing, at last, in a gloomy recess, behind a gloomier building, where huge piles of lumber obstructed sight and sound, Jem Holden lifted his hat and wiped the sweat from his brow, saying—

"There, now, I feel as if we might speak without being afeared. The old woman has got plaguey sharp ears, and if she heard it, it would be all day with us; what with dresses, knicknacks and fal'd'rols; now, say on, tell us about it; my soul! boy! if I can get a little sum ahead, I'm a made man."

"Well, as I said," replied Hart, speaking almost in a whisper, for the mystery which his foster father thought fit

to use, had impressed him with a vague, uneasy fear; "I was going through the old wine cellar under the meeting-house, trying to get in there to see the girls play theatre, Gracie Amber, Letta and the rest, when, as I felt along with my arms, I upset a pot full of gold; I left it under the pulpit stairs; and there it is now, for I didn't know what to do with it."

"Under the pulpit stairs," whispered Jem Holden; "hist! what's that noise? It's the water rats," he added, peering about him; "then somebody'll find it—then old Ingerson'll get it; and he's such a queer old divil, that he'll go blab to the church."

"No; its too securely hidden," replied Hart, turning at the slight repetition of the rustling noise they had heard before.

"How much should you think there was?" asked Jem Holden, who had stood for some moments gazing steadily downwards.

"I don't know, hundreds of dollars, any way," returned Hart.

"Good, boy!" exclaimed the stevedore, with a solemn kind of joy, "it'll make me, that will; it'll be the making of me," he repeated with emphasis, lifting his eyes slowly to the boy's face; "only the old lady musn't hear a word of it, not a word—and them boys—they musn't know nothing about it, or they'd be for running into all sorts of rigmaroles. Lord! well, might's well not get excited about it, but I tell you now, it makes me feel good. But you—" his countenance fell; "of course you'll be wanting *your* share for the keeping of the secret."

A flush reddened the cheek of the boy as he answered almost haughtily, "there's no danger of my telling, and as to being paid for keeping a secret, I'd scorn such a thing."

"I know'd you would," responded Jem, drawing a long

breath, "and between you and me, I don't know as it'll do any harm to say it, there ain't no fear but what *you'll* be provided for, by them that's able to do it, and do it handsomely—hundreds of dollars! my soul! it'll be the making of me. Under the old meeting-house—how queer! Well, I guess we'll go; but, stop! how on earth are you goin' to get the money home?"

Hart looked down thoughtfully.

"Gracie Amber wants me to go in this afternoon and blow the organ bellows for her," he said. "I'll manage it some way, and when you get it you'll know where to keep it, of course."

"Aye, boy, I'll keep it safe; see the sun is rising after all; we're going to have a fine day, and I'll go to stevedoring. I'll git lunch somewhere hereabouts—hundreds of dollars—look here, don't you say a word to the old woman; of course you won't though; I'm a fool; there, go along and git your breakfast."

JUPE.

The two had hardly disappeared, when there emerged from a gap in the timber, stealthily, creepingly, a cadaverous miniature of an undergrown man; a nondescript, apparently of twelve or fourteen, but so old and careworn in face, so shrivelled, so wanting in all the physical attributes of boyhood! so hollow cheeked and large eyed! so tattered and bedaubed! and with premature vice, stamped in unmistakable characters upon his broad, low forehead! such falling jaws and livid complexion! as almost utterly to preclude all possibility of accounting him aught of human mould. Rising with effort, he stood shaking and trembling for a moment, steadying himself by the rough, projecting boards, his fleshless jaws grinning and gaping, his lifeless eye-balls rolling with vague wonder.

Presently he drew from his ragged pocket, a crust of black bread frosted with blue mould, and breaking with an effort the most inviting morsels, if any could be so called where all was loathsome, he eat with ravenous haste of hunger. After he had done, he stood and chuckled to himself a moment (a strange triumphant sound it was,) then looking towards the opening, as if he yet saw the two, whose consultation and whose secret he had evidently heard, he chuckled louder, shook his ghastly head, and, dragging one foot slowly after the other, emerged from his damp sleeping place.

As he met, singly, the few workmen who had come down to the wharf, to begin their day's labor, he saluted them oddly with a jerk of his head, from which the uncut hair hung in tangled masses; and was in return recognized with a nod, or a "hilloa, Jupe!" "morning, tombstone," and similar original expressions. The boy wandered round among the gangs, who seemed to tolerate him out of pity, for he was evidently the victim of a slow consumption; nobody knew his origin, he could not even tell himself. Various efforts had been made to reclaim him, but he loved a vagabond life; he had known, and he would know no other.

Moving along with a tottering gait, the result of extreme bodily weakness, he found at last the object of his search. His eye shone with a strange and fearful glitter, as he shamled up to the side of Jem Holden, who, with jacket off, and check shirt sleeves rolled up to his brawny elbows, stood with lever in hand, lifting huge bales over the vessel's side.

"Say, Jem Holden," he cried, winking, chuckling and shrugging his skeleton shoulders. "Say, gi' me some money?"

"Go off, Jupe, I hain't got a dime; what d'ye come to me for money for?"

The boy only compressed his lips, laughed inwardly, and wagged his head. Presently he went forward again.

"Say—Jem Holden, gi me some breakfast?"

"Go along with you, I say," cried the man, in a loud voice. "I've got no breakfast for you, ain't had any myself."

"But you're going to git lunch somewhere hereabouts," drawled the shadow, winking unceasingly, and rubbing his mouth with the rag bunch that answered for a sleeve. "You've got hundreds of dollars."

The stevedore paused suddenly, and threw a terrible look on the cadaverous face before him. His brown cheek turned a shade paler, as he noticed the contortions that were evidently intended to establish a mute correspondence between them, and also to betoken secrecy.

"Come, Jem Holden, gi' me some money now, you've got plenty—the old meetin' house, ye know."

Still Jem Holden stood gazing upon the miserable wreck, unwilling to believe the evidence of his senses, while the words, "you young villain you—you imp of perdition," came ground by passion between his teeth.

"I, I won't blab, I tell ye, if I did heern about it," said the unsightly object, stepping back; the wide shoes that had belonged to some stout, robust man, clattering as they moved about his bony ancles. "Honor amongst thieves, ye know; I won't never blab, so long as ye'll gi' me a sixpence for keepin' it; but if ye don't gi' me a sixpence, I'll go and tell on ye. I knows that sixton what buried old grandman;" and the death's head shook, and the thin lips displayed the large yellow teeth, while Jem Holden still gazed as if spell-bound.

If no one had been in sight, so instantaneous was the mingling passion, with the suddenly aroused sentiment of avarice, Jem Holden had little recked if the few drops of blood that kept life in the miserable creature, had stained the ground at his feet. Murder knocked with her red hand at the door of his heart, and held in one bloody palm a few bright atoms as his temptation and reward.

"If I give you sixpence"—he slowly articulated.

"I won't say nothin' to livin' or dead—ony," he chuckled, dragging himself away, and speaking for his own benefit, "I'll skin yer pocket of sixpences, blow'd if I don't."

CHAPTER IV.

JUPE'S INTERVIEW WITH THE SEXTON.

It was Saturday—that busy period for the working poor. Ruddy housemaids, with their skirts carefully tucked from the dirty pave, labored to cleanse innumerable wooden steps leading to tenements of every variety of form and color. Market baskets were rife, and butchers' carts, surrounded mostly by females, who bargained closely for their favorite joints. It was a clear day in the Indian summer; the sky was a deep blue, of June softness, the atmosphere balmly as an infant's breath.

The doors of the old meeting-house were thrown wide open, revealing the toiling form of the grey-haired sexton, Ingerson, who, sweeping the wide, uncarpeted vestibule, seemed unfit for his lowly occupation. He was a tall, bony man, full six feet high, with a narrow but prominent forehead, from which the white hairs were carefully brushed. His apparel was neat though homely, his eye kindly, his face prepossessing, and of a loftier cast than common. A studious man was sexton Ingerson, as his neat little room at home, fitted up with the exactness, though not the abundance of a well-stored library, gave evidence.

Opening one of the heavy doors, he disappeared within the church: and it was not long after, that the figure of a young

girl glided up the stone steps, and, after pausing a moment, passed also within the body of the house. There she stood awhile, looking about for the sexton. The bland wind stirred the graceful Venetian blinds, and the subdued sun-rays mellowly lighted the interior of the old church. The sombre, dark pews, with their mahogany tops, the rich, bright-colored carpet, the handsomely carved pulpit with its draperies of crimson, the magnificent curtain, quaintly folded, yet daintily, with its enormous tassels, the pillars with their Corinthian curves, the massive chandelier, all were pervaded with the hue of delicious morning; and a silent beauty lingered over the adornments of the house of God.

So it seemed to Gracie Amber, who held her breath, and wondered at her own irreverence in enacting the mockery of a theatre in a place sacred to the Almighty. So impressed was she with the quiet and solemnity of the place, that she did not notice the presence of a second person, until a startlingly hollow voice exclaimed,

"What's that thingumbob up there?"

Uttering an exclamation of fear, the young girl sprang from the unearthly figure that met her view, and stood gazing into the large glittering eyes upraised to hers.

"You ain't pizened, are you?" asked the strange creature with a sneer—"say; ain't there a man here what buries folks? I seen him about this morning."

"Do you mean Mr. Ingerson?" asked Gracie, forgetting her fear in the pity her girlish heart felt for one so woe-begone and wasted.

"I do no—its the man what buries folks I mean. I come to see if he wouldn't like a job—to bury *me*, in course; don't I look half dead? I wish I *was* dead and done."

"Why, what's the matter with you?" asked Gracie, almost tearfully, drawing a little nearer.

"It's laying awake o' nights, and coughing nary time but

then, what ails me; the doctors says its the consumption, and wants to take me to the 'ospital, but they can't have this child to cut up—say! s'this the place Jim Holden got them shiners?"

"What do you mean?" queried the wondering girl.

"Why, this is the old meetin'-'ouse, ain't it? The old meetin'-'ouse, corner o' Bread Alley, ain't it?"

Gracie answered in the affirmative.

"Then Jim Holden lives her' somewhere, don't he? Say, you just tell me ware Jim Holden shells?"

"If you mean where he lives, it's over there, in the little brown house—garden in front," replied Gracie, her heart aching at the sight of the skin plastered to the high bones, and jaw thrust forward and fallen, the whole appearance so deathly—the claw-like fingers, the rags and strings, and greasy straps that held his filthy and misshapen clothes together, the protruding ankle-bones, on which the flesh was blue and shrunken.

"Say," cried the boy shrilly, turning to the old sexton, who entered at that moment, "you'll bury me, won't you? 'twon't cost much, and p'raps Jim Holden 'll pay the expenses; he owes me, Jim Holden does, some money to keep me from blabbin'. Don't you let the doctors have me to do away with my bones, will you?"

"Boy, you're drunk," said the old sexton, in a tone of reproof; "this ain't no place for you."

"I ain't had no whisky—nary drop since no time, and I ain't had nothin' to eat—nor I don't want nothin'. I've got the consumption, and I know I ain't a going to live long, and I want to be buried up in that place where you put 'em;" and the troubled grey eyes glared strangely, as a few tears moistened their glazed surface.

"Who are you, my boy?" asked the old sexton, more kindly.

"I'm Jupe, they call me; I used to be a reg'lar hand at circusses and theatres, and cutting up, but I ain't got no strength now;" and he gasped, and drew his arm up against his side, as though a sharp pain contested with him for the little breath he had. "Now, say," he continued—"s'pose I die on the wharf—I ain't got no friends, who'se goin' to tell you? how'll you find out? You'll be sure to, some way, won't you? You'll bury me—p'raps I'll git the rhino some way 'fore that time"—and he winked sagaciously. And the wicked, oldish look on his haggard face grew painfully dark.

"Havn't you got *any* friends?" asked the sexton.

"On'y some what gi' me a lodging-house in jail for hooking," he answered; "and all I'd like to live for," he added, his grey eye kindling with a ferocious light, "'d be to have my will o' them are men. Say, mister—will you bury me, 'cause I'll be easy in my mind if you say yes."

"Yes, then," said the good sexton, unwilling to witness such living misery any longer; "and now, ain't there any place where you can get a mouthful? I'm sure you must be hungry."

"Would you like a cake?" asked Gracie, pity in her eyes: "because, if you'll sit on the steps outside, I'll go and get you a nice one out of father's shop."

"Say, you just git me one, and see if I won't. I ain't got no stomach for mouldy bread no longer—see here;" and he pulled out a crust that caused the old sexton to turn his head, and sent the warm feeling to the young girl's fine eyes. "I'm a going to see Jim Holden, and p'raps he'll let me live with him. Jim and I has business together, we has," and with a look of importance that contrasted strangely with the diseased aspect of his sunken face, he shuffled to the stone steps, while Gracie, who had spoken of her errand to the sexton, hurried to her father's shop.

CHAPTER V.

PAUL HALBURTON.

SHE paused on the threshold as she entered. Her father stood behind the counter, supporting himself by one hand. His face was livid, his lips were white, and he seemed struggling with some internal emotion. Opposite, stood a tall, slender, handsome man in the prime of life, an expression of conscious importance giving to his finely turned features a haughtiness that was almost supercilious. His hair curled loosely under his hat, his face was dark, set with shining black eyes that flashed sometimes under beautifully pencilled brows. He was talking earnestly, excitedly to her father, and as he spoke he drew his head back with an air of a man who is determined to do some disagreeable thing.

"Can't wait, Mr. Amber, the money must be paid," he said firmly. "I have waited a week too long already. I lent you the money without security, taking your simple word—a thing no one ever knew me to do before; I have always considered you an honest man, Mr. Amber."

Tom Amber's white lips grew whiter—he looked over to Gracie, and commanding his voice, said, "What do you want, daughter?"

The stranger turned at this, gazing long and admiringly in the sweet young face. As he looked, his eye kindled, and Tom Amber made a gesture of impatience, as if he would have torn the girl from his glances.

"A cake, father, for a poor, famished boy, dying with consumption," returned the young girl, her face growing bright with blushes, as she felt herself the object of this man's unflinching scrutiny. The grocer took two or three from a box near, and handed them to his daughter.

"Amber, I didn't know you had such a fine looking girl as that," spoke the stranger, as Gracie sprung lightly from the shop. "Why, man, that girl is worth fifty thousand dollars to you this minute."

The grocer's eyes flashed lightning, as he replied, "Fifty thousand, nor a thousand times fifty, couldn't buy my child. Mr. Halburton. She's but a child yet; but gold couldn't buy her."

"Pretty much of a woman, I should say," remarked the other, in his cold way; "but about the money, can you be ready for me Monday week?"

"I will try to," responded the grocer, wearily lifting himself from his bent position.

"I will try to!" The old, sad burden of aching hearts.

The stranger passed from the shop. Jupe on the old meeting-house steps was greedily finishing his cakes. The boy looked up askingly, and Paul Halburton threw a small silver piece towards him. He seldom gave way to such weakness, nor would he now, but for remembrance of the childish sweet face of Gracie Amber.

MOTHER MOTT.

Tom Amber was almost discouraged. Since he had given up his bar, his profits had been much lessened. A hard winter in prospect, and his family demanding more than ever from his untiring efforts, he hardly knew how to look life in the face. A few sweet notes of music came faintly through from the house; his brow darkened. "If it hadn't been for mother's foolishness," he muttered, "Gracie would have been some help to me now. She might have learned a trade, months ago; but no, instead she must have a piano, and I must pay for it by the sweat of my brow, while she dings away thinking of nothing but self."

The poor man forgot how many times he had been soothed by the same old instrument. He forgot how proud he had been when professor Rose told him that really his daughter had such wonderful genius for music, that as soon as she had conquered the mere technicalities of the science, she might make her fortune by teaching others. He forgot that the spectacled professor asked nothing for his services—he only remembered that he was poor, very poor; that none of his children were able to help him; that his landlord was a hard, rich man; that those who lived only for gold, and upon the downfall and ruin of their fellow creatures, gained in money and the esteem of the false world, while he, who for the sake of his conscience, kept no liquor, and walked in the straight and narrow way as well as he knew how, suffered from poverty, and was subjected to insult from his fellows. His spirit rebelled as he thought of this, and his heart grew impatient under the trial. Look where he would, there was no light visible; clouds and darkness encompassed his path. He had shut his soul from consolation, and he could not believe that God cared for him.

"Good morning, brother Amber."

The cheerful voice roused the disconsolate grocer from his reverie. It was a small, tidy looking body that stood before him, a little kettle in one hand, a white plate on which was folded a snowy napkin in the other. She was attired in the perfection of neatness, although her garments were of the coarsest kind, her bonnet a black straw that had seen service seven years; yet not a speck was visible on the gown of brown bombazine, not a wrinkle in the linen kerchief, many times mended, that was placidly folded over her shoulders. Her happy old face was even yet handsome; her hair, white as silver, laid smoothly under the crimped cap ruffle, and her whole appearance indicated purity and spotlessness alike within and without. Peace spoke in the serene lips, a calm

joy sat on the wrinkled brow, and the blue eyes, though faded, almost looked comfort into the weary heart.

"How d'e do, Mother Mott?" said the grocer, a smile breaking over his face, and the trouble vanishing. "I havn't seen you for a day or two."

"No, I've been sick; didn't Gracie tell you? bless that child! what a comfort she must be to you. Give me a quarter pound of your best butter, brother Amber," she continued, holding out the plate and the nicely folded cloth, "and a penny's worth of milk—yes, that daughter of yours must be a great blessing, Mr. Amber. I often think how thankful you ought to be to God that he has kept your family together. You never knew what it was to lose a child;" and she sighed a little, but presently smiled as she added—"I'm thankful my pilgrimage is nearly done, only think of it!" and a light of rapture shone from her withered features—"eleven to meet me there."

"Mother Mott," said the grocer, pressing down an extra lump of golden butter on the already required weight, "you always speak so sure of heaven and heavenly things. One would think you had been on a short journey there, and had come back again for a while."

"Ah!" she said, while a beaming smile made her face all alive again, "as I told brother Merrill in class meeting last night, says he, 'sister, is your hope as bright as ever?' Says I, no, brother Merrill; and his countenance fell in a minute; says I, but it's a good deal brighter; I can't think how it is that I, a poor lonely old soul, should be so favored of the Lord. Bless His name, if I havn't a stick on the fire, his love warms my heart like; if I havn't a bit on the table, his word fills me; it seems as if *my* heaven had begun on earth. Oh! brother Amber, I tell you all things will work right to them that love the Lord."

"I wish you would go in the house a minute," said Tom,

after a pause, winking the tears from his eyes; "mother's worried and fretted about the baby, and perhaps you can tell her what to do for it. Any how, there'll be a blessing wherever *you* go," he murmured, as she hastened to perform his request, and he brushed off his shelves, determining in his own mind that he would not give way to despondency.

THE TEMPTATION.

Then came in, soon after mother Mott had gone, a slender, sickly-looking woman, to see about hiring the long room above the shop, for a school-room. She had called on the same errand several times, and each time became more importunate. She had a large family, she said, and was unwilling to pay the rent he asked. She begged him to favor her, to show mercy as he would have mercy shown; and as the grocer was a tender-hearted man, he at last half resolved to let her have the room, and told her that she might know decidedly on the morrow. As she turned to go, the warm flush of hope coloring her cheek, a rubicund customer entered with a rough, hearty salutation.

"I say, Tom," he cried in loud, jovial tones that spoke his rude but genial nature—"how with that old loft of yours? 'Empty yet?'"

"Yes, but I'm in hopes of getting it off my hands soon," replied the grocer.

"Well, now, my boy, do you want to make lots of money by that room, that will clear your rent, shop and all?" queried the other with a sagacious look. "Seems to me, Tom, you ain't doing much business for a Saturday; pity you gave up that bar."

"I don't think so," replied the grocer, "although for a time it may make business dull. Besides, I don't want the death of any poor devil laid at my door, either here or hereafter."

"Aye! all morally true enough, *but* you know, a fellow must think of his interest."

"What was you going to say about the room overhead?"

"Why, that you have the offer of a clear eight hundred for it, and no questions asked."

A gleam of pleasure passed athwart the grocer's intelligent face; he started to his feet, exclaiming, "a clear eight hundred!"

"Handsome sum, ain't it? then it's to be elegantly fitted up with damask curtains, and fine carpets, chairs and mirrors. Then, you see, it will bring you customers, and before you and I know it, Tom Amber's a rich man."

The grocer's heart beat high. Eight hundred dollars a year! it would clear his rent, it would lighten his heart, it would benefit him incalculably; but his joy gave way to astonishment. "What do they want to make of the room?" he asked. "What is it to be fitted up so finely for?"

"Ah! there's where you must be mum," said the other, winking, and at the same time making some suspicious movements with his hands. "There's where you musn't know nothing. What business of mine is it?" says you when you're asked; "of course, none—certainly not. Eight hundred a year and no questions asked," he repeated, watching the grocer narrowly. "Best location in the world for some kinds of business," he said, hesitatingly, seeing that Tom Amber's honest face fell as he spoke.

The grocer thought a moment, and slowly shook his head.

"It's no use for me to pretend ignorance," he repeated, slowly. "It's to establish a gambling saloon, to make my house the very pit of hell—I couldn't think of it; twice eight hundred dollars wouldn't be a temptation."

He spoke thoughtlessly; his voice was not firm as he said it. It *was* a temptation even as it was, a very great temptation. He saw his poor wife released from toil, comparative-

ly—his own mind at ease—his children better dressed and better fed: but then he saw—he saw also another picture; a terrible picture framed in broken hearts—the semblance of the God he worshiped, degraded under his roof; the blood-shot eye—the eager, frantic clutch for unlawful gold; the soul shorn of all honesty—man enriching himself by blood—man pandering to passions the lowest and the blackest; man preparing souls for the darker school of hell. These visions crossed and recrossed the portals of his mind with terrible rapidity. The scales within lost their equal poise; integrity smiled as she watched narrowly the preponderance, and as they fell slowly down, on the side of truth and justice, her exultant glance lightened the whole man.

"I can't do it," he said, as he stood upright and held his head firmly. "I should never know peace after it, and peace of conscience is better than all neighbor Ben's houses over yonder—no, I can't do it."

"Now, Tom Amber, don't go to be a fool," responded his friend, who had been deliberately eating from a sack of peanuts that stood conveniently near. "Seems to me, you're a strangely altered man from what you used to be; you did once seem to have some spirits. Come, think it over, man; that pretty, little delicate wife of yours now; how hard she has to work. By George! it's a shame; nicest looking woman at the North end; ought to dress in silks and satins, and go about visiting like other folks; you miss it, Tom Amber."

"Perhaps I do miss making money," replied the other, "but I don't miss the peace of my conscience. I tell you, Jake, we're to be tried some day for our honesty; and then they who had their good things in this world may fare harder in the next, for it's my opinion, Jake," and he looked keenly at his companion, "that dishonesty don't go unpunished, forever."

The man blushed and filled his coarse mouth with peanuts. "As you like, Tom Amber; I made you the offer in all kindness, 'cause I wanted to do a friendly turn by you. If you ain't a mind to take it up, why! let it go, that's all;" and, wishing a crusty good morning, he hurried away, taking an additional handful of peanuts.

Leaving one of his boys in the shop, the grocer went into the house to talk over the matter with his wife. She fully approved of his course, and smiled as she said—

"Do right, Thomas; it is better to have the approval of one's own heart, than all the kingdoms of this world. As for me, I have had a perfect feast this morning. It does seem as if whenever mother Mott comes here the sun shines brighter all day after it. What troubles she has had, and yet what a happy creature she is, always telling of God's goodness."

"I wish Gracie wouldn't ding at that piano," said the grocer, somewhat pettishly.

"O! but she loves it," responded the wife, coaxingly, "and the teachers are going to have a little festival, and expect Gracie to play. Do let her enjoy herself while she can; she may have trouble enough yet, poor thing," she added, sadly.

How quickly one desponding word takes heart from the unfortunate. The manner in which the grocer's wife said this, set Tom Amber to thinking that perhaps she was reflecting upon her own hard lot, and upon him as its cause; and then came the pale face of the slender woman who wanted to keep school in his empty room; and the feeling of disappointment that she could pay so little; and the knowledge that he had but one week in which to gather his rent, and another quarter rapidly approaching its termination; then there would be the same uncertainty, perhaps, and winter was coming with its multiplied necessities, and "oh, dear!" sighed the grocer, "how hard it is to be poor!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSULTATION.

"PERHAPS," suggested Mrs. Amber, rocking her fretful babe to sleep, "Jemmy Holden might accommodate you with the balance; he generally has some money by him."

"I know it," exclaimed her husband with bitterness; "and how he does it I don't see; a poor day laborer, with so many mouths to feed. I don't see how it is," he added dolorously, shaking his head.

"He isn't dependent upon the risks of trade, dear," said his wife quietly; "neither of his boys go to school, and I suppose they bring in something. Bob assists his father, you know, and Dick is in a store; besides, he gets a little sum for chiming the old North bells."

"Aye! and our boys not earning a penny."

"But look at the difference," reasoned Mrs. Amber softly; "would you have our Frank, or little Ben, such as they? Coarse, ignorant, swearing boys, who break the Sabbath, and think of nothing but how to make money! Now, Thomas, would you like to have our boys like them, if they brought you a fortune a week?"

"No, of course not; but sometimes I feel as if education would do them but little good. Old Tim Fanning, the richest man at the North end, can neither read nor write; I saw him make his mark myself."

"Oh, Thomas!" said Mrs. Amber, with a reproachful look, and that was all she had to say, generally, to bring him to reflection. He turned away from her, and gazed out upon the night. A cloudless heaven and a full moon, made the evening delicious. His glances wandered over the bright distance; the stars blazed benignly, and he wondered if, be-

tween him and the deep beyond, angels ascended and descended on ministrations of mercy. As he gazed, his soul grew more quiet; "surely," thought he, "God, who made Nature so holy in the hush of her beauty, knows what is best for us. Oh! that I trusted more wholly in Him; oh! that I had mother Mott's lowly spirit; oh! that I was more a Christian, and less a 'doubting Thomas!'"

"If I had the strength of Jemmy Holden's wife," murmured Mrs. Amber, her lip quivering, "I could work harder and help you along, but——"

An arm was around her neck, a kiss imprinted on her forehead.

"It is for you, my poor, patient wife, that I am troubled," said Tom Amber affectionately; "best of wives! I know I am not worthy of you. Forgive my continued fault-finding—my thoughtlessness. Come! I'm determined to cast off fear, and trust Heaven. We shall not always struggle thus; and if we do, we have good health and handsome children. I get compliments on every hand, mother," he continued, his spirits rising; "we've got the prettiest family in town; I don't care whose the next is, if I do say it; and as to my wife—it wouldn't do to tell you all the fine speeches I hear about you."

"But where are you going?" asked his wife more cheerfully, seeing him change his shop coat.

"Down to Jemmy Holden's," he replied. "Jemmy has a good heart, and has always helped me before. To be sure I have to pay him something for the use of the money, but that of course. Just keep an eye on the shop, mother, and if there is a crowd step in for a minute, won't you? I shan't be gone long."

MRS. HOLDEN'S PERPLEXITY.

On the day following Hart Holden's disclosure, Jem had the money in his possession. That night it was secretly bur-

ied below the floor in the cellar, and Jem Holden stamped his foot upon the board, underneath which it laid, triumphantly. For the fortieth time that day, his fat little wife exclaimed, as he emerged from the cellar-way,

"Well, Mr. Holden, you do act so queer! I should think somethin' 'd happened."

"Something's happening all the time," Jem replied gruffly, looking hard at his feet to conceal a smile of triumph. "But come—supper most ready? I've been at work to-day, I tell you. Them boards—" he paused abruptly, then, bethinking himself, added—"on the wharf are putty tight lifting, I can tell you—confounded hard."

The next day Jem Holden staid at home. He had, as it were, retired awhile on the interest of imagination. Hart found it the greatest difficulty to meet his eye without losing his gravity, there was such a comical kind of importance there, a sort of good natured command, saying, "thou shalt not tell." Many a time did the stevedore steal down into the cellar, and stand in the farthest corner, eyeing intently the place where lay his paltry treasure. Mrs. Holden said that if the house was his own he couldn't feel more afraid of fire; what in the world, she wondered, made him want to know, all at once, if he couldn't get insurance upon a hired house! She was sure if he did such a foolish thing as that, she *should* give him up as demented.

"I was talking about my horrid old silk to-day," said she to Hart, who was striving to fix his attention upon a gardener's manual in his hand, "and he looked at me so queer, and said, 'why, wife, I could get you six dozen silk dresses, if I was a mind,' and then I told him I'd be very well contented with one, and he said, 'well, well, wife, wait till we git better off.' That was changing his tune pretty quick, wasn't it?"

"I should think so," responded Hart, with a half smile.

"And what's come over him to leave off work, to-day, when he ain't sick an' nothing, and there's plenty to do? *that* puzzles me—seems to me he's strange."

"Oh, you can't expect him always to be tugging at hard work," said Hart.

"No, but then he never stays at home without some reason; and, as I said before, he's so strange. Why, this noon, if he didn't call me out in the wood shed, and says he, 'old woman, did you ever hear any thing strange about the old meeting-house?' says I, no; except I've often thought 'twould look more cheerful like if it had a few more windows."

At this the book fell from Hart's hand; he had been laughing silently, but now he burst into a paroxysm of mirth, so loud and hearty that it was almost convulsive. Mrs. Holden stopped her Saturday's ironing, and turned round, paralyzed at the abruptness of his mirth.

"My goodness, what *on* earth!" she exclaimed rapidly, while Hart rocked to and fro, great tears rolling down his cheeks, his head thrown back. He recovered himself but to look in his foster mother's puzzled face, then screamed again till the little woman, iron in hand, began laughing likewise, and laughed till her iron grew cold.

"Well, I'm sure," she exclaimed in the midst of her mirth; "I don't kno'—ha! what I'm laughing at—ha! ha! nor you, either, I guess—oh!—Lord have mercy, what's that?"

JUPE AGAIN.

Hart checked his screams with an effort and looked in the direction his foster mother indicated. They had both been at work in the covered woodshed, which was more like a kitchen. Hart was preparing a few tulip bulbs for the garden; the creature who made his appearance presented himself without warning at the open door.

"Say, you, Jem Holden live here?"

"Oh! you *horrid* looking thing!" cried the startled woman, poisoning her iron to shut him from her view.

"Guess I can't help it; ain't got no clothes nor nothin'; maybe Jem'll give me some better things nor these—Jem's got money now—Jem's rich—he, he!"

"Hart, *will* you put the creature out? Don't let him set on my sewing chair;" and she pulled it away from the half human looking being so suddenly, that he rolled over on the floor.

"Say, you'll git pay for this," he muttered vengefully, defiantly nodding his head, as he lifted himself up, covered, from top to toe, with the saw dust with which Hart had been experimenting, and breathing with the utmost difficulty, his hollow cheeks pulsating at every gasp, "you'll git your pay for this, coz I've got the consumption, and ain't got no mother, nor father neither—you'll git your pay for this."

"Sit down here a minute," said Hart, compassionating the diseased, half-starved appearance of the unfortunate child, and he handed him a rude seat. "What's the matter with you? What do you want?"

"Want to see Jem Holden," replied the boy; then added with a quick, cunning glance, "we has business together, we has. Be you his boy? Ain't he a reg'lar chicken?"

"My patience, jest hear him!" exclaimed Mrs. Holden, with reddened cheeks; "what in the world does my husband have to do with a thing like that?"

"We works together on the wharf," chuckled the creature, glancing sideways towards Hart; "we works together, I guess. I sleeps jest side of old Jenks' warehouse, where you and him was t'other morning;" and the boy looked hideously cunning as he thrust his tongue in his cheek with a wink as much as to say, "you know."

"He's a crazy vagabone!" exclaimed Mrs. Holden, warm-

ly, not noticing that Hart changed color; "he's a wicked tramper that ought to be put out of sight."

"I'm going to be put out o'sight precious soon, I guess," wheezed the unfortunate; "I'se spoke for my berrying to-day. The old sixton up yonder," nodding towards the meeting-house; "he's going to cover me up; guess I'll be better off then, coz that'll be the last of me."

"What a heathen!" exclaimed Mrs. Holden, neglecting her work, as she stood spell-bound before the living skeleton. "Ready to drop off and die, and a perfect infidel."

"I ain't a fiddle!" exclaimed Jupe, indignantly, "'cept that my clothes is all strings, same's the beggar boys used to be at the theatre; I wish I could go there agin, I'd forgit my consumption, maybe. Say's, Jem Holden home?"

"I'd like to know what you mean by calling my husband Jem Holden," half angrily inquired the wife, lifting another iron from the tiny furnace; "he ain't got nothing to do with such as you."

"Ain't he?" queried Jupe, with his old cunning look, and a rapid succession of winks and contortions directed towards Hart; "he's goin' to give me some money," he added.

"What! for working for him?" asked Mrs. Holden, her feminine curiosity predominating.

"No; for lettin' alone," replied the boy, winking and shrugging in convulsions of secrecy.

A pleasant voice suddenly interposed, and as Mrs. Holden greeted mother Mott, Hart hurried off to hunt up his foster father.

"I'm so glad to see you, mother Mott," said Mrs. Holden, setting back the little table; "and now you've come I mean to keep you, for I've got lots of news to tell. Don't sit down there," she continued, "no knowing what ails him;" but the old lady had drawn up the little rocking chair close to the unfortunate, who regarded her out of his hollow eyes with suspicious glances.

"Poor child," said she, after she had taken off her little black bonnet, "what is the matter with him?"

The boy shrank back, and did not seem to be inclined to speak with her. His innate perceptions were so absolutely depraved that it seemed as if he could not bear the presence of goodness. The evil within could feel the approach of virtue, as the devils of old did the approach of our Saviour.

"He's a miserable little infidel," exclaimed Mrs. Holden, "and I wish he'd go off; nobody knows what he's stayin' for; I don't."

"I won't stay in yer darned old shell no longer, then," cried the boy, rising, with blazing eyes, and drawing up his side as with a spasm of pain.

"Stop, my child," said mother Mott. There was magic in the soft, persuasive voice; besides, she had laid her hand upon his arm, and the touch electrified, thrilled his worn body. What lady, since he could remember, had ever laid her hand upon his arm? He paused, bewildered, scratching his head awkwardly, hunching his shoulders nervously.

"My poor boy, you are very sick," said the sweet voice, and tears came to those earnest eyes.

Tears! Jupe looked up again with a wondering, prolonged stare; tears, and wholly for him; what *could* it mean?

"Yes," he answered, thoroughly subdued, "I've got the consumption."

"My poor, poor boy; anybody might know that; and are these miserable clothes all you have, and winter coming?"

"I didn't know's anybody cared," muttered the boy, his seldom tearful eye now moistened.

"I care, poor child, for I had a son—that's—in Heaven now," she paused; the crowding emotions of tenderness and sorrow would not allow her to go on.

"La, mother Mott! I wouldn't make myself feel so bad, now," said the little woman, folding her finished ironing; "your boy and this vagabone were two different beings."

But mother Mott, evidently, did not stop to consider distinctions; suffering was all alike to her, whether it lay on a couch of silver or straw. The sunken cheek, the shining eye, the fitful fever-flush appealed to her heart with awful fervor; her husband and nine children had fallen victims to the scourge of every clime—the slow, devouring monster, whose thirst is never slaked, whose appetite never satisfied. Jupe was evidently touched by her kindness as much as one so steeped in evil could be, and he told his melancholy story, in his defiant way to be sure, but then it was very mournful, and mother Mott made a vow in her heart that she would not forget the friendless child. She promised him a suit of good, coarse clothes that had belonged to her last boy. She had opened, by the greatest effort, the door of his heart, and though the rubbish laid in heaps behind it, a little of heaven's light shone in.

AFTER SUPPER AT JEMMY HOLDEN'S.

Jem Holden came in thoughtful and moody. He had given some money, so one of the boys said in confidence to his mother—to the wretched creature who had waited for him at the gate, and a "tremenjus" scolding; "yes, don't you think, ma," continued the young hopeful, "he told him he'd knock his brains out if he come again; my, but wan't the old man hoppin'?"

Mother Mott had yielded to the solicitations of the busy housewife and remained to tea, though had she consulted her own inclinations, she had preferred to take her sup of milk in her own humble little lodging place. After the meal, Jem took his seat at the door. The grape-vines trembled in the soft September breeze, but Jem's affections were with his treasure—down cellar. So he sat and worked and meditated amid the rustling of the vine leaves. And if perchance

his eye sought the western sky, its amber richness only reminded him of his gold.

It was here that Tom Amber, the grocer, found him after his little chat with his wife. He came in the yard like a man in a hurry, and before the smoke had cleared from Jem's last whiff, a voice started him from his sleepy reverie.

"How are you, Holden—no, thank you, can't stop to sit down; I called to see if you had a little extra cash on hand."

To Jem Holden, since the day on which he became, comparatively, a rich man, the very wind had been treacherous, whispering abroad of his new gotten treasure. So that when Tom Amber came up in his bold, hasty way, he believed for the moment, that he really knew as much about it as himself. He changed color, stammered and altogether appeared so ill at his ease, that Tom Amber knew not what to think.

"I've generally returned the little sums, I've borrowed," he said hesitatingly, "but I know times are bad, and perhaps you're as hard up as I am; still I thought if you had twenty dollars or so over, you would lend them to an old friend."

"Don't think I'm afraid, Amber," remarked Jem, after a vigorous puff, and he held his pipe thoughtfully, and fixed his eyes on the ground; "but the fact is, times *is* deuced hard, and I do happen to—to—be in want of cash myself, as you say." His face grew very red, as he continued, "I'm a poor man, you know, friend Amber, a day laborer, and though I don't complain but what I've done very well—still I——"

"O! 'tisin't necessary to say any more," interrupted the grocer, cheerfully, "needn't make any excuses to me; I know you'd let me have it if you could; so good-night, Jem."

With a guilty feeling the stevedore stole into the room where the women sat. It was gathering darkness, a sombre mantle had fallen upon the twilight. Mrs. Holden had just put the last cup in the closet, and in her bustling manner was cleansing the crumbs from the table, talking baby talk to the youngest, and listening between whiles to good mother Mott.

"I don't see," said the anxious house-wife, as her husband entered, "why that Letta ain't at home. She ought to be doing her 'stent,' instead of being with that harum scarum thing, Gracie Amber; she's a perfect witch, that gal is. Miss Maligna, who brings tracts here, says Gracie Amber's a ruined gal, playing theatre in meeting-houses, and cutting up all sorts of shines. Proper, clever person that Miss Maligna, but I pity *Miss* Amber, if her girl is as bad as Miss Maligna tells for; poor woman, I shouldn't wonder if the gal comes to some bad end."

"Miss Maligna ought not to go round scandalizing her neighbors," remarked mother Mott, quietly.

"O, la! she don't do it for that, I guess," returned Mrs. Holden, "but she's perfectly shocked, she says, at the way Gracie Amber carries on; and, besides, she felt it her duty, she said, to caution me against 'lowing Letta to be in her company so much. La!" she continued, sitting down, dish-cloth in hand, not noticing the mild look of reproof which was waiting to form itself in words, "have you heard about that singular woman that's come to live in the large white house? Well, you havn't, it's the most singularest thing. It seems she lives all alone in that great place, with nobody but one servant, that's black as the ace of spades, and she never goes any where that she ain't covered from head to foot a'most with a great black veil. Who do you s'pose she is?"

"Some poor widow, perhaps, who don't want to be troubled with the world," suggested mother Mott.

"P'raps so; but ain't it singular?—every body is wondering who she can be. She never buys anything herself; always sends this dumb thing with a paper, written on it, whatever she wants. You'd see her yourself if you went to church here—but I forgot, you're a Methodist."

"What if I am?" asked mother Mott, with a smile.

"Why, of course you wouldn't go inside a Unitarian church."

"I will go wherever I hear good preached," said mother Mott, her placid face brightening; among all believing sects of Christians, so they try to serve my God, let them hold what views they may, they are all the same to me. I thank the Lord that Methodism don't bound religion. I'm a Methodist, and to be sure I love my own church best, but I don't pretend to condemn them that differ from me. I am content to take the lowest seat in my Lord's tabernacle, be it what persuasion it may."

"Well, there! mother Mott, I'll say you're a Christian," exclaimed Jem Holden, vehemently; "though I ain't got no religion myself, I can tell folks that has. If you'd said now, there wan't no Christianity in any body but Methodists, you'd a put me agin the whole concern; but its your charity what takes me."

"But does nobody know who this woman is, where she came from, or anything about her?" asked mother Mott.

"Well, no, I guess not. Miss Maligna says she don't think she can be much, to live so secret and dress so solemn like. *She* thinks its somebody that's committed a hanious sin, and she's trying to do penance like."

"Does Miss Maligna speak charitably of any body?" asked mother Mott, looking mildly up.

"La! well—yes, any body she likes—I s'pose," returned little Mrs. Holden; "but she's so good herself; you couldn't git *her* to go inside a Unitarian church—she calls 'em all heathens except her own persuasion. She's a trying to convert Miss Prindable, that nice little segar woman we rent our two chambers to, from being a Catholic, and she'll do it too. Well, Miss Letta, I guess you've come, after so long," she added hastily, taking her baby up to undress it, as the young girl came in untying her bonnet strings; "I guess you and Hart both are bewitched with Gracie Amber, you can't seem to keep away."

"She does play so beautifully, ma; I declare I never heard such sweet music as that piano makes; better than the Maxwell's, though they think they can beat all creation. She's studying so's to give lessons by-and-bye; oh! I do wish I could ever learn to play."

"Your time's coming," chuckled Jem Holden from behind a cloud of smoke.

"Oh! pa, may I learn—may I *ever* learn?"

"Wait, wait, child; if I'm put in p'leceman next week, as I expect, we'll see if you can't learn music as well as Tom Amber's girl, or the Maxwell's either."

Both mother and daughter started at this unexpected news; Letta, with transport that she was perhaps soon to have a piano, the former overwhelmed with the idea of the dignity of her prospective position. To her weak mind it was a step as grand as king ever took to reach a throne; and the new silk loomed up in all the glory of rainbow coloring, while Letta should go to dancing-school, and the boys be some day gentlemen; *she'd* show the Ambers, wouldn't she? humph!

CHAPTER VII.

THE BELFRY—MOTHER MOTT—PAUL.

THE holy Sabbath!

May it ever be called the holy Sabbath. Perish the lips that would profane it; the hands that would tear down its sacred statutes—the feet that would trample upon them—the eyes that would see in its place a day devoted to vain show and pleasure taking. Let it come ever as now with its quietude, its church-gatherings of high and lowly, its many

prayers that ascend from humble hearts—its soft voices singing—its lessons of lofty moral instruction. What is it to you or to me, that hypocrites go in among the throng that professedly serve Jesus? What that the pomp and fashion of this world make mockery of the Saviour's lowly life, and esteem poverty sin? What is it to you or to me, that men sometimes fill the pulpit and raise warning voices, while they are whited sepulchres? Our duty lays between God and our own souls. We are to take the stern question to heart, "What is that to thee?—follow thou me." How mellowly the autumn sun shines down! It seems as if the great busy world were waiting to hear God speak. Not a sound in the streets, save the low voices of quiet groups walking to the house of prayer.

In the tower of the Old North church, looking so solemnly over to the silent graves on the hill, Dick Holden pulled the strong cords that chimed the seven bells above. Dick was very jovial as he sounded the notes of "hark from the tombs." He laughed and danced and swore, with his madcap companions, and took especial pains to show off his new suit of brown striped cloth, and a flaming red waistcoat that he wore for the first time. His hair, arranged with two long locks in front, was sleek and shining, being plentifully "larded," and his coarse face shone with coarser mirth. The object of his fun sat crouched in one corner, his head sunk between his knees, his features gathered into horrible grimaces, and his hands tightly and painfully clasped over his ears. A bunch of rags, disease and dirt, Jupe gained no pity from the belfry imps, but the more he groaned and writhed, the louder they laughed and shouted, profaning the sacredness of the upper air. He had wanted to see what made the music, and the boys had dragged him along up the almost endless stairs, as it seemed to him, persisting, in spite of his piteous cries of pain, in urging him to the top; and though the clangor of

the brazen tongues shook him from head to foot, almost wrenching his miserable life from its frail hold; still they felt no compassion but shouted over his misery.

Slowly the people of God, of all conditions, each wearing a semblance, at least, of tranquillity—pompously the children of Mammon, and quietly the sons and daughters of poverty, sought their respective places of worship. Emerging from a homely little one-story house, mother Mott, with her spotless cape and dress of bombazine, and her old fashioned black bonnet, bearing her hymn book, her little spectacle-case of black morocco and her snowy 'kerchief, proceeded towards the plain, unpainted edifice, from which sounded many voices, singing strange old revival hymns; and now and then came forth from stentorian lungs, the 'sonorous "amen!" There she took her seat, after devoutly kneeling for a moment—the "humblest in her Lord's tabernacle," indeed, adjusted her spectacles that she might see the "blessed face" of the shaggy browed man, who felt that his was a mission of salvation; that souls must be saved, that the Bible was the word of God—and so preached accordingly; preached with eyes, lips and hands, aye! and occasionally with feet too. Bringing his strong points, hammer-like, on the solid front of the solid oaken, uncushioned pulpit; swaying from side to side where were no fragile astral shades to impede the sword of the Spirit; shouting that the deaf ears might hear, throwing his remonstrances, with glowing eyes, full in the face of the shivering sinner, anon sinking into sweetest music, attuning his voice to the plaint of the wounded heart, Abram Taylor was a fair sample of the primitive, God-fearing, iron-framed, self-denying Methodist-preacher.

In the old meeting-house, Ingerson, the sexton, moved with stealthy tread, to note that the pew doors were all closed, that the communion service, covered with ample folds of white damask, had not departed from its usual precision;

that the great gilt bibles and the hymn book were duly placed upon their pulpit cushions of red satin; that there was no dust in the crevices of the shining, crimson curtain; and having satisfied himself all was right, he stood for a moment to listen to the music, pouring, peal after peal, from the fine old organ. It was a slight, girlish figure that sat in the loft, running her fingers over the banks of keys responding so willingly to the magic of her touch. Now soft and plaintive, now massive, compact and grand, now melting, now overpowering, the melody rolled forth till the vaulted roof re-echoed the majestic strains, or seemed to clasp to itself as it were the sweetness of each lingering note.

Hart stood behind the organ in the exalted capacity of bellows-blower. Once he stole to Gracie Amber's side, (for it was she) to say, "why! Gracie, you beat professor Rose all hollow; how in the world can you play so?"

And she would answer as she always did—"I don't know, except it comes to me."

Slowly pacing down the aisle, while yet there were but few worshipers assembled, came Paul Halburton, Tom Amber's landlord, and one to whom all the dignitaries paid homage, albeit he was not a churchman. Sombre-browed and deep-eyed, he stood near the sexton, his black hair falling, as was the custom then, in thick ringlets almost to his shoulders; his snowy shirt ruffles conspicuously displayed, and from which, like a serpent's eye, glittered a diamond. His hands were tightly gloved, his whole attire that of a wealthy and elegant gentleman. As he took his stand, leaning with his back against the communion railing, old Ingerson went out to his duty.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VEILED LADY.

STILL swelled the music, more and more beautiful—more grand, more majestic; and still Paul Halburton looked straight up to the organ. Some one had joined him as he listened, and now he turned to his companion, saying in low tones, "Fine playing, Mr. Morris."

"Fine indeed," returned the other, moving a step nearer, "and considering that the young girl knows little or nothing of music, theoretically, it seems quite a wonderful effort."

"Who is she?" asked the moneyed Paul, pulling his kid gloves daintily off, and apparently displaying, for effect, a delicate white hand.

"You know Tom Amber, the grocer, I suppose?"

"Know him!" Paul started—"he is one of my tenants. Is she his daughter? Yes, yes—I remember her now," he muttered aside.

"She is, and a genius, it seems. By the way, they tell a strange story about her: how she wrote a play, and rehearsed it here, turning the old meeting-house into a theatre; got quite a regular drama established—everything but letting spectators in at a shilling a-head. Deacon Hinges heard of it, and was going to call a church meeting about it; but some way the affair was hushed up. I wonder if she's handsome? I'd like to see her face."

At these words, a strange pang shot through Paul's heart, a fierce, quick passion, to which purity is not akin; he turned abruptly, and entered his pew. No humility of look or deed followed this action. No bending of the knee or head, no closing of the brilliant eyes, no upward glancing aspiration; but settling himself comfortably, in the softly-lined and lux-

urious seat, he threw his handsome head haughtily back, and gazed on vacancy. His white hand nestled among the ebon curls, his finely turned arm, with its rich broad-cloth casing, rested upon the polished moulding, and his red lips, protruding a little, occasionally he parted to show the gleam of his glistening teeth. No thought of God entered his world-hardened heart; to him all days were alike. He merely showed observance of the Sabbath, because it was respectable. And now he sat in the dim religious light, crimsoned a little by the subdued sun-rays falling through screen and curtain, as an animated image, breathing only the breath of life—crime stained—glorying in false security—his almost faultless exterior, his name, his wealth, bowed down to and worshiped, by the rich and great, while, had the secrets of his life been written on his face, the meanest, the most despised, had shrunk aghast from his likeness; nor had men felt safe in their own houses.

Slowly the pews were filled, as family after family walked up the sombre aisles. There were the Misses Flidgets, whose bonnets, everybody knew, cost twenty dollars and sixty cents a-piece. The first time they wore them, the eldest, Miss Celia Flidgets, had neglected to take off the shop-mark, consequently, an admirable single lady, Miss Cornelia Slanderall, who sat exactly back of Miss Celia Flidgets, told all her friends before sunset; and before sunset, the tidings ran through the whole gamut, and exhausted volumes of exclamation points,—what extravagance!!! Flidget was *only* a butcher, you know!!!!

There was the Stanhope family, who managed to keep a precarious footing in good society, by means of a limited gentilityism, that consisted in dressing with extreme elegance, living in a five-hundred dollar house, and robbing groceries to pay dry goods. There was Andover, the plethoric doctor, who had once sent word to a patient, to be kind enough to

put off dying till the sermon was over. He sat in the short slip aisle, and was a remarkably good listener, whenever he could keep awake, a thing he was seldom *known* to do. There, too, was the portly Greenleaf, whose sign on State-street read thus, "Stock and Exchange Broker," who kept a carriage every day in the week but six, and whose wife having brought him a fortune—in herself, looked down from six feet six, on less pretending aspirants, and was considered the tallest woman in the city. Farther off, an uneasy, restless-eyed little man, occupied a plainly carpeted pew, a Mr. John Dacker, who was exceedingly unpopular, and impervious to almost all ideas, save one, viz: that there is no color in the dark; this he adhered to almost pertinaciously, and nobody could unseat him from his favorite hobby. By many considered foolish, and by all crazy, poor John Dacker, lecturer, doctor, professor, moved hurriedly through by-ways and alleys, daily, his hands filled with papers, papers protruding from his pockets, papers sticking awry, out under his napless hat, and parchment written upon his dry, yellow face, as he trotted on to regenerate the world, and demonstrate his favorite theory. Back near the door, where provision was made for the penniless, sat a pale, spiritless looking girl. She had undoubtedly been very beautiful, before heart and hope had both put out their light in her sad young face. But for granny Howell, who kept a little toy-shop opposite the old church, it might have been said of her, "she had no friends," for indeed, she was an outcast from the world's sympathy.

Her very attire wore a neglected look, and the fold of her poor shawl, told a world of apathy. Her hair, put carelessly back under a small chip hat, seemed like its wearer, shrinking from observation; it had a pretty curl and gloss, what there was in sight, but her blue eyes looked oldish and faded, and her lips, that had been coral red, were pale. It was the

first time she had been to church for many a day, for granny Howell had that morning taken the baby from her arms, and pointing to the homely clothing on the bed, urged the poor girl, with the command almost of a mother, to wrap herself up, and take a breath of air. So she had wandered down to the water and back, and almost unconsciously followed the crowd into the old meeting-house, where, with the passive instinct that she was in a church, she sat, thinking, thinking of her clouded young life.

In the gallery, was still another class of character. The giddy, thoughtless singers, looked over the short red curtains upon the nabobs who occupied the very centre of the church, making their comments upon the congregation; but especially were their giddy thoughts attracted towards Paul Halburton, who always gazed so steadfastly at them, more particularly at the blushing cheeks of Lizzie Hill, a sort of waxen-doll beauty, whose flaxen curls fluttered only for him, and whose wide, swimming blue eyes, sometimes met his own unflinching stare.

Gracie Amber had retreated before the superior considerations of Professor Rose, who was launching forth thunderbolts of sound, and rocking his slim body, in an agony of excitement, while his hands glanced from key to stop, and his feet sprang back and forth, performing their tread-mill accompaniment, with an agility that was truly surprising for so little a man as Professor Rose. His very spectacles quivered in an ecstasy of melody, and large drops of perspiration stood on his high forehead and his short, hooked nose.

Suddenly there was a stir in the choir, in the gallery, in nearly the entire congregation, and subdued voices whispered, "see, she comes!" as a tall, graceful figure, garbed in the deepest mourning, glided in the centre aisle, and, pausing half-way, entered a richly furnished pew, and quietly took her seat. The thick, long veil, fell in full folds all over her

person, as she sat there, bowing her head reverently. Her dress was unrelieved by even a white collar—all was black, dead black. Like a statue, she remained, looking neither to the right nor left—holding her black-bound hymn-book in her black-gloved hands, not even raising her face as the reverend doctor who officiated, walked with slow, solemn step up to his pulpit. The Misses Flidgets shook their twenty dollar bonnets, and Miss Cornelia Slanderall virtuously averted her glance, and eye met eye as Greek meet Greek, filled with hostility. Only Minnie Dale, granny Howell's *protégé*, thought—"oh! poor woman! a widow, perhaps; how happy to have had a husband! better to bury one than to bear my fate."

CHAPTER IX.

THE MINISTER.

WITH slow and solemn steps, I said, the reverend doctor ascended to his pulpit. One glance at that face, at the large, expressive eyes, the white, patient brow, the cheek, care-worn and somewhat hollowed, the raven hair, slightly sprinkled with grey, sufficed to tell that Gilbert Waldron had been a man of sorrow. For seven years he had presided over this aristocratic church and congregation, their reverend and idolized pastor.

A man of superior talent, his position in society defined and honorable, he became an object of the most absorbing interest to many besides the society for which he consented to labor. Fair maids envied the very ceiling on which, in his rapt moments, he lavished his most beaming smiles, looking beyond, let us hope, in spirit to his Maker. The richest girl

there—and there were many beautiful daughters of wealthy papas—would have given the half of her promised dowry to feel herself for one moment an object of tender interest to Gilbert Waldron, the lonely bachelor preacher.

It was certain he had been "disappointed in love;" bachelor preachers are always said to be, hence, as pity is kin to the tender sympathy, the reverend doctor drew many worshippers, all marshalled by the tiny god.

Somehow, they were well acquainted with his manner of living, the style and appointment of his handsome suite of rooms, the hours he spent in lonely meditation, the portions of time during which he walked the floor of his private study, the pictures he had hung therein, the solitary rambles he took—but I leave my minister too long with his foot on the pulpit stairs.

Again the massive organ tones shook, or seemed to shake the building with their thunder—the well-dressed congregation arose—all but poor Minnie Dale, who, plunged in one of her wistful reveries, forgetful of the present, sat with her faded eyes fixed like one in a stupor—her hands folded on her lap, her posture painfully abstracted. "Waxy," for such was the cognomen of the pretty head singer, opened her baby mouth its widest, that the silvery notes might flow out over the great space, and down, down right into the fastidious and elegant ears of Paul; thus it had been no wonder if she had sung, instead of repeating the hymn, "let us sing praises unto Paul Halburton;" but fortunately, for the sanctity of the church, no such mistake occurred. From all parts of the congregation, eyes were turned to where the stately veiled lady stood, not proudly, but erect, holding her book beneath the thick black crape that concealed all but a misty outline of her face. It were a wonder if even the dignified doctor Gilbert Waldron, in the course of his elaborate sermon, did not sometimes glance over that pew, empty of all but one presence, and that

one telling indirectly of the grave, and ponder unconsciously to himself, with a wonder not formed in words, who she might be, who seemed to claim no sympathy, and to shun all opportunities of fellowship among the people whose worship she had chosen. Never had his curiosity been so strongly awakened. Wherever he went to console in affliction, or make merely a friendly, pastoral visit, the veiled lady was the theme of all tongues. Why did she hold herself aloof from society? was she too good to be seen? to be spoken to? Where had she come from, among them? Did she drop down from the skies? By what means was she supported? for she evidently knew no want. Why did she have but one old servant, and she a negro? Could any body tell whether her eyes were grey or black? That they were large, very large and bright, could just be distinguished under the heavy folds of her veil. And the old women shook their heads and mumbled something that sounded like, "no better than she should be;" coupled with the shrewd Yankee "guess," while the young ladies perplexed "*dear* doctor Gilbert" with questions, and displayed their languishing smiles and their white teeth in vain.

Notwithstanding the doctor's speculations, however cleverly they edged in between the interstices of his classical discourse, the veiled lady sat like a statue of bronze, and not once did it seem that the stately head inclined from its uprightness. Steadily at the preacher, till the last word fell from his lips, did she direct her veiled eyes; then the fascination seemed suddenly suspended, for her head, nay, her whole figure drooped, and a close observer might have noted a deep-drawn breath that was in reality a sigh.

At last the spring doors were fastened back, and Jupe, who had stretched himself in the sun on the old grey steps, hastily aroused from a comforting nap, was told to stand back out of sight, which he did of course. And there he stood, gazing

and rubbing his weak eyes, and watching the concourse wend their different ways. Rich silks flashed in the sun, and the dainty white faces of the fair and wealthy cast sometimes a glance on the forlorn boy, but turned instantly, disgusted with the sight.

Near the bell-rope, in the entry, stood, or rather leaned, Hart Holden. The rest of the stevedore's family, who sat in the gallery of the church, had gone; Hart had stopped to speak with Gracie, who was coming down stairs with the singers. As was his usual custom, Paul Halburton lingered among the latest, and Waxy, the pretty head singer, coquettishly laughed and cast her eyes towards the ample spring doors, as she chatted with a companion, and passed on, elevated to the fifth heaven of beatitude, if she caught but a glance of the aristocratic Paul, and received a bow from the minister. The latter was talking earnestly with Paul Halburton; he retired first, however, and all were gone save an old man who kept the keys of the wine-cellar; Ingerson, the sexton; Gracie and Hart Holden. Paul stood in full view of Hart, and the boy looked with a kind of wonder upon the man whose gold, people said, was his god, and who pulled on his soft, glossy kids with such an air, and read the time from a massive brilliant watch, that flashed a thousand colors in the sunlight, whenever he revealed it. Turning with a careless look to Hardrake, the man who kept the keys of the vault—(and I should mention that a cellar near by had been leased by Paul, and the huge wine pipes and hogsheads and barrels, were all his property)—Paul said, directing a keen glance towards the sexton at the same time,

"Oh! by the way, I forgot to ask if you found a pocket-book with bank bills in it, or any loose money about the vault underneath, Hardrake, after Hauscom was buried, last Sunday?" and his sharp eye fell full upon the man's weather-beaten countenance.

There was something in his voice, his manner, an air of assumption, a lurking suspicion hidden underneath, a cross-questioning look, a cunning meaning, all apparent to Hart. The boy started, changed color; it seemed to him Paul Halburton was not sincere. Suddenly it occurred to him, that *he* was the veritable wine-dealer himself, that he had not lost a pocket-book filled with bank bills, but *had* missed the gold which probably he deposited there, and which Hart himself had found. His heart beat hard against his vest; he could have fallen to the earth, there seemed such a load thrust suddenly upon his shoulders, a load that burthened him as with guilt. With the rapidity of thought born of intuition these suspicions had passed through his brain while he looked to see what the hard old sailor, past going to see, would answer for himself.

"A pocket book, sir, filled with bank notes, sir; no, *sir*, neither down stairs nor in the wine-cellar. I hain't seen nothing o' *that* kind these many a long year, sir," was the frank reply, with a look clear and innocent as that of a child. "Hain't I better go down with you, sir?" he continued, "down about where you were, sir; we'll hunt the old place round, sir, but what we'll find it, if it's *there* you lost it."

"No, now I think of it," said Paul, musingly, and with a satisfied air, "I don't know as I missed it coming out of the vault—Mr. Ingerson, is there an entrance into the vestries below from the vaults?"

"There may be," said the old man, his hand on the huge key with which he locked up the church brooms and dusters; "I never noticed, though I think I've heard say, too, that there's a door somewhere, but—"

"Oh! never mind," replied Paul with his easy off-hand way, while his eye rested unconsciously on Hart's flushed face, "never mind, it's of no consequence—I merely asked for information," and he turned, leisurely moved down the

broad steps, paused a moment to speak a word to Jupe, who, crouched in the juncture of the wall and the strong iron rail, seemed waiting for some purpose, and with firm step and elegant motion, passed along the now deserted sidewalk, unconscious that at least two fair ladies had driven reluctantly from the old church, who would fain have been accompanied by the rich and accomplished Paul Halburton, the famous bachelor beau.

Still onward he moved, eulogising in his reverie the modest loveliness of Gracie Amber, her genius, evidently of no common order; and the snaky brilliance of the diamond in his ruffled bosom, flashed as though its gleam answered to his thought, while Gracie flew up the uncarpeted oaken stairs, and soon the old church was resounding again with organ melody.

CHAPTER X.

MINNIE DALE.

GRANNY HOWELL had just sung the little thin baby to sleep, and laid it carefully in its tiny bed, as the dingy doors of the old meeting-house were thrown open, and the fluttering crowd emerged. Her candy-shop was shut up for the day, and the windows hidden by the old fashioned shutters, strongly barred with iron; but the windows of her one room over the shop, looked directly on the church. It was her custom on Sundays, when she did not go out herself, to sit there and speculate upon the different comers and goers; and she had patiently lullabyed Minnie Dale's little one that she might indulge in this peculiarly feminine pleasure. Consequently, her cap border, white and stiff, surrounding a

cherry, handsome old face, whose red and smoothness had not yet disappeared, filled its accustomed square, though few bestowed a glance, fewer yet a thought on old granny Howell.

"There," she muttered, "there goes Squire Cambell. How white his hairs are? *I* can remember when they were brown enough. Well, I s'pose if I'd a had him as he wanted me to, I might have rid in my carriage instead of keeping a candy-shop. He's got mighty rich selling hides; wonder if he's happy? guess not, by his looks. That daughter of his is a proud piece; highty toity, see her toss her new bonnet, with a feather in it. There's the Morrels—he's a wine merchant—looks as if he liked a bit—a brandyish color about his face. Pity *his* heart couldn't be sunned and aired, guess it needs it badly. He's the ruination of many a young man—how *he* can go to church less he's got a silk velvet preacher, *I* don't know. There goes widow Thornton—a gentleman with her, after her money-like's not—there's that slim young man that came in last week—wonder who *he* is? Why don't Minnie come? oh! there she is, poor child—must wait till the rich folks are out first of course. Wonder what seat they gave her? poor child! if *she* ain't getting the wages of sin fast, I don't know who is. I hope she won't die and leave me with the baby, though to be sure—well, I never! how strange she walks! just as if she was going to fall. Is the girl sick, I wonder—and just as white as a ghost!"

Leaving the window, granny Howell reached the door below, in time to receive the fainting form of the wretched young creature in her arms. Leading her carefully into her little room, she assisted her on the bed and bathed her hot temples.

"You're burning up, child; what is the matter?" she inquired kindly.

"Oh! granny, I'm dying—I'm dying. I ain't going to

live this day out. I've seen him, and it's killed me—it's killed me;" she gasped, clutching at her side painfully. "There's such a feeling in my heart, I *know* I'm dying."

"Show! don't take on so now," said the good old lady, her hands trembling in her eagerness to relieve the sufferer, by loosening her dress—"don't tell me that; your eyes is sparkling and your cheeks beautifully red. What have you seen, poor dear?"

"Granny, get the Bible, won't you, and read me something good. Oh! do, *do*," she implored, with feverish earnestness; "I ain't fit to die, and something tells me I am going to. God'll be merciful to me, won't he, granny? seeing as I'm a poor orphan that never had a loving word spoken to me till *he* came—do say something comforting—do send for somebody that'll talk to me about heaven. I've been thinking a long time," she continued, keeping down with an effort the choking sobs, "how wicked I've been, and I've tried not to feel revengeful—wasn't that trying to do better? And you know," she continued, with terrible earnestness and glittering eyes, as she half lifted herself upon one arm, "*I was* deceived; I thought I was married—I thought I *really* was."

"What shall I do for you, child?" murmured granny Howell, her eyes suffused as the girl laid down again moaning with pain.

"I don't think any one can do anything for me now," she feebly articulated, "the pain is going—but oh! my heart; my poor heart is broken."

Granny Howell had reached the old, large print Bible from its little stand. As she opened at the New Testament, many of its pages seemed blistered with tears; for, often after the pining baby went to sleep, Minnie had pored over the gospels, and as Mary Magdalene did her Saviour's feet, literally bathed them with her tears. Adjusting her spectacles,

the tender-hearted old lady read here and there comforting passages, till, looking up, she saw that the sick girl slept a calm, sweet sleep. White as the pillow were her cheeks, and her features, which were yet extremely beautiful, were outlined by the sharp tracery of mortal disease. She did not look sinful, but like an angel, with her innocent brow and almost infantile lips. The sadness had passed away, a light played over her pallid countenance; it spoke of repose, not of body, but spirit.

"Let her sleep, poor child," whispered granny Howell, after a minute survey of the placid face, and she carefully proceeded to arrange the humble noon-day meal.

She had partaken of dinner, and put away the cold remains and a little delicacy or two for Minnie, when she should awake.

Sitting in her old-fashioned chair, she fell to thinking about the friendless creature, whom God had cast thus upon her protection. She thought upon the dreadful day, when she first came with haggard face, and garments soaked through and through, with the pelting rain drops; of her piteous prayers that she might have shelter for *one* night—her looks of gratitude and broken blessings. She thought how her exceeding gentleness and wordless suffering had won her heart, and she could never tell her to take her child and go, though many condemned her for sheltering an outcast in her honest home. Gradually, as the good dame mused, her eyes grew dim. The pictures on the blue-tiled chimney lost their color and perspective; her head drooped—once more she made an effort to resist the coming drowsiness, but the surpliced clergyman, in the little red frame, multiplied by two, the figures on the tiles ran together, her spectacles fell softly on her lap, her hands parted their patient fold, and she slept, sitting in the old easy chair, till roused by the soft, silvery voice, calling, "mother, mother!"

Startled, she opened her eyes. There sat Minnie in bed, her long hair falling loose, and curling about her face and shoulders, and her shining eyes wandering fitfully over the little room.

"What is it, child?" asked the old lady, gazing with a sort of awe, upon the unearthly-looking being.

"I feel her arms about me—I feel her kisses on my cheeks—oh!" continued the excited girl, "her heart beats close to mine. It was my mother—but she is gone—and to-night I shall see her again; and to-night I shall feel her heart beat, and she will kiss me and fold me to her bosom, and shield me from those who would injure me—oh! what a blessed dream!" she fervently ejaculated.

"What are you talking about, Minnie?" interrogated granny Howell, going close to the bedside.

"Give me my baby; let me feel that sweet thrill of love once more; let me whisper to her, that when she is a poor little orphan, whom nobody cares for, I will watch over her if God please—oh! my poor baby, my dear little baby, we shan't be parted for long," she murmured, laying the little cheek up to her own, now all glowing and feverish.

"How do you feel now, dear?" asked granny Howell, fingering her spectacles nervously, after she had laid the drowsy child in the arms of the young girl.

"Oh! I feel better—much better; I feel bright, and somehow, happy too. The pain in my head is all gone, and it seems as if I was soaring in the air, I feel so light. Granny, I'm going to dress baby and go out with her this afternoon—don't look so frightened; what do you look so strange for?"

"To hear you run on so, deary; what are you going out for?"

"O!" a cloud passed over her face—"something; but I musn't tell; give me her little cloak, granny, that you made you know, and her little hood, and I will bind up my hair—why how light I feel, and how pleasant!"—then turning, with

the thick tresses caught up in her hand, she said solemnly, "why I'd just as lief die as not, granny Howell—I feel as if God loved me,"—she burst into tears—"just as my own mother used to—and would forgive me everything."

CHAPTER XI.

MINNIE SEEKS PAUL HALBURTON.

It was nearly four in the afternoon. The churches were not yet out—the streets were very still; only occasionally a well-dressed couple slowly sauntered along, or a gaudy female turned some corner from the haunts where shame and sin run riot. Making her way wearily, might be seen a slight figure in a worn bonnet and shawl, holding close in her arms a little babe, that looked as though it never wept and never smiled. The houses she passed all wore a Sabbath aspect, standing straight and solemn, with closed blinds and drawn curtains. Many a heart suffered within, yet many an eye smiled in the serene contentment of Sabbath rest. The wives of laboring-men, sat by their little ones, unconsciously though fervently grateful for this one day in seven, when they might cease from their labors. None knew or cared that the fragile girl toiled on in the soft sunlight with her baby in her arms—a victim to man's cold treachery and unrepented perfidy. Yet she seemed to ask no sympathy—her eye fell at a look—that large eye so blue and youthful—and her cheek burned hotly if but a sister, glad and happy in her innocence, passed by her. She had gained the common, whose serpentine paths were filled with dead, yellow leaves, and the wind beginning to rise, whirled some of them

to her feet. She paused a moment to look at them—then raised her blue eyes heavenward. There was meaning in that glance.

She had gained a tall flight of grey, stone steps, leading up to a building of magnificent proportions. Here she stopped to rest, and sat down wearily, pressing her babe to her heart, and gazing down upon it with a yearning love. Presently at a sound she raised her eyes. The veiled lady stood before her, gazing first at her, then towards the house. Minnie Dale shuddered as if at a spiritual presence, for she heard no footsteps nor rustling of silk, until the supernaturally tall form, which none could fail to recognise, draped in black, shut out the sunlight directly before her. Her heart grew cold with fear, and she clutched the patient babe more tightly as if dreading that this mysterious personage might demand her.

"My child, who lives here?" and the voice was as low as the whisper of the wind, as sweet as the sweetest music. The girl felt all fear vanish, and replied that it was the residence of Mr. Paul Halburton.

"Paul!" exclaimed the veiled lady in a startling voice—then added more softly, "Halburton." Minnie felt that she was the object of intense scrutiny, the eyes that were said to be so large, dark and beautiful, were gazing directly upon her.

"And what do you here, poor girl?" asked the voice mournful now as the sound in the sea-shell.

Minnie Dale shuddered again; her head fell—her face she hid in the folds of her babe's dress. When she looked up the gloomy figure had gone.

THE INTERVIEW.

At last, after much annoyance from the impertinence of a portly servant, Minnie Dale was admitted into the hall of the

grand house, and told to remain there, and if she was a thief she should be cared for when the master came home.

Only waiting till he had gone below, the girl lifted her babe, and glided over the threshold into the parlor, whose shaded splendor for a moment dazzled her eyes. It was but a moment; advancing, she walked calmly down the long vista where stood the tall mirrors in gorgeous frames, and gazed about her with a glance full of meaning, on the massive furniture and the heavy damask hangings. Then depositing her quiet babe on a rich velvet lounge, she deliberately took off her bonnet and shawl, unfastened her hair and curled it round her trembling fingers, then arranging the folds of her common dress, sat down by her child. Strangely she looked in that subdued light, her slender frame sinking down into the deep spring lounge, her shining eyes and feverish crimson cheeks pictured in the gloom as a bright painting on a dusky ground-work.

"I can but try," she murmured, starting at every sound. "It's been on my heart long; besides, he *did* marry me."

Forgotten by the servant, who was happy in the society of sundry kitchen girls, holding their customary Sunday party in the basement, the excited girl still kept her place, soothing her child to slumber, till the long continued ringing of the door-bell recalled her from her dream. Deathly paleness succeeded the hot flush, and she shivered from head to foot.

"Shure the beggar's gone!" cried the servant, looking incredulous, as Paul walked pompously past—"a thief, sir; I'll be bound she's a thief; she sat on the settee there, sir, and now she's gone and vanished, for all I see," and he still gazed curiously round, peering into every nook and corner.

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Paul, stopping for a moment; "what girl? Who do you let in while I am at church? Why are the parlors open? What have you—"

He paused with parted lips, stepping back a pace, for he

had entered the room. "Go down, sirrah," he said sternly, to the man—then closing the door, he walked rapidly towards the half fainting Minnie, and stood with the face of a fiend right opposite her.

"What does this mean?" he muttered, in smothered, angry tones, and his eyes blazed fiercer than the diamond sparkled on his bosom; "what right have you, creature, to intrude in this house with your brat?"

For a moment the girl seemed battling with her weakness, gathering all of the spirit that was not crushed out of her extremely feminine nature, to make reply.

"I am your wife, and you know it!" she exclaimed huskily, "You know before the great God of heaven, I am your wife. You have not forgotten the terrible vows in which you called heaven and earth to witness your sincerity. Or if you have," she continued, noting the passionate clouding of his dark face, and rising with such dignity as never before had any occasion called forth, "*I* have not. And I come as a dying woman, and the mother of your child, to claim my right; and here will I stay in your house; it is my home, I will not have any other."

The stormy hour that followed—the oaths, imprecations, curses, let not this pen record. Nor dwell upon the coward *blow* dealt by the strong, right arm of a strong man upon the shrinking, dying form of a fragile woman, that brought back the agonizing pain in a heart that would willingly have shed its blood for him—that stretched pale and motionless on the floor, her long, dark hair streaming in disorder over the bright colors of the carpet, the shrinking, writhing victim of his base passions—the innocent girl he had most cruelly deceived. Aye! and that right hand had taken in its gloved palm, that day, how many stainless fingers that would fain have lingered there? that right hand, white and ringed, had struck a woman! foulest stain, and cruelest cowardice!

The darkness came, and a carriage was driven rapidly up to granny Howell's humble door, a burden deposited almost lifeless on the steps, a thundering knock bestowed upon the thin panels, rousing the inmates of the neighboring house, and when granny Howell hastened below, fearing, she knew not what, the burden fell against her with a faint moan. Lifting in her strong arms the woman and her sleeping child, she half led, half dragged them up the stairs.

Before morning dawned, Minnie Dale was laid in granny Howell's bed, her hands clasped tightly over where the heart had ceased to beat, and the cry of a wailing child came up from her side.

CHAPTER XII.

ALLAN, THE COFFIN-MAKER.

In an obscure street in one of the most abandoned parts of the city, Allan Beauvine kept his coffin warehouse. Allan was a tall, gaunt man, with something of Scotch ruggedness in the build of his spare person, and French hilarity in the sparkle of his eye. A kindly man was Allan—a warm-hearted friend, and nobody's enemy. A pleasant word hovered ever upon his lips, always prefaced with a jovial smile. Allan was somewhat of a musical genius, too, and the morning, after the event detailed in our last chapter, stood at his bench, singing in a loud, and not unmusical voice,

THE COFFIN-MAKER'S SONG.

Rat, tap, tap!
With a laugh and a song of glee;
The nails I drive, and the boards I plane,
While I make a box in which thousands have lain,
And I work right merrily.

ALLAN, THE COFFIN-MAKER.

Rat, tap, tap!
Who says 'tis a life of gloom,
To live with the hammer and screw in hand,
While gaping coffins around me stand,
Emblems of death and the tomb!

Rat, tap, tap!
Five foot three this must be;
And the man it is for was a neighbor and friend;
Can I do more than make and send
His coffin, and pocket the fee?

Rat, tap, tap!
Hand that board over to me;
This for an infant, that for a man,
It matter me not, I must live while I can,
To-morrow I may not be.

Rat, tap, tap!
With a short and gasping breath;
While I am making this lining of lead,
Many are dying, many are dead—
'Tis nothing—I live on death.

Rat, tap, tap!
The mother is weeping wild;
For this rustling satin, so fine and white,
All crimped and plaited, will fold to-night
The brow of her sinless child.

Rat, tap, tap!
How the rosewood shines in the sun!
'Tis a costly coffin, with silver screws,
But not too dainty for death to use,
Or the worms to revel on.

Rat, tap, tap!
Line it with taste and care;
For the bride shall sleep on a bosom to-morrow,
That never knew love, and that never felt sorrow,
Yet burdens of both must bear.

Rat, tap, tap!
And why should regrets be given?
For the body is only a coffin case,
'Till the soul begins its immortal race
For the pleasant goal of Heaven.

Rat, tap, tap!
 With a laugh and a song of glee;
 The nails I drive, and the boards I plane,
 While I make a home in which millions have lain,
 And I work right merrily.

Pausing, with hammer in hand, he looked up as the shadow of Ingerson, the old sexton, darkened the door-way.

"Ha!" he cried, his jovial, hearty tone belying his hollow chest and pallid face, "come in old friend, glad to see you; business been dull these few weeks—reekin' healthy now I tell ye. Anything in my line?"

The old sexton responded, and bustled cheerily about among the narrow homes of many sizes, that stood upright against the dingy walls, or were piled one above another to the very ceiling. Selecting one that answered to the circling tape he held in his hand, the coffin-maker took it down and proceeded to line it, chatting all the while in his hearty, whole-souled way.

"So it's the poor thing that Gracie Amber was talking about, I expect," he soliloquized, bending down the edge of the cambric, and suiting the minute tacks to it, then fitting it to the dimensions of the coffin, he continued—"poor unfortnit thing—I allers pity such creeters, Ingerson; I allers say when any of 'em comes into my shop, as many and many of 'em does, I can tell you; 'well, arter all, you're as good flesh and blood as my own gals, any day; and, like's not, if they'd a had the bringing up as you have, or, like's not no bringing up at all, ony a sort of heavin' up, same's you throw a ball that might come down in the gutter or might lodge in the house-top,' you know, Ingerson, 'maybe they wouldn't be a mite better nor you.' I most generally finds, when I talks to 'em, which I do precious often, Ingerson, sometimes for fun, but most generally for soberness, that they've been most poor, misbelied things, far as their willin'ness goes, for they're the wretchedest, unhappiest mortals, dying by inches, and

mad as thunder at the life they're living, ony they can't get away from it. Jest hand me that screw, yonder, old fellow." And again he struck up a lively measure—

"Oh! when I was a lad
 The girls used to say
 Tol lol lo, tol lol lay.
 That I cut up the dickens,
 But they cut me—
 Tol lol lo, tol lol le.

I made them smile and simper
 Many a day,
 Tol lol le, tol——"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" the old coffin-maker turned from his task, laughing convulsively, screw in hand; "can't help it, Ingerson," he cried, writhing with some vivid perception of the ludicrous, "last Wednesday—'twas too bad, though," he continued, winking the tears from his eyes, "Dacker, you know, who hates the Masons, was initiated into the mysteries of the order—oh! goodey! I wish you'd a bin there. There was a few high fellows you see, who pretended to be Masons, and they got into a tearin' dispute with Dacker, who has big notions of cleaning out this desprit dirty world, you know, and establishing one to go by machinery, on the Dacker patent, eh! By and by, one of 'em pertends to side with Dacker, you know, and he goes to him with a face as solemn as my paste-pot, says he, 'Dacker,' says he, 'you pretend to be converted, and we'll put you through the ceremony; then you see, you can publish it—expose 'em, and I'll take the responsibility; no mistake about it,' ses he, 'they're a right mean set, and I'm tired of their monopolizing—on'y,' he kept on solemnly, 'we must share the profits.' Well, Dacker was tickled; ses he, 'I'll do it; but you'll stan' by me, and not let 'em hurt me?'"

"'Yes,' ses old Joe, you may be sure it was him, 'I'll stand by you,' so 'twas settled.

"Well, Wednesday night—oh! goodey! it's too much," and the coffin-maker ran the back of his hand across his eyes, "I was there, and Dacker was there. They had all the candles put out, a row of chairs stood along the middle of the hall, clear through; we'd got a capital big wood-saw made, a tremenjuss chain, a tin trumpet, and a parcel of squibs ready, and, as somebody ses, the tremblin' wictim was led in, in the dark, and the way he had to run the gauntlet of them chairs wasn't slow. Then we set him on the wood-horse, and rubbed a parcel of phosphorus on an old black mask, that Joe had on, and that looked *like* the old one, and two stout men took the wood-horse on their shoulders, and if they didn't give him a shaking, if they didn't blow that old tin trumpet, and rattle them heavy chains, if they didn't roll cannon balls till we was all deaf, and if Dacker didn't holler 'saints and angels!' and 'watch!' and 'let me out!' oh! there ain't no fun in creation;" and the queer, cadaverous man twisted his lean body out of shape, and laughed in concert with Ingerson, and—

"Ahem!"

Uncoiling himself, Allan jerked his face into the usual proportions, as he met the keen honest glance of Abram Taylor, the Methodist clergyman. The single breasted coat, white handkerchief, close cut vest, and entire absence of ornament, marked at once what manner of man he was.

"Good morning, friends," he said pleasantly.

The coffin-maker, with phiz lengthened out of all proportion, answered his salutation, with a droll by-glance from one eye towards the sexton, who had risen from his seat.

"I see you are rather merry over a grave business," ventured the preacher, leaning on his staff, and looking with a smile full in Allan Beauvine's roguish face.

"Well, yes, sir, rayther," replied Allan, undecided how to trim his sails to suit the "captain's orthodoxy," as he styled

the good man and his profession, "it's a very *grave* business, sir," he continued, winking furtively towards Ingerson, "a werry sad thing, our latter end, 'specially to some that pines in life, and has to come to *pine* after it too."

A frown and a smile struggled together on the clergyman's honest face.

"By that you mean, I suppose, that you have a good many poor people to provide for," he said.

"Yes; them as can't afford to be buried in mahogany, rosewood, maple or chestnut; I don't s'pose it makes much odds to 'em though, anyway," and he bent to his task with redoubled vigilance.

"Little odds, indeed," murmured the preacher.

"They're past bein' consulted, sir, and it don't make no difference whether they lays on a satin lining or a cotton one—except in my pocket," he added, with a sly contortion. Immediately looking up, he continued, "you must excuse my jokes, captin'; fact is, when I first took up this business, 'twant very 'ongenial to my sperrits, because, you see, I was naturally a live man—wide-awake, go-ahead, and up to fun, and the sights I see, and the coffins what surrounded me, made me feel kind o' pale. So I took to whistling, singing and cracking jokes—don't make no odds, I s'pose," he concluded with a glance, somewhat doubtful, in the good Abram Taylor's face, as if fearful he had risked a lecture.

"Be cheerful and merry, my friend," responded the preacher, "only let not your wit lapse into irreverence. We can grow accustomed to the most fearful perils, the most sorrowful scenes of human suffering; and it is a sad thing when the natural affections man feels for his kind become hardened, and his heart calloused."

"True as gospel, sir," ejaculated the coffin-maker, with a sagacious nod, "we be a mighty queer set anyhow. Sometimes I wonder what we're here for, to take and go off so soon."

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," repeated the preacher, with the same pleasant smile, only the voice was a trifle lower, the manner more impressive.

"True as gospel, sir," reiterated Allan, not well knowing what more to say.

"The body dies, but the spirit goes to God, who gave it."

"Yes, sir, I believe that. I'm no Papist, sir," (he meant Atheist) responded Allan, the nervous twitching of his facile muscles now entirely subdued.

"I never shrink at the sight of a coffin," continued Abram Taylor, "as many do—it only reminds me of a truth to be realized, for which I strive to be prepared—that I must die. Then I take the first step into eternity."

"Yes, a man has to take a good many in this 'ere world, but that step you're speaking of will be a great one—it'll want mighty good upper leathers and strong soles to stand the rack of it, I'm a thinkin'."

Allan's parchment face was really serious, and there was a quiet solemnity in his manner, indicating how utterly unconscious he was of perpetrating a joke. Ingerson, in the meantime, stood attentively regarding the preacher, and now and then turning to listen to some sound unnoticed by the others.

"Good man," said Allan, after the minister had gone, as with apparent relish he struck the last nail and surveyed his handiwork, "and I'll tell you why I think so. He ain't none of your mealy-mouthed, soft-sodder, silk-gloved men, but one that'll take a poor fellow fresh from tar and oakum by the hand. Everybody gives him that character. I tell you he'll set down to a poor man's table and eat common vittles with a relish, too. And he comes round this way to talk to the wicked vagrants that live hereabout—and though it's a desprit bad place, anyhow, there ain't one but respects Abram Taylor. Ah! that's the gospil man for me."

"Doctor Waldron is just such a man," said Ingerson, quietly.

"Now you make me b'leve *that*, old fellow, if you can. Why, ain't he got the richest church in Boston? And won't he have to go through the eye of a camel as most rich men does, before they get into heaven? no, no."

"I tell you, Doctor Waldron spent two hours with me last Thursday, talking about chemistry; and *I'm* a poor man. He can illustrate better than the doctor on the corner; he gave a fine description of the explosive gasses, of the causes of fire-damp in the coal mines, which he says is heavy air, called 'hydro-carburet, and proto-carburet—there—I heard it again';" and he held up his finger, changing his attitude to that of a listener.

CHAPTER XIII.

LITTLE ANGY.

In the silence that followed, both stood intent on catching the mysterious sound. They heard it, a deep, quiet breathing, like a child in a pleasant sleep.

"What in thunder!" ejaculated Beauvine, stepping forward—"unless it should be—my crackee! Come here, Ingerson," he had hurried to the other side of the shop, and stood on tiptoe, peering over into a large, deep coffin. The old sexton followed, and held up his hands in astonishment. With rosy cheeks, polished like the sunny-side of a pear, with full eyes closed, and plump shoulders gleaming out here and there under masses of golden curls, lay a beautiful little girl, of five summers, sleeping as healthfully and quietly as

though her bed were a couch of the softest down. Her pink flushed fingers laid lightly over the heaving bosom, and lashes of the silkiest brown lovingly laved the blue-veined snowiness underneath. Milk white teeth shewed faintly through the gently parted crimson of her lips. How came that rare creation asleep, and *in a coffin*, in the old cabinet-shop?

So asked the sexton as with fresh wonder he gazed.

"Why! it's Angy, my baby, I call her. She's in here every day—but, jingo! she got in the coffin before her time; tain't her's nither—it don't fit; there's the one she likes best, that little concern with handles. I wonder she didn't turn in there, but the shavings and things in this one, you see, looked inviting. Now ain't she a beauty?"

"But who is she, Beauvine? not one of your own, I know."

"Ha, he—you may well say that, old fellow," exclaimed the coffin-maker, grinning, "look at these lantern jaws, and see if they ought ter father such rose-buds as them; I'd like to pinch 'em anyhow; no, no, she's none o' mine. She's Mike's girl, Mike Harkness, who keeps sailor boarding-house a piece down here. His wife has been—ahem! she's quite a beauty; as they say of dead folks, bury her faults. They don't 'ither of 'em take much care of the little one, only dress her to kill, and send her off to play with me. She's the cutest little kind of a thing you ever did see. Such questions as she asks would set you to laughing. Yesterday she wanted to know if they had any coffin-shops in heaven, and when I told her I hoped not, she up and said, what would I do then for a living, when I get there. Here! baby, Angy, wake up! pinky, wake up! bless my soul, does baby know where she is? Here's the old sexton to bury her."

The child opened her sleepy eyes, and sprang a minute after with a quick, merry laugh, out of her resting-place, and then stood shrugging her dimpled shoulders, and looking curiously at the sexton.

"Well, beauty, what made you git to sleep?" asked Allan, pushing back her curls with his rough, dark fingers, "don't you know coffins are places for dead folks, and not living ones?"

"I was a dead folks then," returned the little creature, merrily, "I wanted to see how it felt, and I felled asleep."

"S'pose we'd a' berried you, now?" queried Allan, putting his huge palms round her delicate waist, and lifting her up to his knee.

"You couldn't—coz people would see me and say, that little girl isn't dead, she's only asleep; carry her back to her mother."

"Cute, eh?" said Allan interrogatively, with a sly wink at Ingerson,—“cant git round her, I tell ye.”

As he was saying this a tall form appeared at the door, and in a bold, hard voice, a woman cried out,

"My coffin ready?"

"Pooh! Nance Collins, you've joked enough 'bout that; you ain't fit to die," said Allan, seriously.

"I know it," said the woman coming forward, and letting fall, as she did so, a tattered shawl from her haggard face, "nobody knows better'n I that I ain't fit to die; but, I'm goin' to, I tell *you*, now. Something keeps saying, 'Nance, git ready, your time's come,' " and she laughed with a recklessness and bitterness that were terrible to behold.

"I'm bad enough, the good Lord knows, and I never expect to be better; and I tell you, I'd rather be in hell in t'other world than the hell I'm in here; for I shan't keep sinning there—I shan't only suffer; here I keep sinning and suffering too," she continued with frightful earnestness. "Look," and she drew from the tattered shawl two small but valuable pictures, enclosed in common frames; one "the happy family," the other Hogarth's sad but too true picture of the last scene in the harlot's progress.

"I've kept these pictures through everything; see, there's what I was once—here's what I shall be. There's my father and my mother—my pleasant, innocent home, there's myself, handsome, vain, gay, believing everybody, rather than those who called me daughter. Don't think I was led away all of a sudden; no, when I wasn't older than that child *there*, I began to set up my will. Oh! I remember all about it. And they, my good, kind parents, God forgive them, gave way to me. They indulged me in everything. They never subdued my will, never; they never crossed me for fear of my temper, and *that's* the why I come to ruin. When I got older they saw the sin of it; then when it was too late, they began to try to bend the strong tree, and it wouldn't bend. I had become selfish and hardened; my heart was calloused; I run away to do for myself; I got into bad company. But do you suppose I didn't *know* what I was doing all that time? *Didn't I!*" she exclaimed through her shut teeth—"yes, yes, yes, and every created being God ever made, knows when the first wrong step is taken," she continued, striking her hand violently against the pictures. "I don't care what sort of bringing up they've had."

"Sometimes," she continued rapidly, "it's a case of weak mindedness, that some folks call trusting and confiding, and all that; but I tell you, oftener its real cause is wickedness, fostered by indulgence and carelessness in the parents, and *they'll* be judged too. Oh! often," she continued, with a look of pain, "I've cursed my father and I've cursed my mother in one breath, and prayed to be forgiven in the next. But *my* prayers, ha!" and she ended in an insane laugh.

"Nance, you're out o' sorts this morning," said Allan gently.

"Out o' sorts! did you ever see me *in* sorts? Don't touch me, child," she added nervously, as little Angy patted her rude garments, saying, with a voice of pity, "poor lady!"—

"I can bear the *blow* of fingers such as mine, but your little hands, they're too holy. Go away, child! who would believe," and her mouth grew grieved, and big tears rolled fast over the thickly-rouged cheeks, "who would believe I was ever a little, pure-minded thing like that? Oh! to be good, to be *good*, to be *good*," she cried, throwing her hands up in a frenzy of passion, "what wouldn't I sacrifice now, if I had the whole world, if I could only be good once more!"

"You're strange to-day, Nance."

"Strange, oh! I *am* strange, I know I'm strange; its strange for me to talk of goodness, when I've been so wilfully wicked; but, I tell you, something's going to happen to me; not that it makes me feel bad neither, for now I *know* there ain't no mercy for me, I'd as lieve die as not. But I forgot what I come for—there, there's the money, you know what for—none of them wouldn't care to give me a decent box—and you take these pictures—you've been kind to me—yes!" she cried louder, while a frenzied glare lighted up her sunken eye, "take 'em home to your girls, and tell 'em my history; tell 'em," and she counted on her fingers as she specified each subject—"it was first disobedience—next vanity—next an iron, stubborn will—next, and forever and ever hereafter, the curse of God—now remember!" and wiping her eyes with her tattered shawl, she passed out of the shop.

"Proper sad, that, Ingerson," said Allan, eyeing the picture absently; "that's a wreck of a handsome woman—I've known her these ten years, and she's sunk lower and lower. I never seen her in such a way before—well, well," he added, sighing, "Mary Maggellan, I b'lieve it was, was forgiven—I hope *she* may be, poor creeter."

"Now, you see," he continued, taking up one of the pictures, and shaking the forefinger of his left hand in concert with his head, "I shall jest stop Sally Merlindy from buying that flaunting red bonnet with flowers in it, and I won't let

her have a silk gound neither. *She's* agittin too proud; and she shall stop goin' out nights, and she shall mind me and her mother. I ain't agoing to have her ruin poked on my head, if she has to go without a bonnet."

The sexton took the coffin now ready, and none of the heaviest, under his arm, and left the pleasant old man with little Angy, who was chasing him in and out among the coffins.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FUNERAL OF THE FORSAKEN.

ALL was in decent order at the lowly home of granny Howell. The fair young mother, whom nobody beside had pitied or seemed to care for, lay calmly in the sleep of death, her short and painful race rudely ended. Yet, better this than the tortures of a living death—better for her, but, alas! for the poor little motherless baby!

It had moaned constantly ever since, as if a sense of its mother's fate and its father's cruelty pressed upon the slender strings of its young heart. Mother Mott, in her tidy bombazine, had robed dead Minnie Dale, and she now sat with the orphan in her lap, striving with kind manner, and her own sweet voice, to soothe the miserable babe. The little shop was closed; "a suspension of life and 'lasses candy," the impish Dick Holden, who knew not what refinement or sympathy meant, said to his mate, as they passed the green closed door from whose latch dangled a bit of rusty crape. Dick thought he should go to the funeral to show off his new skull cap, which, after the manner of approved dandyism of all

time, from Brummell down to "broom Jack," who swept the sidewalks, sat jauntily on one side of his well-greased head. Dick had little feeling in the matter of death, except to think sometimes how "jolly funny it seemed for a man to keel up, and not speak no more nor nothin'." He "favored" funerals "some'at," for then he had to toll—and tolling brought in money—"it was a very nice arrangement," he said, "and *told* well for the caricter of the diseased."

But there was no tolling bell for poor Minnie Dale. Fond husband, tender lover, nor mourning parents stood about her last resting-place on earth. Many called, whose curious eyes saw only a victim of sin and sorrow, a miserable unfortunate upon whose small, pale features their glances were cautiously thrown, as if even in the look might be contamination.

And when the hour came round for the simple rites of sepulture, the little room was crowded to its utmost. Young hearts wondered, and old ones shuddered at the fervency of Abram Taylor's prayer; at his sorrowful, pleading invocations for mercy upon the outcast from home and society—for those who wandered starving in the lanes and byways of mortal sin and anguish, and there was no bread of life broken to their famished souls.

Gracie Amber was there, her eyes downcast and suffused—Letta Holden sat by her side, speculating curiously on life and death—Miss Maligna stood near the door, looking innocent of the many unfeeling things she had spoken against the erring girl, innocent of strewing thorns in her choked-up path, innocent of sending up from the lacerated heart sobs that were too strong for utterance, and that shook the frail body with anguish; and her parchment features and her primly drawn lips, proper in arrangement and precise in expression, betrayed no sign of feeling, other than that novel-tortured exhibition, misnamed a "holy horror" of all human weakness.

And a little back of her, with his hat in his folded hands—folded so meekly, so reverently before him, his fine dark eyes, that could flash with the deepest feeling, bent to the ground, his lythe figure gracefully inclining a little forward, stood that “kind, good man,” Paul Halburton; quiet, gentlemanly, the usual tone of his lofty demeanor subdued. “Such a condescension!” said granny Howell, in an ecstasy of gratified emotion, “for such as *him* to come to the burying of such as *her*.”

The prayer was scarcely ended before a fluttering excitement began to be visible about the entrance, and the *veiled lady* appeared on the threshold, paused for a moment, then deliberately walked towards the body, and looked long and earnestly on the dead. Those who were near her, Gracie Amber among them, saw a light that shot like fire from under her gloomy veil, when she raised her head, and slowly retracing her steps passed out again, going very close to Paul. He suddenly became pale, started, frowned, and forgetful of his usual serenity, turned hastily to look after the retreating form, and seemingly painfully agitated, though striving for self-possession, sank upon the nearest seat. For she had said one word which reached his ear alone, as she passed close by him, and that word was “*murderer!*”

“Wasn’t it queer, Hart?”—said Gracie, as they wended their way homeward, “the veiled lady coming in that way! Who do you think she is?”

“Suppose you ask Miss Maligna,” queried Hart.

Gracie turned; for that august personage was close at her side, but to her eager look, her question, she deigned no reply. Lifting her upturned nose a trifle more to the perpendicular, she tossed her head scornfully, and moved majestically past.

“Why! what’s the matter now?” ejaculated Hart, looking up in surprise.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” returned Gracie. “I suppose I’ve

shut my eyes the wrong way, or—now I have it! It’s because *you* are with me, that’s it!”

“And what if I am?” asked Hart, looking astonished.

“She see’s something wrong in it, I suppose, I don’t know what,” returned Gracie. “She has a spite against me, I believe, and always has had, since the time I was a little child. I told somebody once, quite innocently, that she wore false curls, and she never forgave me. Now did you ever see anything very wicked in that poor creature’s face, Minnie Dale, who was buried to-day? I thought she had one of the gentlest countenances I ever beheld, but Miss Maligna always told mother that she carried the mark of the beast upon her forehead.”

“I don’t like that man, Hart,” continued Gracie, after a short pause.

“Who?”

“Opposite there—he is going into father’s store; I don’t like him.”

“That’s the famous Paul Halburton. I’m glad you don’t; but he always seems to look at you—and I don’t wonder,” he added abruptly.

“Why don’t you wonder, pray?”

“Oh! why—because,” stammered the blushing boy—“for some reason or other; it’s queer how people talk about him, some call him the soul of honor, and some say he is one of the most rascally men living.”

“I and my lady!” muttered a coarse voice at their elbow, and Dick’s skull cap bobbed up in Hart’s face, as the latter turned to note the intruder.

“Don’t be foolish,” returned Hart.

“Me and my *gentleman*, ahem!” and the rude fellow passed, winking and snickering at the immense amount of wit generated in his brilliant exclamations.

“How little you are like your brothers, Hart!”

The boy straightened himself as he replied, "Thank you, you couldn't pay me a higher compliment;" and with a good-day he parted with Gracie at her father's door.

CHAPTER XV.

JUPE AND THE SAILOR BOARDING-HOUSE.

Two years have passed and Jupe is still a wanderer. It is a winter's day, cold, cheerless, rainy. *Scene first*, a wharf; the ice and snow being gradually washed off the slippery planks and posts into the water; smoke curling lazily from the cook rooms of schooners and brigs—bare, bleak islands looming through the thick curtain of storm showing white in the distance; a raw east wind blowing steadily. It is the dinner hour, and most of the warehouses are deserted. Their owners, portly, red-faced men, grown bulky with generous living, have wended their several ways up along the leather smelling streets, with umbrellas spread amply over their fine broadcloths. Two or three ragged but ruddy urchins wander disconsolately round, looking out for some chances to work if they must, steal if they can. Under a mean shelter, formed by the broken fragments of a boat, and forlornly hugging his knees, sits Jupe, a wonder and a distress to himself. The poor wretch, between fear of being sent to the hospital, and carried to a worse place by Jem Holden, who has arrived at the dignity of policeman, has nearly starved himself. But he can hold out only a little while longer. His clothes are plastered by the wet to his lean, skeleton limbs; his hands are claws without their symmetry; his feet are soaked in cruel looking shoes, breaking rottenly away all over, and showing his filthy feet, toe and heel.

Scene Second.—The darkness has come down, not "like a feather," but like a deep, dreadful cloud. The rain patters harder against the deserted shipping, and only a few faint "ahoys" break the monotonous beat of the storm. How strange and dreary sounds the sullen dash of the water against the dank posts, all covered with sea-weed, and between which, the depths always look black even in the day time! Right into Jupe's face drives the rain, directed thither by the cutting east wind. In vain he crouches, it drips from his apology of a cap down the loose neck of his flapping coat, and his raking cough only allows it further ingress. He is hungry; not even a crust of mouldy bread have his lips tasted the whole day. It is wonderful what keeps life in him.

As I said before, to-night he is a wonder to himself.

"Why don't I die?" he mutters. "I want to die now—I've lived long enough. My burying's spoken for, now why don't I jest kick the bucket? Wonder if it would feel very bad to jump in here? Don't believe it would, but then the fishes would eat me, wouldn't they? (cough.) Oh! dear—I wish I was dead, I do—me or Jem Holden, one o' the two. Wish I had a better place nor this. No dog wouldn't lay here. They want me to go to the hospittle—can't get this child there in a day or two. I'm hungry, I am—I'm wet and cold; somebody's got a good fire, and now they've locked me out of the old bunk, I'm 'fraid I'll freeze here. Ugh! cuss the rain; ugh!" he repeated spitefully, "I hate the rain; what does it want to come right in my face for?"

Presently he began again—"the sailors are all scar't of me, 'fraid to have me lay aboard o' their darned old ships. Somebody's got to be paid for treating me so; wish I could whip the world."

Another paroxysm, and the desolate boy crawled out of his miserable lodging, and felt his way staggering and stoop-

ing, up the torturous wharf. All alight, were the numerous grog-shops that looked out like murderous eyes upon the night. Smoke obscured the windows, and dingy crowds filled the door-ways; oaths and the reeking steam of whisky came out upon the damp, unwholesome air; battered hats, green jackets, grimmy faces, vile pipes, unshaven chins, and unkempt hair matched well here with the rude bars, unpainted floors, and villainous bar-keepers, who, with seducing smiles, plied their victims with poison. Jupe shuffled by all these, half crying as the warm, unwholesome steam touched his chilled frame, and presently he paused before a wide, uncarpeted hall, on the lower floor of which stood a horn lantern, and from whose precincts beyond, came the sound of lively music and the heavy shuffle of feet. In this door-way Jupe paused, almost overcome with hunger and cold. He heard the clock strike six, but he, like many another immortal, took no note of time, not even by its loss. Time to him was a stern enemy. Oh! how good that smell of tea and coffee! and how his eager nostrils snuffed it up! His eyes grew fierce in their yearning, his lips parted, his teeth snapped together.

A door opened; out of a broad blaze of light, like a white cloud from the sun, came a beautiful child with curling hair, dancing, carolling, bounding forward. She paused at the sight of Jupe, but the scarecrow did not make her run.

"What do you want, poor boy?" she asked in her little musical voice, coming up on tiptoe.

"I'm cold," shivered Jupe, and his teeth chattered.

"Come in to my mother's fire; I've got a lap-dog and a black cat; and Bob, oh! he does shuffle so beautiful; and Rink, he plays the fiddle—come in; they'll let you," she almost commanded.

The unwilling boy crept from his seat, and little Angy Harkness took his bony hand in her's, and led him to the

kitchen. In an enormous fire-place blazed a fire of hickory wood, and its wide black jams a-glow with millions of dancing sparks, looked to poor Jupe like the gates of Paradise, crimsoned with the light that is brighter than the sun. Two stout and not over refined domestics, hovered over the great iron frying-pan, redolent with doughnuts, and every little while they would pause to shriek their gratification at the feats of agility displayed by the little sailor dancing in the room beyond. The floor looked freshly washed and sanded; on the wide shelves that lined the room, stood stores of common delf, guadily colored, and against the walls hung innumerable Marys and Sallys, tenderly parting with disconsolate Jacks, in red jackets, and foot-flapping unmentionables, pumps and white stockings, that being supposed by poetical artists to be the usual "rig" of the hardy tar at sea. In a large cage suspended from the ceiling, swung an indefatigable chatterer, that indispensable appendage to a sailor boarding-house, poll-parrot, learned in all the mysteries of sea-phrases. Several sailors sat round the kitchen, on long yellow settees, smoking; among them two or three Englishmen, whose eyes, floating in their discolored sockets, looked as if they were close friends of the bottle. The room beyond, or dining-hall, was clean and nicely sanded—indeed there had been some attempt at taste, as the lines daintily curved by a worn-out broom brokenly testified. Several candles, dripping grease, blazed and flared on the wide mantel, surrounded by crockery shepherds, and attempts at architecture done up in plaster. A dozen sailors sat swinging their legs from the tables ranged against the wall, gravely discussing the merits of the dancers, of whom Bob, a lythe, dapper little fellow, with a huge black belt buckled round his waist, seemed to take precedence. Rink, the fiddler, his long, grey beard falling in patriarchal waves over his fancy shirt, plied the bow with unfaltering determination, though

in keeping time with the flying feet of Bob, the exertion he made sent large drops of perspiration oozing from his massive, bronzed forehead.

Upon all this Jupe gazed with growing satisfaction, apparently never heeding the coarse mirth that found in him congenial food; his large eyes grew frightfully round as he spread his hands and his tattered chest to the fire, every pore soaking in the genial warmth.

"Goot!" muttered a Dutchman, for one moment withholding his whiff, and nearly dropping his huge pipe.

"*Sacre!*" screamed a volatile Frenchman, as the little dancer capped the climax, springing almost to the ceiling, and his feet became quite invisible through the dexterity with which he managed a series of double-shuffles, "he cut ze capers quicker zan I shall vink."

"My hi's!" shouted a Johnny Bull, hitching up his waistband, "hif that hain't a jolly go—say, Bob, been greasing your footers with lightnin'?"

"It's coz he's a Yankee," quote the mate of a down-east schooner, with a grunt of satisfaction.

"Gut (well) leigt ibnen im ge *blute*," muttered a pale, gentlemanly looking German, who sat apart from the rest, leisurely smoking a Havana.

"None o' your murtherous tongue," exclaimed the portly Irish servant, filling her arms with yellow dishes, "spake it out in daicent Ainglish."

"If the man ain't got an English tongue, how can he spake English?" queried another.

"Troth—an' isn't mesilf that got an *Irrish* tongue, en-thirely, and don't I spake Ainglish?" returned the Hibernian, laughing.

"Yes, with an *a* to it," responded the tar; "anyhow your brogue ain't half as pretty as your face, mavourneen."

"O, out wid ye now; since I learned ye how to spake

mavourneen, ye don't spake nothin' else," said the girl coquettishly—"Angy, darnlint, git out o' me way, and go fade Poll; hear how he's imploring o' yees."

"Want a cracker—Polly want a cracker—down with the mainsail!—oh! blazes!—murder, murder, murder—Polly want a cracker!" screamed the noisy bird, like one frantic.

"Where's my boy—where's my ragged boy?" cried Angy in a voice of absolute distress. "Oh, dear, I was going to give him some supper."

"He got into the fire, birdie," said one of the men, striving to catch her as she flitted by, "and there wasn't enough of him to burn, so he whiffed up the chimney."

"Oh, dear," sighed the child, glancing out into the entry, "he was so cold!" and tears filled her eyes.

"Don't cry, Angy," and Bridget paused a moment beside her; "but the men here, the haythenish things, made such fun of the crathur, that he got mad like; and whin some of the fat spluttered up in his face, and they funned iv it, he just clared out like a speerit; I'm sure I never know'd he was gone, did you, Kate?"

"No," replied Kate, turning into a deep dish the last batch of doughnuts; "but it's glad I am, for the wretched craythure took away all my stumich. Here's the mistress," she muttered in an undertone, and Bridget, springing to her work, flew about the kitchen with more than her wonted agility.

The mistress, Mrs. Mildred Harkness, a tall, stately woman, though somewhat faded, was yet handsome. There was too much color on her cheeks, and too little nature on her forehead, and report spoke ill of her previous fame. Still she was a calculating, prudent woman, who saved money for her husband, and drew thither and waited upon his customers in the dark, little slop shop, smelling so strongly of tar and dye stuff, in the front of the house; and as a thorough reform

had taken place in her character, the public allowed her to go her way unmolested. It seemed strange that so bright and holy a thing as little Angeline, her only child, should flourish in an atmosphere of blight and mildew, and yet lose no tint from the delicate shading of her purity. It was truly marvellous, how, in the midst of vulgarity, coarseness, drunkenness (for Harkness kept a bar,) and blasphemy, the child moved like an angel, veiled securely in her own innocence. Like the diamond in its mine, she illuminated the darkness. Like a violet on the hill side, that blooms serenely, clothed in Heaven's own blue, and preserved from the rankness of weeds that defile the earth, so bloomed little Angy. The sailors worshiped her in their rude way, and many an oath went skulking back at the lifting of her tiny finger. Whenever they returned from distant voyages, some present came for little Angy, and there were trunks up stairs, filled with costly stuffs, crape shawls, soft silks, fabrics as delicate as the down of the swan, and wonderful toys from India, beautiful enough to excite the envy of the most aristocratic little lady in the land.

The great supper-bell rang, and Mildred, stately as a queen, took her seat at the head of the table, opposite her husband, a thin, dark-browed, anxious looking man, with thick, curling hair; and Angy, still grieving at the loss of "her ragged boy," sat down silently beside her mother.

JUPE TAKEN TO THE COFFIN-MAKER'S HOUSE.

Meanwhile Jupe, with hate in his heart towards every living creature, except little Angeline, for whom he felt a momentary warmth of feeling (he could not well hold warmth longer in his miserable frame) scrambled out into the early darkness. "The darned old street was kinder to him than human beings was," he muttered, "and wished he could die,"

seeing no light anywhere, neither within nor without, and tears fell down his ghastly cheeks, chasing each other, and were washed away by the rain.

A tall figure with a lantern came hurrying along, paused opposite Jupe, held up the faint light, disclosing both the haggard features of the boy, and the unmistakable lineaments of Allan Beauvine, the old coffin-maker, in his long, reddish-brown great-coat.

"Hallo! Jupe—s'this you?" he exclaimed—"shew! crying? shew! what's e'matter, Jupe?"

"I'm hungry, and nobody won't gi' me nuthin' to eat!" sobbed the boy, now fairly breaking down.

"Shew! jest tack on to my arm—there—don't take on, poor feller—step caffly over the gutters," he added, leading the forsaken being along as tenderly as if he were breasting the storm for the first time—"you shall have some supper now, if the folks isn't all gone off after we git there—here we are—this is the lid—open sesamy, and—now look out for yourself—the entry's alleys full o' litter."

And full of litter it was—shoes, blacking-brushes, a baby chair turned over, a broken coffee-pot, that had served duty as a drum, and sundries too numerous, if not too offensive to mention.

"Come, some of you—tol de rol—open the door, la lal la," sang the old coffin-maker, as he pulled off his wet over-coat and threw it down where he stood, "here, give this boy something to eat;" and as a girl, with red, untidy hair, appeared with a candle, he pushed Jupe gently along, notwithstanding the boy shrank back, offended at the girl's shriek of horror.

"He won't bite," cried Allan, reguishly, now fully over the threshold, into the room as dirty and littered as the entry. "How de' feel, mother?" he asked of a listless-looking woman, who sat loosely dressed, and seemed as loosely jointed, rocking a large white baby to sleep.

"Oh! I do' no—seems if I'm miserable," groaned his wife, without looking up; "Sally Merlindy ain't got your supper, I'll bet; she's so good for nothin' and careless. I'm sure I don't feel like movin'."

"Oh! never mind," said Allan, good naturedly, snuffing up the mingled odor of stale soup and coffee: "I guess we'll find somethin' to eat—here, Sally Merlindy, why ain't you here? what are you a doin'?"

"I was gittin' the young ones off to bed," said the girl, sulkily, for she had been deprived of a long anticipated pleasure by her father, and she felt no disposition to obey him or add to his comfort.

"Well, you come here now, and leave 'em to shift for 'em-selves, and git us some supper; now don't look at that 'ere boy, he's jest as good flesh and blood as you, only," and he grinned at a wide smut streak that covered half of the young lady's face, "not quite so dirty."

The girl flounced out of the room, after making a scornful mouth to Jupe, and it was a mouth wide enough to hold no stinted measure. Presently a small table was covered, its tidy black surface hidden with a soiled and ragged cloth, a few plates of vegetables that looked as though "they couldn't help it," thrown here and there in disorder, a plate of brown soup—a coffee-pot that had seen no ablution since the tin-man exchanged it for commodities, a dish of ragged bread, and oily butter to match, ranged on the outer edges, while Allan sat down, renewed the smouldering fire, thrust his hands deep in his pockets, tilted back his chair, and commenced singing,

"There was a fair maiden in Rochester town,
Highty tol rol, tighly tol rol!"

"Jupe, take off them are water soakers; now put your toasters into the fire—they won't catch—there ain't enough flesh—they may singe, though—be careful——"

"Now her lover did live only twenty miles down,
Highty tol rol, tighly tol rol.
Now this fair maiden she did enjoy——"

"Oh! Allan, you kill my head," pleaded the weak, distressful voice of his wife.

"Do I? then I won't sing lovey, tol lol," he murmured dreamily, "highty tol lol, oh! supper's ready, is it? Come, Jupe, jest fall on to them wittles, and eat as I do, till you're too full for utterance."

Jupe needed no second order, but his eyes glared indignantly towards "Sally Merlindy," who, with washed face, still turned up her nose and pointed her lip towards him, carefully contriving not to touch him with her hands or her dress as she poured the coffee and passed it over.

Then the girl sat down defiantly in a corner, and presently putting up her apron to her face, began to cry softly.

"Sally Merlindy, you worry my patience out o' me!" fretfully exclaimed the languid mother, shifting the large white baby on the other arm.

"Why! what's she doing now?" queried Allan, with his mouth full, "snivelling, eh? Sally Merlindy, what on airth is the matter?" and he rested on the end of his fork, the prongs of which glistened with an immense mouthful of white meat, "what on airth is the matter?"

"It's all lighted up now," sobbed the disappointed girl, "and the actors is all acting of it so beautifully, and the girls is enjoying it so nicely, and I—I—have to—have to stay, stay at home," she sobbed, growing vehement.

"Sally Merlindy!" exclaimed the old coffin-maker solemnly, "do you 'spose I want you to go the way of all flesh to them ruinous places? Look up there;" and he pointed his fork, still garnished with the edible, to which adhered a potato-paring, accidentally caught on the handle, "look at them two pictures up there, given to your father by one of the misera-

blest beings the world ever contained; look, look at that blest and happy family, where the spirit of blessedness broods like a sleeping infant; I say, look on that picter, and then on 'tother; do you see anything?" and with the air of a preacher who preacheth on vanity, he transferred the burden of the fork to his mouth.

"I'm tired of hearing about them pictures," replied the girl querulously.

"That's *your* fault, Sally Merlindy; I tell you, you poor child, you don't know nothin' about the world; you havn't scraped into its nooks and corners as I have. You ain't made coffins for the scruff of the world as is shovelled into the ground without any prayers. You ain't seen their sorrowful faces when I axed 'em what made 'em so bad, and they most allers said, 'it's the theatre what I had got a hankerin' after, and so I went to my ruin.' Now, Sally Merlindy, do you 'spose I wouldn't do this here thing if I didn't care nothin' about you, jes' as I'd let you have that tarin' bonnet, instead of the rale neat and lady-like one you bought? No, most *certainly* not. I don't want you to be ruined, my child, and what's more, I ain't goin' to let you be ruined, that I ain't. You jest keep the moral of them two picters afore your eyes, and you won't be."

A knock was heard at the outer door. Jack Flint, the baker's boy, was there, and on the appearance of the blushing and tear-bedewed Sally, said he "guessed he wouldn't go to the *theater* if she wasn't," and wanted to know "would she like to have him spend the evenin' and play checkers."

With a bound Sally Merlindy cleared the way before her, pushing the litter from a seat in the corner, flew up stairs and tied her red locks with redder ribbons, ironed out her face with grim smiles, and soon coming below, put back the remains of the supper, cleaned up with alacrity, and sat down happy, with Jack Flint and the checker-board before her.

After supper, Allan could not induce the wandering boy to stop all night, for Jupe had formed a plan in his own mind, and was determined to execute it before the evening had lengthened into night.

CHAPTER XVI.

MOTHER MOTT'S CLASS-MEETING.

ALL that day mother Mott had been to a poor sick neighbor's, on one of her missions of love. Shaking the patched and much worn "umberil," outside the door, she carefully wiped her feet, examined the bottom of her black bombazine which seemed, like herself, to catch no taint of impurity, and unlocking the inner door, entered the scrupulously clean, but small apartment. First, the old straw bonnet must be laid carefully away in a huge handbox that held her best shawl, and on which was a representation of Noah going into the ark—the men and one animal being by many degrees larger than the ark itself. Then turning to the small back fire-place, she raked away the grey ashes, disclosing a few bright red coals, that looked up cheerily, as if to say, like everybody she met, "How do you do, mother Mott? I'm glad to see you."

Then from a mysterious closet that opened out of the wall, and was perhaps a foot square, she took splinters and hickory wood, cut to the dimensions of the cunning fire-place by Dick Holden himself, who declared "if ever he did figger up for eternity, mother Mott's kind speeches would make a big total against him." Soon the little fire was blazing in its usual unpretending manner, and the little black tea-kettle, swinging from the little black crane, began to sing, and the little

brush swept up the nice little red hearth, and then the sweet face of mother Mott took its station at the window, from whose shining pane the snowy half curtains were drawn, while her busy fingers were plying the knitting-needles. Was ever room more perfect in its neatness than mother Mott's? Other rooms were as cleanly, as prettily arranged, but there was a poetry about mother Mott, about all she had and all she did, that elevated her above the commonness of indigent life, and caused the many speeches of the many people who declared there was something so superior in mother Mott's ways. The blaze shone out, shone strongly on the four oaken shelves that held all her store of books, from the Bible to the history of the Waldenses, the only volume that could boast of elegant binding, and that was presented to her by one of her dearly prized ministers. The floor was as white as milk, nearly, and look where you would, it was spotless. Before the handsome old four-post bedstead, with its dimity curtains, laid one strip of red and white and blue rag-carpeting. At the head of the bedstead stood a round table, polished like steel. Against the wall a larger table stood, covered with the white cloth, and displaying a variety of Japan tea-trays. A few mahogany chairs, the remnants of her better days, made a braveshow with their antiquated patterns and shining frames. Over the mantel were many branches of various colored corals, a quantity of very handsome shells, the model of a tiny ship in a glass frame, and lastly, an amber-mouthed pipe, suspended by red tape. Her husband had been a sea-captain, much respected and beloved. His certificate of membership with the honorable order of Freemasons, hung against the neat paper on the wall—a "blessed order," as mother Mott often said, and she "knew," she had reason to say it, for they had attended to all her wants since William's unfortunate death, and treated her as if they were all brothers. And wherever they met her, be

they the proudest of the land, they had a word to say and a shake of the hand with her." Aye, humble Christian, right had they to be proud of *thy* favor.

But, in common parlance, the kettle had boiled, and the shining little table was drawn up, a slice of white bread put on the toasting fork, the butter, milk and loaf, placed with scrupulous exactness, for, as she declared in her cheerful manner, if she had but one knife, one spoon, and one plate, they should be as nice, and as nicely arranged as the Queen's, in the matter of cleanliness. And when the plain repast was ready, and the tea sending its fragrance out of the tiny black teapot, it looked inviting enough to tempt an ascetic, that humble widow's supper.

Not long after, when everything was cleaned and put away again, mother Mott placed the little stand in the centre of the room, and laid thereon a large print Bible, with clasps and old-fashioned board covers; beside that a book of Methodist hymns, and a small basket in which shone something like silver. Then she went into the next apartment, as neat and proper as the other, and brought therefrom some commoner chairs, which she ranged methodically around the room. And why all this parade about which mother Mott looks so cheerful, her face so beaming and genuinely beautiful? Reader, did you ever go to a real old time Methodist class-meeting? Then you know, as you read this, why the Bible, and the hymn-book, and the chairs were all brought into requisition. A few humble persons, very humble, bound in the brotherhood of a holy faith, striving to assist each other up the toilsome path that led to the darksome river, were that evening to meet and renew their vows. However much of the poor human nature yet lingered about the skirts of their mortality, they were sincere. They believed themselves traveling to eternity, and felt truly that time was theirs only to prepare for that better home, by meekness, humility and striving to do good to their fellows.

The dark came down, and the candles in their shining bright candlesticks, that nobody could have told from gold, were severally lighted. Soon there was a light tap at the door. It opened, and a woman dressed in deep mourning came in. As she drew aside her veil, a careworn, but still sweet and pale face became visible—the face of Mrs. Amber, Gracie's mother.

"Dear sister Amber!" said mother Mott, holding her hand affectionately, "you have come in a stormy evening."

"I felt as if I must," returned Mrs. Amber, in an unsteady voice; "I have not been since—since—Thomas died, you know," she faltered forth, bravely restraining her tears, and I am hungry for spiritual consolation. I am very lonely now, mother Mott—very, very lonely."

Her voice was shaken, and a few large tears rolled silently down the faded cheeks.

"But he died so triumphantly happy, dear sister Amber, he was so willing to die! and then you have kind friends, and dear, sweet children."

"I know it," sobbed the widow, "and Mr. Halburton has been very good to us, too. He seems to take such interest in all that concerns us, and helps us along; I'm sure I ought to be thankful—but there is such a dreary, dreary sense of lonesomeness—you can't tell—"

She paused suddenly, recollecting all at once that mother Mott knew all about it, and looking up she saw tears in her gentle blue eyes.

"Dear sister Amber," said the woman, "you had at least the consolation of following your husband to a decent burial; you heard his last words, you saw his last smiles; but my poor husband died in the midst of strangers; of savages with no feeling in their hard hearts—but I ought not to talk thus," she added, falteringly; and rising, she went towards the little table, and opening her Bible at a mark, she read soft-

ly, "For I will be the God of the widow and the father of the fatherless," and with a smile full of holy trust, welcomed the next comer. She was a poor woman with scanty clothing, a large, old-fashioned bonnet, gloveless hands, hard, red and misshapen, but an honest, cheerful, contented smile. She had been toiling all day over the tub, for she went out washing to provide for her five helpless little ones. She was worse than widowed; her husband was a sot, and as she said, class-meeting was almost her only comfort, it gave her so much strength to get through the week. One after the other came the little class to the number of twenty, and lastly came the zealous Abram Taylor, his shining face giving proof that he had been on the mount in prayer to God. One person among the number deserves particular mention. With head meekly bowed, thin, unseasonable garments, she came in like one not worthy, and without lifting her eyes, walked directly to a seat in the farthest corner and sat alone. Mother Mott went and spoke kindly to her, so did the minister, but she kept her head still bowed with a sense of the deepest humiliation, and her hands were tightly clasped together, as though she was constantly in prayer. There was silence for a few moments in the little room. The few men present sat with closed eyes and smiling faces, on which was stamped that "peace that passeth all understanding." There was no mistaking the serenity of Christian composure, the quiet of the heart seeking counsel of its God.

With a loud voice, Abram Taylor said, "let us pray," and instantly all dropped humbly on their knees. The opening prayer was simple, impressive, full of faith, embracing all sufferers, all sinners; loud and sonorous were the tones of the preacher; his head thrown back, his hands joined, and the veins swelling out with the strong fervency of that clasp as they were uplifted beseechingly, told that the man of God was earnest, terribly earnest; that he did truly and faithfully

seek the salvation of souls, while the "amens" that echoed and re-echoed, sometimes swelling into almost noisy ejaculations, proved that every heart present was united with his.

All arose, and standing, sung the sweet hymn, the favorite of Christian worship, beginning thus:—

"Ye angels who stand round the throne,
And view my Emmanuel's face,
In rapturous songs make him known,
Tune—tune your soft harps to his praise;
He formed you the spirits you are,
So happy, so noble, so good;
When others sunk down in despair,
Confirmed by his power ye stood."

And those who have never heard it sung with the life and spirit of Christian fervor, have something yet in store for them. And when they came to the last verse—

"I long to put on my attire,
Washed white in the blood of the Lamb;
I long to be one of your choir,
And tune my sweet harp to His name;
I long—oh! I long to be there,
Where sorrow and sin bid adieu—
Your joy and your friendship to share,
To wonder and worship with you."

All eyes were filled with tears, and every voice trembled; for the poor lone creature in the corner, by herself, bowed down with penitence, shame and disease, threw her head forward upon her hands, and her frame shook with strong, deep sobs.

"My brethren and sisters," said the preacher, in soft, subdued tones, "let us thank God for his great mercy in permitting us to meet together again. And oh! let us be especially thankful, that he has brought in one poor wanderer from the path of guilt, one lost lamb, and restored her to his fold; brother Williams, will you give us your testimony?"

The person in question arose—a rugged, hard-featured

man, with a countenance expressive of serenity, however. His language was rough and his style untutored. "It seems to me," he said, with emotion, "as if I saw a great black pit behind me, from which the good spirit of the Lord has hauled me out. I ain't like I was, I *know* I ain't. There's something in here," and he laid his hand upon his heart, "that feels *white*. It used to feel black, very black, like the pit from which I was digged. I used to git up in the mornin' crabbed and sour, and feeling miserable; but thanks be to his name, there's a light round me when I wake up, and it ain't the sun—no, brethren and sisters, *not* the sun," he added in a tone of ecstasy, "it's the blessed power of the Lord looking into my clean heart, and keeping it clean. I'm goin' on I trust to glory; I'm a poor man here; but I expect to be rich *there*! rich in his grace, dear friends; rich in his love—oh!

'His name yields the richest perfume,
And sweeter than music his voice;
His presence disperses my gloom,
And makes all within me rejoice.'

"Brethren and sisters—I can't tell you how happy I feel, if I did I shouldn't stop to-night—no, nor through eternity—blessed be God that ever I heard his gospel."

With a beaming face, Abram Taylor addressed a few words of exhortation to brother Williams, and called upon another. He was a timid little man, but evidently a sincere one. "He didn't know sometimes but he had gone back, he was so cold; but, then, he loved Christians, and tried to do his duty. He wasn't favored like brother Williams was, with an unclouded sky, but he meant to press forward in spite of clouds. He was very unworthy, but *knew* he loved God. Would the brethren and sisters remember him in their prayers?"

To this timid Christian, the good preacher suited his advice. He encouraged him; held up the promises, and then

broke forth in an inspiring melody, in which every voice joined but one; and then the untutored washerwoman was appealed to—and most glorious was her testimony—"Amidst poverty, sickness, afflictions of every kind, she still was *quiet*"—her way of expressing joy. "Once everything troubled her, and she envied all who were better off than herself; now, she didn't know what envy was. And oh! it was *so* blessed to get to class-meeting! a real feast. She thought of it every day, and longed for the night to come. Some people told her that religion was a fable, but oh! if they knew how *quiet* and peaceful her soul was all the time, and how much real joy she took in going to her Father in Heaven, and telling him all her little troubles, they wouldn't talk that way. It was really a joy to live, to breathe the air, because the Lord had given it;" and she sat down with a face so beaming that every soul took courage. One after another gave evidence, beautiful hymns were sung, and feelingly sung, and at last, after a breathless pause, the good minister turned with a look of compassion to the Magdalen in the corner, saying in his own gentlemanly manner, "sister Nancy Collins, have you not something to tell us?"

The figure shuddered all over, and after a pause slowly lifted itself and turned the head away. But the pallid, deathly face had been seen by those who looked curiously towards her, and shrinking, they listened for her words. It seemed some time before she could master her emotion, or stop the falling tears; when she did so, she said in a choked voice, "I can only say—I thank Him—for his gracious mercy towards a being sunk in sin, as I have been—oh! I cannot tell—how—my heart," she ceased and silently sobbed.

"My poor sister," murmured Abram Taylor, with quivering chin, "can you say you think you have passed from death unto life?"

"Oh! yes, oh! yes," she cried eagerly; "I no longer have

that bitter hatred towards all mankind; I have no longer murder in my heart; I loathe my former sin; I *did* loathe it many years ago, but not as I do now. There came no peace after, then. As *he* said over there, all was dark, *dark*. And now I'm lost—I'm lost in wonder; how *can* He love me, sinful as I have been? Every body despised me, but you Christians; and now my race is nearly run, I want to thank you in particular, Mr. Taylor, that you ever came down to that wretched place where I lived, and preached the words of eternal life. They sank into my soul; they gave me no rest. I tried to drown them in drink, but they haunted me even then. I went and spoke for my coffin, and determined to kill myself; but your words—'*there is a judgment*'—kept ringing in my ears; for two long years, they've given me no rest. And now you all take me by the hand, though I wish you wouldn't; I ain't worthy, although I feel forgiven; I ain't worthy even of a place in your prayers. I'm very sick, but I thought I *must* come to-night to tell you all, and to say that, let me die when I may, it will not be in despair, though I deserve no mercy. I couldn't have said this once—I was too stubborn, too proud; but I feel like a new creature."

"In Christ Jesus!" murmured the preacher, with deep feeling, as the repentant Magdalen sunk, drowned in tears, upon her seat. Deep emotion was visible on every countenance; many wept.

CHAPTER XVII.

JUPE FINDS MOTHER MOTT.

THE parting hymn had just ended, when a loud rap at the door announced another comer.

"Say you, she live here?" muttered a hollow voice, and Jupe's ghastly face was thrust forward, and as suddenly drawn back, at the sight of so many persons.

Mother Mott went forward instantly, and drew him in, while little groups talked apart, and stood pityingly back, looking upon the miserable child, with his muddied and dripping garments. Then, in a few words, she made known his case to the good preacher, who promised to come and see the boy, and left the pleasant room. At length, all were gone save Nancy Collins; and mother Mott, going for a moment in the next room, returned with a bundle, which she placed in the woman's lap, saying, "I told you to stop, so that I could give you these. They are a few clothes, old and well-worn, but thick and more comfortable than the ones you have on. No, no, don't thank me thus; but for the mercy of God, I had gone astray and been a worse sinner than yourself. Now I must get some dry, warm clothes for this poor boy. I always have a supply on hand, for many of my friends make me the almoner of their bounty; and remember now, sister Collins," and she clasped the thin, trembling hand, "don't come out in a stormy night, even to class-meeting. The Lord don't ask us to injure our health, but rather to preserve it to his glory; good night, and send for me any time you want me."

Turning her attention to the outcast lad, mother Mott said cheerfully, "Why have you not been here before? I have been looking for you."

"I do' no, 'cept I didn't like to. Nobody ever *does* want me."

"But I told you to come, and wanted you, too; now here are some coarse clothes, which you must put on in the morning, for you shall sleep here to-night; do you think you could wash yourself clean?"

"Do' no," replied Jupe, with a hopeful look—"ain't never washed me s' I know of."

"Well, I'll build a little fire for you in the morning, and give you towels and soap, and you must come in to breakfast as clean as you can make yourself."

The miserable creature promised faithfully, and mother Mott, untying a little can of syrup, that she kept for her sick friends, gave him some for his cough; he ate it greedily, and after a thorough warming went into the next room, where was a small bedstead, and there mother Mott left him. True to his instincts, he *crept under* the bed, and was there found, sound asleep, a few moments after, by his kind benefactress, who did not disturb him, but throwing a blanket over him left him for the night.

In the morning Jupe made his appearance, haggard, emaciated, as usual, but in some degree clean. He did not seem at all at ease in the strong, warm clothing he had donned, but said he "didn't shiver in 'em, as he did in the old."

Poor Jupe had no pretensions to beauty. His features were long and awry, his mouth wide, his eyes that were very large and bright, were still not pleasing, and his hair had been so long neglected that it looked like bunches of withered grass. It was a painful sight to the widow as he sat near her eating, and a terrible strain upon her sympathies to watch his lean hunger, to see his hollow face on which was stamped death.

"I think I can get you in the new hospital," she said kindly, "where you will be well cared for, and"—

She paused, for at the word hospital the boy had dropped his saucer, and gazed at her with ferocious aspect, somewhat softened by a kind of fear.

"I won't never go to no hospittle!" he cried furiously, rising from his seat; "I don't want no more yer darned vittles, if you're going to send me to the hospittle;" and he shuffled backwards, eyeing the astonished woman with a look of dread and defiance.

"Only if you like, my child," she said calmly, after a moment's thought, "you shan't go if you don't want to; come, sit down again and finish your breakfast; you shouldn't be angry with me, you know,—I didn't know you had such an aversion to the hospital."

"I ain't got a version, and I don't want it; I don't want anything to do with hospittles—besides it ain't *version* that ails me; it's consumption; don't you 'spose I know?"

He had slowly returned to the table, reassured by the widow, and he now sat down on the end of his chair, and essayed to drink his tea again.

"What makes you hate the hospital?" enquired mother Mott, kindly, after she had cleared away the breakfast things. Jupe sat cowering over the fire, his hands and head hanging listlessly.

"Coz I do!" he answered, gloomily, then added with his peculiar ferocious look, "wasn't grandmam carried there? and didn't she die there? and didn't they cut her up and put her together again, before the sexton berried her? I knows!"

"Was it your grandmother? then you had a grandmother."

"No I didn't neether; I never had *nobody*; but she was grandmam."

"Where did she live?" queried puzzled mother Mott.

"Why, down there, you know," and the first gleam of intelligence crossed his face; "down in that muddy old hole, where old Allen keeps his shell shop—you know!"

"Shell shop," repeated mother Mott, still in a maze.

"Yes, shells, vot folks is berried in; in one of them old housen, what's torn down now; there's where she lived."

"Oh! you mean by Allan Beauvine's coffin shop; yes, I know; and what was grandmam's name?"

"Why, grandmam; that's all; she gin me a meal o' wittles many a time—cust if she wasn't good to me."

"Don't swear, my boy!" said mother Mott firmly.

"It's what they do in the theatre and surkis," replied the boy defiantly; "and I guess I like 'em best of everything."

"But there are things better than those, poor child!" The good woman's heart was pained within her.

"Well! I'd like to see um then; Jehu! to look at them fellers go round and jump through 'em and the horses a flyin'!"—he was interrupted by violent coughing, and after the fit was over sat gasping and struggling.

Mother Mott for the first time in her life knew not what to say. Here was soil fruitful enough, but fruitful for what? It made her very soul sick to think of the spiritual and moral blindness of this poor cast away. "What shall I do?" she asked mentally, "if I plant seed in this ground, what rocks and weeds there are ready to choke it!" but she did not say "it's no use," and leave him in the darkness, with a "God have mercy on him." She began prayerfully to talk with him, and wonderful though it was, he grew interested and fastened his brilliant eyes on her face. She told him the story of a Christian little boy, she knew, and he listened with vague astonishment.

"Wonder if he'd be happy anyhow? Wonder'f he'd be happy if he hadn't got nuthin' to eat?" at last broke in Jupe, scratching his head in a contemplative manner. "Wonder if he'd be happy if he'd a had to sleep in hogsheads on the wharf? Wonder'f he'd be happy if he had a consumption, and a' aching here'n there?"

These questions gave great joy to the good Christian; it revealed the pleasant fact to her that Jupe could think; that a shaft might be found leading into the choked up mine of his heart, and she labored on.

Jupe listened and replied, but strange to say, he was wishing for means to escape from this pleasant home. He had no faith in his kind. When mother Mott told him she would not send him to the hospital, he did not believe her—not a bit

of it; he thought she was keeping him interested on purpose that he should wait until somebody came after him, to carry him forcibly to the dreadful hospital; a place that seemed to him a prison of horrors, and worse than the most cruel death. He shuddered every time the door opened, or the wind blew the shutters to; and his fears were not allayed, when Dick Holden appeared, his heartless tormentor, though the latter was restrained from his jibes by the presence of mother Mott.

Dick had come to borrow mother Mott's copper kettle, they were going to have such a buster of a party, he said, for Bob and he had found some money, and they meant to have just the highest time they knew how. And making up a sly face towards the miserable Jupe, Dick left with the kettle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SPECULATIONS PERTAINING TO THE VEILED LADY.

MUCH discussion was excited by the stated appearance of the veiled lady in her accustomed seat in the old church. Whoever passed by the closed house in which she resided, invariably cast a furtive glance towards the well-guarded windows, but she was never to be seen there. Conjecture was rife and curiosity unsatisfied. The butcher and the baker were petitioned for the slips of paper which the mute servant daily deposited in their hands. The writing was exceedingly small and elegant, and always in *red ink*. That of course looked suspicious; a woman in deep mourning to use *red ink*. What could it denote? And what did she pay with? Always in good gold, always promptly, the dealer said with a chuckle. And what did she buy? Why, pretty

much what other people did—a beefsteak now and then—a veal cutlet—potatoes, celery, etc. And the early fruits she was never backward in getting, nor did she ever scruple about the price, as long as the things suited her.

What could she be doing all the time? they queried. Did the bookseller know? was he patronized? Yes, he sent her all the new works, but she liked particularly English reprints, and the reviews seemed to please her very much. She bought regularly the English newspapers, as they came to hand, at great prices also.

"That was it!" The knowing ones clapped their hands; they had found a clue to the mystery. She was certainly some English refugee, whose husband, or son, or somebody, had been killed in the revolution, and she might be a Catholic, performing some vow.

"How a Catholic, when she attends a Protestant church?" enquired some one.

"True—how? I never thought of that!"

"Wonder if Paul Halburton knows her?" queried another, "she rents one of his houses."

"Here comes Dr. Andover," exclaimed one, as the round, rolling body of the contented physician appeared in sight. The doctor, who was thoroughly democratic, paused at the sight of the familiar faces, and, stopping, entered the shop.

"Why! all Boston is in commotion about that woman," he said, good naturedly; "hadn't you better appoint a committee to call upon her, and ask her if she won't do you the favor to stand with her bonnet off on the common, opposite the frog pond, and oblige you by revolving as the wax figures do in Paris, for the benefit of the community?"

All the while the little man was saying this, he stroked his scant beard, and twinkled his little blue eyes, about which laid small rolls of fat, and in the corners the good-natured crows feet indented the soft ruddy flesh, graduating with a

sort of pensive satisfaction towards the ears, where they still kept faint unison with his hearty laugh.

"Has she ever been sick, I wonder?" asked some one.

"Why, not that I know of; perhaps if she was aware of your extreme solicitude, she would favor you with a slight illness, and send for me for a prescription. Of course"—and he bowed waggishly—"I should never rest till I scoured the town, found you all out, and communicated the symptoms. It would be even worth while for her to die off, as poor Amber did the other day."

"Poor Tom!" said the grocer, a sly curl lurking in the corner of his lip, "I'm really sorry he died so suddenly; I'm afraid his widow is poorly provided for, though Tom had just begun to do pretty tolerable well."

"Suppose you make yourself acquainted with her case?" queried the doctor with assumed gravity; "you were very fond of Tom, you know, in a business way especially; a little cash would be acceptable, no doubt."

"Oh! hem—Paul Halburton has taken them under his wing; Gracie's a fine girl, you know," he added with a knowing wink.

"Yes, she is a fine girl," said the doctor decidedly—"and above all suspicion. I'll trust her with Paul Halburton, or any other man; she's a girl to be proud of, both in the way of looks and accomplishments. I wonder what they'll do now?" he soliloquized, turning on his heel, and, as the whim took him, directing his footsteps towards the widow's house.

It was noon. From the school-room over the store, on the shutters of which were marked in large letters the words "TO LET," issued a group of merry children, their chubby faces lighted with satisfaction as they bounded from their weary tasks homeward. The windows on the lower floor were open, and, swayed by the warm south wind, the snowy half curtains—it was summer time—waved gently in and

out, disclosing at times a sad, pretty face, sitting behind them, looking intently downward. It was Gracie Amber, sewing on a garment for her little brother, her foot on the rocker of the cradle, in which slept the youngest born, a child of two years. Catching a glimpse of Doctor Andover, her heart fluttered and her cheek burned; she vaguely feared that he had come for money due for her father's illness.

So she welcomed him with a sort of confusion, and the tears started to her hazel eyes, for she remembered when she saw him last he held her father's dying hand.

"Well, Miss Gracie," said the little man, cheerfully, "I see you're looking well, and Milly there in the cradle is as bright as a rose-bud. How are all the rest of the family?"

"All well, doctor, I thank you," she murmured in a choking voice.

"And getting along I hope? Ah! here is mother. Mrs. Amber, I'm glad to see you; but you must coax a little color in your cheeks—you will lose your health."

The widow answered after a momentary pause—a pause in which, oh! how many bitter memories came flooding up! She too thought perhaps the doctor wanted his money, else why did he come?

"I hope you will not consider me impertinent, madam, if I ask if your husband died much involved," inquired the doctor with great delicacy of manner.

"It was that that hastened his death," answered the widow, slowly; "he could not bear to be indebted to anybody, and as I have reason to think, some of his creditors treated him harshly. It could hardly have been Mr. Halburton, he has been so kind since, and yet to him he owed the largest sum of any."

"Mr. Halburton could well afford to be merciful," said the doctor firmly—"owning much of the business portion of the city, as he does, and yet to my certain knowledge"—and he

checked himself suddenly, and abruptly taking out his red bandana, flourished it over his face.

The widow waited anxiously, and finding he did not finish his sentence, said with a hurried air, as if wishing to reinstate Paul in his esteem :

"He has been very kind to us, forgiven the debt, and told us we might stay in the house till the lease run out, and then pay him what we could ; he was perfectly satisfied, he said, and made us a present of the rent of the school-room, up stairs. Had it not been for his kindness, I don't know what we should have done—Gracie would have to give up her music lessons just as she is becoming a proficient, poor child. Now," continued the unsuspecting woman, while a slight hectic lighted up either cheek, "he says that the child will soon be able to instruct, and he will interest himself to find her pupils—heaven bless him !"

Not so thought the kind-hearted doctor, who had been surveying Gracie through the spectacles he had mounted over his Roman nose. He noted the pearly lustre of the girl's fair neck and forehead—the short, clustering auburn curls, falling gracefully over the marble brow and cheek—the finely pencilled brows, the full but beautiful lips, the charming figure and rich dark eyes, and he did *not* say heaven bless him, but rather "heaven help *her*"—and sighing, he arose.

"Doctor—that—that bill of yours," faltered Mrs. Amber—but the doctor turned upon her almost fiercely, and regarding her for a second, said—

"Madam, allow me to call in the capacity of a friend, not as a medical attendant, nor a dun either, but as one of the family ; remember now. I've got to watch over this girl," he added, laying his chubby hand upon Gracie's auburn head ; "I'm interested in her, and for the sake of my dead Lydia," his voice choked a little, "I'm going to see that no harm comes to her—now never say another word about my bill."

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. HOLDEN MAKES THE WIDOW AMBER A GENTEEL CALL.

WEARILY wore away the long summer days to the widow and Gracie. The younger children, though old enough to mourn for their father, had yet so much to engage their attention out of home, that the shadows rested less often upon their brows ; they were thoughtless, confident and unfearing. From the proceeds of the sale of Tom Amber's effects, Mrs. Amber found herself possessor of about three hundred dollars. With a part of this she wished to pay the rent, but Paul Halburton gently refused her, and she laid the little store by, and began more than ever to be sparing in her expenditures. Economy was not natural to her. Brought up to know no want, to depend entirely upon servants, it took her many years to conquer the simplest household accomplishment, and such work was distasteful to her. She labored with her hands at the call of strictest duty, not because she loved to. Mother Mott had been her friend in need, and wisest counsellor. She it was who taught her to cut over old garments she would otherwise have cast aside as worthless. She it was who initiated her into all the mysteries of saving by the penny, to add to the pound, and this knowledge in her widowhood was better to her than gold. Mr. Halburton had proffered assistance in the way of establishing the oldest son, the favorite of his father, in a wine-shop ; but Mrs. Amber, religiously respecting the wish of her husband, whose spirit seemed ever hovering near, could not consent to the arrangement. "If he could only go to school a little longer," she said, with a sigh.

"He *shall*, mother !" exclaimed Gracie, with animation ;

"you remember Miss Maligna wanted to teach me to make coats and pants long ago. Well, I called upon her yesterday, and she seemed quite gracious, on account of our trouble, I suppose"—she added softly. "You know she is head tailor-ess in Mr. Allibone's great establishment, and she says they are wanting apprentices, so I shall go. Then by-and-bye"—she continued, reading her mother's face furtively, "I shall be able to earn perhaps two or three dollars a week—that, you know, will help us along so much that there will be no need of brother's stopping from school."

"I cannot consent to it, Gracie," said Mrs. Amber with spirit, her olden pride springing up—"I don't want you to slave yourself to death over that hot work in such weather as this, and under a tyrannical woman like Miss Maligna—no, no, don't say a word, I won't hear it."

The door opened, and in waddled a dressy, fat, over-heated woman, whose salutation Gracie and her mother returned with reluctant politeness. Gracie immediately provided her with an immense palm-leaf fan, with which she cooled herself laboriously.

"Oh! dear—so hot!" ejaculated the visitor, in a sharp, puffy voice. "I'm so tired looking out a dancing-master for our Letta—how *do* you do, Miss Amber?"

"Well as usual," replied the widow, gloomily, "but what sets you looking for dancing-masters to-day, Mrs. Holden?"

"Because Mr. Holden, my husband the p'leceman, sez he this morning, 'mother'—no, 'wife, we must begin to make ladies of the girls'—sez he; 'I saw them Maxwells posting off to dancin'-school, and my children shall have as good education as any others—my *gals* that is,' and, sez he, 'old woman'—no, 'wife, jest put on your things, and go out and see 'f you can't find out where they go.'"

"Gracie knows, I imagine," said Mrs. Amber, still in her languid way; "she took tea with them yesterday afternoon."

"La! you don't!" and the little woman's eyes grew big. "Hart told me somethin' about it; I says I thought mebbe Gracie was doing some sewing, or odd jobs for 'em."

Gracie looked up in astonishment—"Why, I never did any sewing for them," she said, laughing; "instead of that they've done some for me; look here," and she held up her little black silk apron, "they made this for me, and see here's Carrie's name worked in the stomacher—to my dear friend Gracie."

Mrs. Holden looked her consternation; to her little mind it was a condescension worthy to be extolled throughout eternity, to be spoken to familiarly by any so rich and exalted as the Maxwells, and that Gracie Amber, the daughter of a poor widow, should visit them on terms of intimacy! What was widow Amber better than herself, who lived in a brick house and kept a servant, while the widow worked with her own hands?

Turning the subject with a dexterity proportionate to her chagrin, she began talking about home affairs.

"It was a very gratifying thing," she said, "to sit down and be a lady, and feel that one could afford it. For her part, now her husband, Mr. Holden the p'leceman, had ris up a little in the world, she meant to enjoy herself. I've bought sis such an illigant silk; she continued, "red and green, the flashiest thing—it looks like a rainbow in the sun—and how do you like my new bonnet?"

"It was a beautiful color," Gracie said, compressing her lips, that were quite inclined to smile.

"Yes, and so cheap!" remarked Mrs. Holden. "Bein' satin and a little out o' season, she hadn't on'y give two dollars for it—and it was such a lovely red, wouldn't it look fine now with a white feather—or black one?"

Mrs. Amber thought there was plenty on it, and there was, what with damaged lace, long, gaudy ribbons and trimmings too numerous too mention.

"I intend to be as genteel as I can," said the poor woman, looking herself complacently over; "and as for Letta, she shall be genteel too. I do love gentility so much," she added, with a little simper, "it is the hyth of fashion. La! who do you think Hart saw yesterday, and talked with too?" she asked abruptly, leaning forward in great excitement.

"The veiled lady?" queried Gracie, smiling.

"Why, how did you know?" asked Mrs. Holden, in still greater astonishment; "did that Hart tell you?"

"No—but as she is the only person whom it would be curious to meet with now-a-days, and every body is talking of her, I supposed it must be her.

"Who *can* she be?" reiterated the fat Mrs. Holden, while the perspiration rolled down her little red face; "some folks says she's got an awful mark on her forehead. My Dick says he saw it as plain as git out, on her forehead under her wail, the curl of a snake; and even Mr. Ingerson, who hasn't no sort of queriosity, says he thinks he seed something like it; and Hart last Sunday says he waited in church for something, and the veiled lady stood in her pew till Mr. Halburton, your landlord, come along—Halburton's a nice man, ain't he, proper nice? I've heard all about him and Gracie."

"All about what?" interrogated Mrs. Amber, looking up in alarm.

"Why, he's despritly in love with her, and's agoing to marry her—so folks say, but of course I don't gin it any credibility—but when a handsome man and a rich one comes where there's a handsome gal and a poor one, you may generally know what's going to happen."

Gracie with flushed cheeks, at a sign from her mother, left the room; and Mrs. Amber, with more than her usual warmth of manner, rebuked her visitor for her rash tongue, enquiring at the same time where she heard so scandalous a falsehood.

"Why, Miss Maligna told me; she says she heard it from the grocer, who heard it from granny Howell, and Beauvine told her, and somebody else told him, and so on. You see it *will* make a talk."

Mrs. Amber was silent with a new dread. Gracie's sudden blush, downcast eye and nervous movement, had not escaped her attention; and she was in too deep and painful a reverie to hear Mrs. Holden add that "la! she told everybody there wasn't nothin' in it; in course, Mr. Halburton couldn't stoop to marry a poor gal like Gracie, 'specially as Gracie now had got to work for her livin'!" Neither did she attend to her as she went on further to say—"but about that veiled woman! Hart declares she stood there, and as Mr. Halburton went by, seemed to look him right in the face, so long, and so strangely, that he acted as if he was going to faint, and actilly staggered back a little. So she watched and then followed him out. Now I say, that wan't no putty thing for a woman to do, and I do believe there's something wrong atween 'em."

Gracie now came back and took her seat quietly by her mother's side. Her color was a little heightened, but otherwise she was calm, and smiled sweetly as ever, when she looked up in Mrs. Holden's face, saying, "What was that mysterious interview of Hart's with the veiled lady? I'm quite curious about her myself."

"La! I'd like to have forgotten all about it!" returned Jem Holden's wife, boisterously, "why, he was walking by the common yesterday, on some business for Mr. Holden, my husband, the p'liceman, when she met him; and says she, right off-hand 'sif she'd been intermit with him all his life, says she, 'your name is Hart; Hart Holden, I believe.'"

"He felt frustrated, but you know Hart's got a mighty bit of courage of his own, so he plucked up and told her yes, and they two walked together, and she asked him all about

his studies, but never a word of us, and talked, so he says, most beautifully. Don't you think she told him that he had a resemblance to a once dear friend of hers, and her voice kind'er trembled, and Hart declared he could see her eyes shine, and they seemed to look him through.

"I don't encourage Hart to mystery," she continued, "because I don't think she's a proper sort of a person. Miss Maligna says *she* wouldn't touch the hem of her garment for the world—but la! I must be going; don't think I'm proud 'cause I wear a watch—it's *Mr.* Holden's old silver one, and a'most too big for me," she added—displaying a time-piece as large as a young moon. It's kind'er gentility to wear a watch, you know, and gentility's so fashionable. Do find out where the Maxwells go to dancin', won't you, Miss Gracie? and do come to see my Letta—Letta's gettin' to go with young *ladies* now," she added emphatically.

CHAPTER XX.

READING A LETTER IN THE GRAVE-YARD.

NEITHER mother nor daughter seemed inclined to speak after this coarse visitation. Mrs. Amber's thoughts were very painful, so painful that her heart ached with them. At last Gracie referred to Hart, and told her mother that he was going to Cambridge to study.

"What is the reason he is so different from the rest?" she asked, pausing, as her work fell on her lap.

"They say he is not Holden's son," returned Mrs. Amber, quietly.

"Why, mother!" exclaimed Gracie, with astonishment equal to that of their previous visitor, "who then is he?"

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"I don't know," replied her mother, still musing, and Gracie kept silent for a long while after, even till the subject of her thought stood before her, cap in hand.

Two years had wrought a great change in Hart's appearance. He was no longer boyish in looks or manners. His fine dark eyes had deepened and grown thoughtful; his hair, the tips of which just curled, laid thick and bright over a broad, clear brow. He was as tall as most young men at twenty-one, and the slightest shade of a beard tinged his youthful chin. Gracie blushed deeply, as he drew a chair up and sat down beside her, roguishly busying himself with her work.

"So mother has been here," he said to Gracie,—it seemed as if he pronounced the word mother with an effort. "And she told you perhaps, all about my strange interview yesterday, and that I am going to college."

"She told me you had met the veiled lady," Gracie replied, "but I heard before you intended going to college—Letta told me."

"Did she?" his face for a moment grew sad. "Gracie, will you take a walk with me?" he asked earnestly, "I have something to tell you."

With her mother's permission, Gracie threw on bonnet and shawl, and with a quick beating heart accompanied the youth. They walked on in silence until, turning a corner, the coal black eyes of Miss Maligna, glowing under a thin covering of gauze, challenged recognition. Bending a fierce, enquiring, almost insulting look upon Gracie and her friend, the woman moved rapidly past.

"How I dread to meet her!" murmured Gracie; "there is something so dreadful in her look! Did you ever read of vampires? Well, sometimes I fancy their eyes, if there were ever such creatures, resembled hers. It seems to me as if she were constantly saying, 'I know something about you.' I'm afraid of her."

"She is dangerous; women with such sour, suspicious faces, always are. She sighs and shrugs her shoulders, and says '*I'm afraid*'—'*poor thing*'—'*we all have our troubles*,'—with *such a relish*. I don't like such people; I like better the rude coarseness of—of my mother. You should have seen Miss Maligna lift her eyes yesterday, and in the meantime—looking up to heaven—pulling a character to pieces as you or I would a rose."

"Here comes mother Mott. What a contrast in the two faces! Isn't she a dear, good, handsome old lady?"

"Isn't she!" replied Hart, walking a little more rapidly, and catching the outstretched hand of the smiling Christian.

"A balmy day," said mother Mott, lifting her sweet blue eyes from Gracie to Hart: "a balmy day; the burial ground never looked more beautiful; I've been to see my graves."

She always called the spot where her children slept, her graves.

Still smiling, mother Mott, after a few friendly words, wended her way homeward, and Hart and Gracie continued their walk. They soon gained an eminence, called in revolutionary times "Copp's Hill." A rugged level it was, high above the surrounding land, with steep, uneven banks leading to broken ground, whose deep pits grew to the edge, brambles, thistles, and all manner of noisome weeds. A high stone wall separated this place from the burying-ground in the rear, where grey slabs and white, leaned, or ghastly stood upright, sculptured with hideous death's-heads and skull bones. Dandelions spotted the surface, mingled with here and there the cowslip and buttercup, or the lowly sage. It was said that treasures lay buried under this hill, and whether the deep excavations in its sides, and sometimes within its centre, were the handiwork of men greedy for gold, or the natural consequences of labor paid for by the day, no one at this time knows.

Suffice it to say there they were—and there stood our young friends, looking down upon the placid Charles river and its busy commerce. From that height but few years ago, how many hostile eyes had scanned in wonder the blazing outworks of Charlestown's Bunker Hill. Scarce twenty-five years before, and the summit upon which stood now a gentle young girl, and brave, bold youth, was peopled with British soldiers, while martial music sounded its noisy bugle notes above the graves of the quiet dead. Twenty-five years ago, and the vessels of an insulting foe, fired at thought of victory over an "unprincipled set of Yankee rebels," anchored on the blue Charles, and hundreds of British red-coats were borne across on bloody pallets, to die victims to the just resentment of the sons of liberty.

But the two thought not of these things. Hart's eyes, naturally so beaming, wore an absent, troubled look, and it seemed an effort for him to converse. At last he took a folded paper from his pocket, and with boyish diffidence said,

"Now, Gracie, I'm going to confide in you, for since I've known you, I've—I've felt—I—in short, I think a great deal more of you than any other person in the world—and——"

He paused embarrassed. Gracie felt a hot flush on both her cheeks, and a tide of strong, sweet emotion, hitherto concealed, rushed through her bosom. But when cannot woman better command her feelings than the stronger, sterner sex?

"What were you going to say, Hart?"

He started at her clear, soft tones, and smiled as she laid her hand confidently on his arm. It was strange how soon the stammering tongue was loosed, and the perturbed manner changed to repose and quiet.

"Let us walk into the graveyard and sit down," he said.

Under a wide spread willow they found one of those curious tombstones, now gone out of fashion—for even in death, fash-

ion holds reign—a sort of bench, with its supporters dividing the surface of the ground into compartments—here they sat down, reposing in each other a sweet confidence, and Hart began—

“Perhaps you know that I am not the son of Jem Holden, Gracie?” He waited not to hear her answer, but immediately continued—

“I have long been aware of it, but it has given me little uneasiness till within the past year. During that time the desire to know who were in reality my parents, has made me unhappy, and driven me sometimes to such perplexity that I have been unable to give attention to my studies. I could never think why, when Dick and Bob were sent to stroll the streets, I should be placed and kept at a good school, and left to pursue the bent of my mind, which I am sure is widely different from either of theirs. Even now you see, when Mr. Holden is prospering so finely, and buying him houses and lands, the boys are left to run wild the same as ever.” He paused for a moment.

“Yesterday, as you heard, the veiled lady spoke to me. I wish you could hear her voice, it is so sweet and musical; it sounded like the tones of a flute. Why she should take any interest in me I cannot tell, neither why I received this letter that my foster father gave me to-day, nor who it is from. The handwriting is peculiar, nearly perpendicular, you see; now, hark while I read it,” and he commenced in a tremulous voice:—

“‘*My Young Friend*—The wish is accomplished—the great experiment has succeeded beyond the writer’s most sanguine expectations. Up to this time I have watched you thoroughly, carefully, constantly, and I see no stain upon your actions, such as sometimes descends from father to son. You bid fair to make an honorable, useful, good and happy man; fair to become eminent—and God forbid that any one

should check your ambition. You are poor; that is glorious! Should you suddenly become rich, this interest would cease—these watching eyes grow weary. You must earn an independence for yourself. Your education thus far has been attended to faithfully; your board bill and school bills paid, and there remains yet enough to carry you through college, which you must directly enter. Have no doubts relative to your birth; your parents were honorably wedded, as there is abundant testimony to prove, and you are descended from a good family—good in justice, uprightness and honesty, more is not necessary to establish virtue. Rise to honor; shun meanness, deception, and guard well your temper. Be not seduced into low pursuits and pleasures unworthy of your participation. *Shun the rich profligate.* Shun the gamester, the deceiver, and he who hath murder in his heart, though his eye smile treacherously. Ah! would I could unfold to you—but I cannot—my lips are sealed.

“‘From one who has been your earthly friend and protector since your infancy.’

“Is it not a singular letter?”

“Yes,” replied Gracie, abstractedly; “who do you suppose it was written by?”

“There is mystery connected with it,” returned Hart; “and—the veiled lady—”

“I was thinking of her too,” cried Gracie, suddenly; “and see—there she is. Oh! Hart—if we had only been nearer! she threw her veil up to read an epitaph.”

Hart said nothing—but he was strongly excited. The figure, stately, graceful, slowly uprose from its bended posture, and made a wider circuit of the graves. Perhaps she did not see the friends; she did not appear to, but moved along under the tall trees through the rank grass, and, like a spirit, down the centre of the churchyard.

Gracie felt chill; she always did, she said, in the presence

of that mysterious being; her eyes luminous with feeling, sought those of her friend. On his cheeks burnt two fires, and his eyes, unnaturally bright, followed the tall, veiled figure.

"If she *should be*—" he grasped Gracie Amber's arm painfully tight as he murmured these words, but he did not give shape to the sentence by a *finis*.

They sat silent till the veiled lady had gone, both watching her receding figure to the last. The sun had been slowly sinking; the fresh wind blew over the water, gently rustling the willow trees and the elms, and lifting the short curls under Gracie's hat. Between the trees the old church looked down, and as Hart remarked how brightly the sun shone on its spire, the tolling bell struck once—then swelled up another and another stroke.

"Somebody is dead," murmured Gracie with a sigh.

"Somebody's in Heaven," repeated a low voice behind her; as she turned, surprised, old sexton Ingerson stood attentively regarding a padlock which he held in his hand.

"Well, now, s'pose, for instance, I put a piece of pink cloth, or green, or blue, into that tomb you're a opening, and then closed it up again," said a sharp-nosed little man, whom they recognized as Dacker.

"Why, the fact of shutting the light out would not change the color of the cloth, most certainly," responded the sexton, smiling towards Gracie.

"But I tell you," retorted the little man, jerking his coat tails till their paper contents brimmed over, and pushing from his forehead the insinuating corner of an old letter, "light is color; ain't it reasonable? S'pose there never wan't any day—where would your flowers be? where'd the red and white be on Miss Amber's face? I say, Ingerson, where'd be the color in the sky, in the water, in the air? I tell you there is no such thing as color in the dark."

"Give me a candle, and I'll show you that there is," said Hart, laughing.

"Ah! there," said he, and he gave one of those decided nods, twitches, jerks, which earnest speakers sometimes attempt in combination, "there's the principle; it's the principle I contend for. Carry a light into the darkness, and the darkness vanishes. Light is color, don't you see? light is color! but go into the dark," he added triumphantly, "*go into the dark*," he continued, striking his hands with every word, "and show me your color, if you can."

"But it's there," repeated Hart.

"Show it to me," cried the philosopher, "show it to me; go with me into a room pitch dark—"

"I'll show you color," said Hart, "that you can't see by day, with all your sunshine."

"What! what!" repeated Dacker, protruding his chin and watching for the words with gaping mouth.

"Why, man, a glow-worm, a fire-fly," responded Hart.

"A fire-fly, ha, ha, ha, he, he—a fire-fly; fire is light, ain't it? Light is color—no, no; you're not old enough to teach me—look here," and he emphasized with his fore finger, just as Allan Beauvine, who had taken his natural course after the sexton, and who had been slowly approaching, caught the little man by the shoulders, and with his thin but immensely powerful arms, lifted him with a rapid movement up in the air to the detriment of his hat and a multitude of papers, that, scattered upon the ground, looked like a resurrection of dead leaves.

"I say—oh! I say; put me down," ejaculated the little man, turning his eyes with distressing determination towards his tormentor, whom he justly feared. "I say, none of your jokes; you shet me in a coffin yesterday; I ain't forgotten that," he added with a menacing motion as Allan put him gently down.

"Who said the fire-fly was light?" asked Allan.

"'Twas I read my love's letter
By the glow worm's little light;
Sing fa la, sing fal lal!"

"Who said the fire-fly was light?"

"I did," exclaimed Dacker, boldly; "I repeat it, I say a fire-fly is light, and light is color; I advance the hyopethis; I maintain it."

"Show! why look here, confound your homely phiz! didn't you jest say that fire was *light*? Now tell me if the glow worm is *light*, why don't it show in the day time? Got you there, old chap, besides it ain't fire, it's phosphorus," he cried, slapping his thigh, and surveying the now perplexed countenance of the philosopher, who partly on one knee and partly rising, was redeeming his letters from the dust. "Look here, Mr. Hart"—but Hart and Gracie had stolen away, to find the place where the veiled lady had lately stood.

"As I thought!" cried Hart, "it is poor Minnie Dale's grave; but see, a little grey tomb stone has been put up; what is there on it?"

Gracie knelt down, brushing the tears from her eyes, for she was thinking of her father, buried not far off, and she read in very small Roman letters, these words, "Minnie Dale, 'another victim.'"

"Why, is it not singular?" she queried, rising quickly, and taking Hart's arm; "I know that is some of the veiled lady's doings. The stone was never there before—she must have placed it there. Do you remember, at the funeral, her speaking or seeming to speak with Paul Halburton? and his turning so pale? How strange!"

By the side of that grave, over which the grass had grown thickly, a fresh mound covered some quiet breast. It was in that part of the church-yard where the poor and the forsaken slept, where the rich came not from their stately carriages to

weep above their dead, where pompous grief seldom displayed its crapes and its tears. Beneath that little spot rested "Nance Collins," one who perhaps had sinned more than poor little Minnie, but of whom it might be said, "much had been forgiven, for she loved much."

The shadows fell heavy and black across the gravelled paths, taking shape from the antiquated objects about them; the chimes of the church clock struck six; the sexton had closed the tomb he had been preparing for the morrow, and followed by Allan and his "tol lol lol," and Dacker with his papers, was preparing to leave the grave-yard; so Gracie and her young friend stole quietly after them.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LANDLORD'S VISIT.

At home supper was waiting for the lingerers; the children were noisy, and Mrs. Amber looked fretted and worried.

"Gracie needn't have staid quite so long," she said; "she was almost tired to death, having everything to do; besides entertaining Mr. Paul Halburton, who had been there in the midst of all the muss."

Gracie blamed herself most ardently, and threw off her things, said good-bye to Hart, with an aside that he must come down in the evening, ate her supper hastily, and busied herself with the little ones. Frank, the eldest boy, had come home in the highest spirits; having met Mr. Halburton, and been introduced to a flourishing lawyer, who had engaged him to work in his office, with the stipulation that, if he labored hard, and continued his studies by himself, he

should, when arrived at a proper age, read law himself, and become some day, perhaps, a great man. Who could tell?

It was not completely dark when Gracie, who was standing at the window a moment, before she drew the blinds together, caught sight of Mr. Halburton. Quick as her movements were, he had neared her before she could withdraw, and gracefully, most deferentially lifted his glossy beaver, giving her one piercing glance that made her tremble, but not with joy. No, not with joy, though a sort of triumph lighted up her womanly nature, but only for a moment. She for sometime past had felt that the attentions of the wealthy landlord meant more than was visible to the eye—never remotely dreaming that they might partake of the character of insult. She had sometimes asked herself what if he should seek her for his wife? and visions of splendor dazzled the eyes of her contemplation, till the handsome face of her younger lover came between her and the temptation, and hesitation amounted to horror; horror to absolute denial. Paul was handsome—that she could not but admit, but there was something repulsive in his very beauty; something cold and serpent-like in the glitter of his black eye; she did not feel in unison with him. If she played for him the sweet and touching music that originated in the depth and tenderness of her own nature, she seemed instinctively to feel that it was too pure, and too fine a sentiment for him, although his face grew bright with pleasure, and his applause knew no bounds. As she thought of all this, a weight fell on her spirits, and sitting down to the old piano, she ran through a few plaintive bars.

"Say's that what they call a peana? 'taint 's good as 's a orchistry; my! when them clariqunes and tromboys, and flagelays, and drums, and wiolets, and musicianers all gets agoin', I guess they makes a noise some!"

Gracie, startled, turned round; there stood Jupe, his eyes

grown big with the description of his favorite pleasure, and glowing like spectre-fires set in white, fleshless, skeleton skulls.

"Guess you didn't think *I'd* be here," he muttered, dragging one foot after another, "but I know'd you'd let me, 'cause old Jem Holden, he's agoing by, and he says he's agoin' ter have me taken up; he's a perlice now, drat him—and I was 'fraid he'd see me."

"Why, Jupe!" ejaculated Gracie, "where have you been all the time since you left mother Mott?"

"Well, here'n there; folks is better nor they used to be. The coffin maker, he gi's me sutthin to eat oncet in a while, and—you"—he cried in a half whisper, and with an expression of wonder—"d'you b'leve there is any angels?"

"Of course I do," replied Gracie, willing to study this strange epitome of vagabondism, "what do you ask for?"

"Coz I've seed one; I guess it's a angel—it looks like one with a white gownd on, like the *faeries* at the theatre, and it's got such eyes! and such curly hair, and smiles at me, and takes hold of my hand, and says, 'ain't you my poor beggar-boy, Jupe?' an' I tells her, 'yes, in course.' Now, if *that* ain't a angel!" he added triumphantly, with a wise old look—as much as to say, "if that ain't an angel then there's no such things as angels."

"Where did you see her?" asked Gracie, interested in this description.

"Down to old Allan's shell shop, where she goes an' plays along o' the coffins, she's a angel!" and the boy's face grew quite gentle, and his fingers worked nervously among his coarse clothes.

"What did you leave mother Mott for?" questioned the young girl, "she felt very badly to think you should treat her so."

"It came along o' the hospittle," answered Jupe. I'm

afra'd of everybody but my own self, and she said she'd git me there. Now I don't want anybody to come it over me a coaxin' to go *there*, 'cause I'll just jump into the water and drownd myself fust!" and the strange, ferocious look, crossed the ghastly face again, giving to its haggard lineaments an expression altogether unearthly.

A light step was heard at the door, and Paul Halburton entered the room, bearing in his hand a roll of paper. Jupe hastily retreated, and the two were left alone. Mrs. Amber had gone for a brief visit to mother Mott's and Gracie trembled with apprehension at being thus brought directly in contact with their powerful landlord, especially as the dark hints of vulgar Mrs. Holden, came freshly and forcibly to her mind.

"I saw this in the window of a music store," said Paul with the softest voice, and manner of the utmost suavity, as he carefully unrolled the paper, and placed it upright before Gracie, who had no opportunity to leave the instrument; "will you favor me with the air?"

The young girl complied, and played that beautiful song, so full of passionate sentiment, that none but the most exquisite skill can render with correct pathos,

"My soul is dark—
O! quickly bring the harp."

Paul leaned with one elbow on the instrument, looking full in the sweet face so beaming with intellect, and thinking the blushes called up by his too vivid glance of admiration, the result of an innocent consciousness and a love ready to be evoked. Gracie's heart beat rapidly, her cheeks crimsoned deeper and darker—her hands trembled—she knew not the art of the coquette, and could not hide her embarrassment. She felt that some word, some declaration she did not wish to hear, faltered on his lips. With inexpressible relief she heard the little gate open, and heavy footsteps, as of some

man approaching. Stooping slightly towards her, Paul Halburton fixed his burning eyes on her face, and said rapidly—

"Miss Gracie, can I be favored with an hour's conference with you to-morrow morning?"

In her artless confusion she assented, and as Hart came in the pleasant parlor with her mother, Paul Halburton took his leave. For an instant, astonishment held the young man silent; Gracie blushed, and her mother with enquiring looks regarded her.

"I am so glad you have come!" she said at last, frankly, regaining the composure which for a moment she had lost; "Mr. Halburton brought me some music to practice—and, to tell the truth, I feared he would stay the evening out."

The youth sat down absently, and appeared to listen to the piano.

"He comes often, does he not?" queried Hart in a low voice, that trembled very much, and not even lifting his eyes. He had not spoken for some time; and the abruptness of his question told plainly that Paul had been in his thought, to the exclusion of all other subjects.

"You mean Mr. Paul Halburton," said Gracie, somewhat timidly; "not so very often—at least not to see"—she paused with glowing cheeks, then presently added—"he comes to see mother sometimes."

The young man sprang from his seat, and hurriedly paced the floor, while Gracie sat with downcast looks, all in a wondering perplexity. As for Hart—it was the first time that a mighty and inexplicable passion had stirred his breast since he was conscious of his love. He could scarcely understand this seething fire that burnt his very soul as he thought; he folded his arms tightly to keep it down. At last, pausing, he cried with sudden vehemence—

"Oh! Gracie—if I thought—if I thought!" language

would not come at his call—but his compressed lips and deadly pallor told more than the tongue could tell.

The girl looked with innocent wonder, as woman looks when she feels, but dares not admit, that she understands the unspoken declaration. Suddenly the torrent leaped forth—

"It is said, Gracie—it is said, that the dark man who left here but a little while ago, boasts that over woman his power is unbounded. Yes, boasts that he has but to smile, and she is conquered; that into any cottage, however humble—into any palace, however guarded, he can win his way with his soft, persuasive tongue. This he has said, both in public and in private—oh! Gracie, *do you* believe it?"

She would have answered scornfully, but that the anguish of his looks and gestures forbade it. She only said, with a sorrowful indignation—

"Hart Holden, can you ask me that?"

"I need not; I know, Gracie—I need not; forgive me—but the thought of what he may be, what I candidly believe he is, made me almost *mad* when I saw him here with you alone. He looks to me as if his heart was adamant, and his passions devilish. That cold smile—oh!" he shuddered, "the *mockery* of that smile! I do believe he is corrupt to the very core; that he uses his gold and silver but to corrupt others; that he has no human virtue, but many an *inhuman* vice; I feel towards him an instinctive aversion so powerful that I cannot keep the same side of the street with him, and yet——"

He paused, conscious that he had gone too far; knowing that he never could adequately express the mingled emotions of dread and fascination that both irresistibly repelled and impelled him from and toward the object of his annoyance.

WHAT MRS. AMBER THOUGHT OF IT.

In her chamber, with no light but that of the moon, sat the widow. She too had been perplexing her brain with thoughts and conjectures she could not solve. She too had been speculating upon the hints thrown out by Jem Holden's wife, relative to the visits of Paul Halburton. Never, till now, had the unwonted condescension with which he treated her, and his singular liberality, seemed strange to her; she recalled his looks, his words and actions. She remembered how he had complimented Gracie, deferred to her opinion, seemed enraptured at her singing, giving occasion, although she had never seen it until now, for the most unsuspecting to suspect that underlying all this was some subtle intention, working out slowly to the fullness of its purpose. Suppose, thought Mrs. Amber, he should love Gracie and want to marry her—and therewith her mind went wandering along a range of speculation, and imagined a thousand pleasant things that were to be, in case this momentous fortune should happen to her child.

She was sure Gracie was worthy of him, and would well grace the most splendid mansion; and tears of pride filled her eyes as she thought over all her child's sweet attractions, her grace, her intellect, her rare genius.

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Amber, softly, "he's none too rich, or too good, or too handsome for her, my dear, dutiful child." Slowly revolved her thoughts around this centre of new and novel hopes. Then they took a backward inclination. She sat in the room where her husband had died. Her eyes were now fastened upon the pillow his pale face had pressed so often. It was glistening in the moon-light, and the narrow net-work of the fringe on the curtains, looped back against

the tall bed-posts, swayed gently to and fro as if still stirred by the breath of the sleeper.

"He was proud of her before he went," murmured the widow, "as I said he would be. It is strange how at last he held her hand so constantly, letting it go as he died with such reluctance, and stranger still that after gathering strength to speak Mr. Halburton's name, he could not say any further, though his glances were fixed upon Gracie's face, and he seemed in agony. Perhaps he knew this man's preference, and so tried to tell us that Gracie would be provided for, would find even a rich and luxurious home—but his face looked so sorrowful—not in the least happy—I wish he could have told us."

For a long while she sat plunged in reverie, hearing abstractedly the murmur of young voices below stairs, never dreaming that the two children, as they seemed to her, could talk or even remotely think of love. Her fancy floated up town among the grand squares and broad streets full of princely residences, where they said lived Paul Halburton. A score of times she ascended steps of fine white marble and placed her well-gloved hand upon the silver door bell. Scores of times the handsomely clothed porter bowed her in, and she was ushered into parlors, the splendor of whose decorations dazzled the eyes accustomed for so long to poor and common household things; and there sat her daughter, attired as befitted the wife of the rich landlord, in the rarest of purple and the costliest of fine linen. She was just in the act of marching majestically toward a regally appointed mirror, when her golden imaginations were most ruthlessly melted, by the apparition of a stern, inflexible face, with snapping black eyes, and a sneering expression; the thin, narrow, nay, almost invisible lips of which, moved to the measure of a harsh voice that said—

"Your daughter told me I should find you up here; how do you do, Mrs. Amber?"

The widow rose hastily from her seat and welcomed the new comer, who was no other than Miss Maligna, the tailor-ess; reached a chair and drew it along towards her; then they both sat down together.

"I feel it my duty," began Miss Maligna, with a sharp and peremptory ahem, "to call and put you on your guard concerning the talk that is going round town about your, ahem, Miss Gracie and young Holden."

"What now?" thought the widow, but she said nothing.

"It seems to me highly improper," continued the other, shaking her bonnet till its long green strings fluttered over her maiden bosom, "*highly* improper, to allow her and that young person to go in the old meeting-house at such *highly* improper hours to play the organ; folks are talking about it; and I called as a friend—"

"Oh! certainly," rejoined the widow, in a sarcastic voice, as Miss Maligna placed particular emphasis upon the word, and paused, that her meaning might be comprehended.

"To warn you against the thing; for you see it is reported all round, that every day at a certain hour, Gracie and this godless young man—"

"And Gracie's little brother and sister," put in Mrs. Amber, with considerable spirit.

"Do *they* *always* go with her?"

"Always," replied Mrs. Amber, firmly. "Gracie would not go without them, although even if she did, who but the most vulgar wretch would surmise any harm? And now, Miss Maligna, I've borne your speeches and hints and inuendoes about my child long enough. I want to hear nothing more of them. Are you not ashamed of yourself, going about as you do to distribute the bread of life, and at the same time trying to ruin the reputation of my daughter? Be silent," she continued, with an air of command, "and hear me out. In some unaccountable manner, the girl of-

fended you when she was a little thing, six years ago, and ever since you have been wreaking your vengeance upon her. You poisoned her father's mind by your base insinuations, and now you would poison mine. Every little, innocent, thoughtless thing she has done since that unfortunate time, you have distorted and exaggerated out of all shape. But, believe me, your wickedness shall return four-fold upon your own head; the child has never injured you, but done you many a good turn, and you know it. She says you have offered to teach her your trade; God forbid that I should place her in your power!" and with quivering lips and blazing eye the timid woman, but the wounded *mother*, regarded the enemy of her daughter.

"Very well, Mrs. Amber—very well, *very* well;" was all the two faint whitish lines articulated, and the voice was broken with concealed rage; "you have brought a *pretty* imputation upon me, Mrs. Amber, a *pretty* imputation; have you anything else to say 'm?" she continued with a mock courtesy and a wild eye that shot forth flames, so burning was her rage.

"No—nothing more," replied the poor widow, who felt that she had already gone too far for Gracie's good, though she could no longer have kept the pent-up fire of her just resentment within her bosom. "And now I am really and truly unhappy," she murmured, as the quivering green bow, faintly discernible in the strong moonlight, vanished down the narrow stairway. "Why did I say it? why make of her a more bitter enemy than she has been? God forgive me!" and like a good Christian that she was, she kelt down in the silence to pray. Arising with a calmer spirit, she moved to the bedside of her little ones. Why, as she gazed upon the four sweet faces tucked about with snowy sheets, did that feeling of inexpressible sadness fall upon her heart as it fell when the cold frame of her husband laid unmoving upon that

very couch? What led her to cry, with upraised hands and eyes, "Lord, Lord, Thou hast been with me in six troubles, desert me not in the seventh!" and then, sinking down, she burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXII.

A PEEP AT MYSTERY.

THE home of the veiled lady was a sanctuary into which, as yet, no unholy eyes had penetrated. Scandal had seen it, nevertheless, and scandal said it was an exceedingly repulsive place, profusely furnished with gloomy furniture, of which the prevailing hue was black. Scandal, or perhaps I should say gossip, declared that her bed-chamber was hung with crape; that even in the darkness of the night she wore that mysterious veil, for that the sight of her own deformity affrighted and horrified her beyond all expression. Gossip moreover affirmed that the mirrors were covered with the thickest and blackest material, and this will be believed by all who know the peculiar characteristic or gift of gossip, *i. e.* second sight; a looking into futurity, and solving all doubtful questions with an oracular wink of the eye and wave of the hand.

But suppose for once, we are incredulous, and let gossip's word go for what it is worth, (it will grieve the soul of the tender creature, but we pass that by,) and ourselves take an inventory of the much-talked of, much-coveted premises. With our pen-feather wings we will fly silently over the head of gossip, and, wrapped in the invisible mantle of romance, drop silently and suddenly at her door. It is a large, old-fashioned front door, of Gothic construction, with three plain

stone steps, with iron balustrades, on either side of which light iron chains swing, fastened into a ring on the sides, just below the wide brass knocker. It is a very ordinary door, yet how much interest gathers about it as we look! Here has feminine aristocracy driven in her shining carriage, and sent her white-glazed card, engraved with talismanic letters, whose aggregate make a whole, formidable to the nameless nobody who took her washing home, and driven away again as wise as she came. The Misses Flidgets, with their twenty dollar bonnets, have come hither "all in a row," after pulling down their ruffles and pulling up their parasols, after taking off their delicate gossamer veils that falsely professed to protect their freckled faces, and adjusting their immaculate pocket-handkerchiefs, looked aghast in each other's eyes of dull stone blue, and departed, "all in a row," quite indignant at the harmless bit of pasteboard that contained the declaration—

"Miss D. never sees company."

"We shun her!" ejaculated Miss Division Flidget, the second sister, whenever she was spoken to concerning the visit after that; "we shun her as some unholy thing. Though she comes to our church, papa never allows us to speak with her." So reiterated the other Flidgets. They were unanimous, though they favored Division.

It is needless to enumerate the many who had turned, some in high dudgeon, others in low disgust, from the steps we are now contemplating. Suffice it to say that Miss Cornelia Slanderall declared that the Stanhope family and the mighty Greenleaf, and even Mr. John Dacker, with particles of paper adhering to his frowsy hair, and four newspapers in each pocket—a subscription-book in one hand and the prospectus of a new work, for which he was soliciting names and means, in the other, were successively sent away with a "flea in their ear," her own elegant and expressive language.

We will now open the forbidden door, and with fresh faces and undaunted mien, step into the wide, carpeted hall. Here, on the right, is a statuette of Milton in bronze—on the left, one of Shakspeare. These expressive indications need no comment. A massive, tall, English-looking clock, stands at the further end, and a few pictures in sombre, black frames, line the walls. The staircase is handsomely carpeted. We need not fear to open yonder door, for the mistress of the mansion has gone out on her errand, and we are safe from prying eyes, whatever the mansion may be. The room is furnished for a parlor, plainly, and with black furniture, as the rumor goes, or very dark.

The paper on the wall being of a gay, lively pattern, contrasts strangely with the sombre things that stand in rows, or groups gracefully arranged, dark gleaming in the chastened light. The few pictures are far from cheerful in subject, though of great artistic value. From here let us look into the dining-room. It is ordinary, with a small mahogany table standing in the centre, a snowy cloth folded thereon. Stretched out upon the leather covered lounge—she sleeps! not the veiled lady, but her sable, and one would think, uninteresting companion and servant, the dumb attendant. There is no disputing that she also is black, jetty as the wave of the styx. *Dumb* attendant, we said—see, in dreams her lips move—she speaks! wonder of wonders! tell gossip that she speaks! Leaving her, with astonished glances at each other, we walk up the wide, easy staircase and pause, quite overcome with wonder. For, sure enough, here *is* black drapery; the upper hall looks like a tomb. And the chamber! we hold our breath as we gaze within—the book-case opposite the door is of the same mournful color, and every book is bound in black, on which the gilded titles make a painful show. The long table wears a sable drapery; on it are disposed materials for writing, and a pencil line of sun

shine lays like a thin gleaming thread across. A white handkerchief, the only cheerful object there, and even that bordered with a black stripe, seems to have been carelessly thrown upon it, a black and shining glove, very delicately and thoroughly moulded to a graceful hand by close companionship, lays before it. Many engravings of English scenes adorn the walls, adding only a different and picturesque gloom to the rest. The only thing that has semblance of life there, is the portrait of an exceedingly beautiful girl hanging between the two deeply curtained windows. That face! it is the type of youth's serenity, seemingly unchangeable—of youth's innocence and innocent trust, before the marvellous change that comes with years, nay, sometimes within the compass of a little hour. Can it be the girl's shadowing forth of the lonely, mysterious, haunting woman, she who bears the weight of some great sorrow, or the terrible presence of an unspoken and ghastly crime? Nay, for as we look nearer, the canvas is cracked, and the coloring, though brilliant, still bears the mark of extreme age. She, with her beautiful form, her wrist so white, when by some chance it is disclosed, so round, so slender, her gait so firm, her carriage so erect, cannot be very old. Just opposite, shrouded in black, another portrait hangs—we essay to lift the crape, and under it is a face so wildly beautiful! yet so arrogant in its youthful *hauteur*, that our very admiration is pained. It is that of a youth, a young boy with dazzling black eyes, and long curls of waving, glossy black—with coral lips and a faultless mouth—and yet with all these distinctive marks of rare physical loveliness, mingles an expression that as we still gaze grows horrible. The face, too, is not unfamiliar; we have seen it somewhere—we shall see it again, and yet cannot quite remember it. Standing beneath this fair but sad picture, is something covered with black broadcloth. We lift the pall, and discover—what think you? a monument

like those that ornament our cemeteries; of pure white marble—no! it is wood, cunningly made to imitate the more enduring stone. It is craped, and engraved on its front is the following:

“TO THE MEMORY

Of one dead to all natural affection, to all honor—to all the virtues of his kind—though wearing the semblance of man, being a monster of ingratitude—a hideous reminder of eternal retribution.”

We start back in amaze. For whom is this terrible epitaph? for whom this semblance of a tomb? The room is more like a charnel-house than ever; the air is stifling; the ray of sunlight seems the pale smile upon the changing lips of a corpse. Cover it again; for once gossip has come within speaking distance of the truth, and the deaf world may flourish its ear trumpet in triumph. One more inventory; a miniature case is in yon open drawer. It may be a sacrilege to disturb it and unseal the well-worn lid. Strange—strange, startling truly, but it must be he—the *Reverend Doctor Gilbert Waldron*; our dignified and sorrowful pastor of the old church. What has such as she, if she be indeed degraded or depraved, to do with this? Little, little he thinks it, that solitary man, little he thinks, as in the deep profound of his discourse he glances, absently or otherwise, we cannot tell, towards the strange being in whose single presence, is centered all female, and, shall we say it? masculine curiosity? The case is very old, the painting youthful in expression. Gilbert Waldron has lost that open, smiling look; the mass of shining curls still shades his brow, but it has not the triumph of youth's earlier effort. The curls fall lower on his forehead, the eyes are more hollow; and if one looked close there might be seen, streaking the ebon mass of hair, many a line of silver.

Our interest deepens, but not for the house—the “shell,” as poor Jupe expressively calls it, but for the inmate, whose history is written only on the sacred record of Deity, and with the gaping public, we too cry, “who *can* she be?”

THE VEILED LADY.

The sun, near its setting, streamed in full upon the stately figure of the veiled lady, as she sat with head bowed upon her hand near the southern window of her chamber. The position she had chosen was unfavorable to the eager glance of the passer by, who notwithstanding could be distinctly seen by her. None of her features were visible, for a veil as thick as that she ordinarily wore abroad, was thrown carelessly over head and face, resting on her queenly shoulders, and making more gracefully visible the peculiar beauty of her motion. Still there could not, with so much to inspire imagination, revealed—there could not beneath that veil be absolute deformity.

There was a dreadful story afloat some time ago, of how a husband branded her shame and his own dishonor, upon the brow of his fair young wife, in red-hot characters. Did such a stain deface the white forehead of the veiled lady? Nobody knew, for even in the presence of her own servant, she never uncovered her face. Still and statue-like she sat, and her attention seemed fixed on the panorama beneath. Paul Halburton at that moment passed; a shudder ran through her whole person, and she drew back. Opposite the house he paused, apparently to speak with some person, but the veiled lady noticed some expression in his glance as he turned his head to gaze, that seemed familiar, and taking a powerful glass from a table near her, she, with a motion that withdrew the veil dexterously from her eyes, yet still concealed her features, looked earnestly in the same direction.

She needed not the glass, and she replaced it, as she saw the gentle figure of Gracie Amber with Hart, the handsome boy, at her side, and followed by two pretty little children, restraining their eager steps, just going up into the old meeting-house. Again she turned to Paul Halburton, who was now talking rapidly with a friend, his eyes fixed on the ground, an angry red flush on either cheek, and his hands clasped behind him. As she looked, she sighed—a sigh that seemed more like a groan, it was so loud, so prolonged. Once the beautiful but sinister face of the wine-merchant, turned its scrutinizing eyes up to the very window where she sat, but they saw nothing, and with a scornful curl of the lip, Paul Halburton moved hastily along the busy thoroughfare.

The veiled lady also arose, and adjusting her mantle, and the bonnet with its long gloomy appendage, after giving a few directions to the one servant, left the house with slow and measured steps, and bent her way in the direction of the meeting-house.

“I will see them together,” she said mentally, “and judge for myself.”

It was cleaning day, and the old sexton, his head uncovered, stood on the stone steps with brush in hand. The meeting-house was his pride, his darling, his hobby. Not a day passed that he was not there, arranging and rearranging. The glass-lamps that were used on vestry nights, shone with the brightness of crystal, without spot or blemish—beyond, the round, silvered reflectors used by our fathers, were polished like mirrors. Not a speck of dirt or dust was visible to the most scrutinizing spectacles; and even the old ladies declared that their foot stoves were as bright as the day they bought them. He stood now, as I said, upon the steps, and bowed, though at the same time he moved back a little, as the veiled lady approached him. In her rare, musical voice, she asked permission to enter the house and listen to the music for awhile.

"Certainly, lady," said the old sexton with a courteous bow, for he was not wanting in that deference the true gentleman ever shows to one of the softer sex—and gathering the folds of her great veil, the mysterious personage disappeared within the precincts of the building, and walked dreamily from aisle to aisle, drinking in the melody that Gracie's nimble fingers drew forth. At last she ventured up stairs, in the old gallery, and stood cautiously behind the curtains of crimson damask, that divided the choir seats from the pews. Placed methodically on the green cushions, the hymn-books, in pyramids, threatened to topple over and scrape acquaintance with the narrow strips of carpeting below, that were bounded by square boxes filled with sand. Bits of paper strewed the floor, acutely exposing the mischievous propensities of church singers, who, hidden from view, scribbled over all the torn blank-leaves of the sacred books, and then scattered the mutilated fragments in infinitesimal pieces. One or two long singing books bearing the revered stamp of "Handel and Hadyn," laid open at the beginning, and thereon had the choristers been busily at work with wayward pencil, vilely caricaturing the face of the good divine, and sundry officials, who, in big balloons proceeding from their mouths, expressed the most irreverent ideas in the most flowing language. These were titled with sundry epithets, such as "old goose beak"—"deacon cowhide," "parson bald-head," and other elegant expletives, plainly showing that the singers of the old church were not a whit behind those of the present day in the matter of elevated tastes and elegant accomplishments. All the body of the church below was veiled in the growing gloom. The organ, with its massive brazen pipes, stretched up grandly to the arch beyond, and one might with a trifling stretch of the imagination, fancy that the winged angels that in the garish day were forever flying, yet remained forever stationary, skimmed the

soft grey air and floated around the carved top of the fine old instrument. And Gracie sat perched on the high, awkward seat hallowed by the musical agony of Professor Rose; there she sat, her sweet, spiritual face upturned a little, a smile curving the slight lips, the full dark eyes shining with the wondrous light of genius, and the little hands performing miracles among the ivory keys:—miracles fully apparent to Hart, who stood almost breathless by her side, one elbow resting on the ledge of the organ, and his hand hidden by the loose curls that hung on his temples. Every now and then he would look up to the face of the young girl, but his glance always fell suddenly, and a flush mounted to his forehead. The veiled lady noticed, now, that there was an unusual paleness on the brow of the young performer, and that sometimes she would pause with a look of abstraction only banished as she listened to the manly boy at her side.

In one of the pauses, when she looked and smiled towards him, he said, low but distinctly, "after what you have told me, Gracie, you can never, never again speak with him."

"Never," replied Gracie—"but oh! how he will persecute us! Poor mother! I pity her, for we are indeed very, *very* poor now, since Mr. Halburton will, I am sure, become our unrelenting enemy."

The veiled lady drew back a pace or two, and closing her hands violently together, seemed holding them tightly to her breast, while her frame shook with concealed emotion. Then, as the young organist commenced a soft, sweet prelude, she quietly stole down stairs, and entering her own pew, sat silent and almost without moving.

Occasionally she heard the tones of the two wandering along the margin of melody, and once, rather nearer to her, indeed exactly over head, an exclamation of surprise burst forth, and she knew they had discovered her presence, but she evinced it not by a single movement.

At last, as the wide old gothic arches grew solemn in the deep of twilight, Gracie signified that she must go, and she was closing the door of the organ, when a low, sweet voice murmured, "will you permit me, for one brief moment?"

The veiled lady stood beside her, making a gesture as if she would herself touch the notes; and as Gracie moved fearfully aside, clinging to Hart, the black figure ascended to the high seat, and instantly a peal, so solemn, so wailing, issued from the brazen lungs of the instrument, that the hearts of the hearers grew cold. That ended, a plaintive, fine drawn note preceded a solemn dirge, a dirge that told of broken hope and wasted energies, and that, spite of their forced composure, drew them in imagination to the death-bed and the chilly tomb, and made them shudder again.

In a few moments they stood alone—the veiled lady had glided from her seat, and with no word, not even a look, taken her way from the organ loft. The two children, tired of building houses with books, and playing go-to-meeting in the long back seats that ran round the gallery, clamored to go home. The sexton jingled a bunch of keys over the damask curtain, and yet wondering in a vague way, Gracie and her companion, with the children and old Ingerson, left the meeting-house.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PAUL'S TRUE CHARACTER.

AND what has happened to pale the fair cheek of Gracie Amber? to give that sorrowful expression, that seems as completely out of place on a girlish face as cypress in a wed-

ding wreath? That same day, early in the morning, she had arisen happy as a child. It was a new kind of happiness to her, for even as she thought of her father no regretful tears dimmed her lashes. Her mother was not well, and with a womanly thoughtfulness beyond her years, she undertook all the household cares, utterly forgetting the appointment she was to keep, until just as the clock struck ten, a hasty step and an elegant figure, a haughty, smiling face with eyes of ebon darkness, and a light tap at the door with gloved knuckles, told her who had come. Irresolute, first she ran to her mother, and with faltering tongue and glowing cheeks, essayed to tell her that her visitor of the previous night had come, and beg her, that she would go to him with her. But the languid eye and hotly flushed cheek told too plainly a tale of suffering, and vanishing from her presence, she stopped but a moment to throw off her kitchen apron, smooth back her disordered ringlets, and with high beating heart presented herself alone, before the aristocratic Paul. He, with a winning smile, took her hand and led her to a seat beside himself.

It is needless to tell what transpired in the brief fifteen minutes he remained; suffice it to say, that Gracie left that presence a high souled, indignant woman; her eye flashing, her lips parted and tremulous, her glance, mingled scorn and grief, and sought her chamber to throw herself upon her own little bed, and weep the tears partly of anger, partly of outraged confidence. No longer a child, to be subdued with a look, she herself had looked the base unprincipled aristocrat down; had caused him to falter—to apologize, to humble himself to her, a poor fatherless girl; and he had left her baffled as he was, with a tide of hate coursing through his cowardly bosom; and an unheard but deep threat of vengeance burned on his lips.

"Sis," said Mrs. Amber, a few hours afterward as she sat

up in bed, to eat some little delicacy that Gracie had prepared for her, "I thought I saw Mr. Halburton go from here some time ago, but my head was so dizzy I could not tell; was it him?"

Gracie did not look up as she answered that it was, but she shivered and grew feverish alternately as she thought of the interview that had changed almost the current of her life—the first bitter lesson of poor humanity's deception she had not now to learn; it was conned to the very bottom of the page.

"Don't you think, Gracie, that our landlord is an uncommonly handsome man?" queried Mrs. Amber, whom relief from pain had made gratefully garrulous.

"He is said to be," replied Gracie evasively.

"And I have thought, Gracie," continued her mother, "that he was wonderfully attentive to you. You may depend upon it he has an object in being so kind to us; landlords are generally beings of another order. They say his wealth is almost boundless; and, Gracie, his wife will never know what it is to bring the water to wash her hands. I expect by all accounts his house is furnished with gold and silver; why, how queer you look, child!" she suddenly exclaimed, pausing in the act of carrying a spoon to her mouth; "you have worked too hard; I must make haste and get well."

"No, no, mother, it is not that," hastily cried the young girl, "but—oh! please, mother—never speak again to praise Mr. Paul Halburton!" she exclaimed, with a look of agony, tears filling her eyes, "if you knew what he came for to-day, oh! if you only knew what he said," she cried, and letting her head fall on her hands, she wept almost convulsively.

Mrs. Amber turned pale—paused doubtful for a moment, then said, "why, if he asked you to be his wife, Gracie, I should not let Hart Holden, a beardless youth, stand in my

way, for you will never have another chance like it, never. Most certainly, darling, if he asked you to become his wife, I——"

"He did not; he did *not*, mother!" shrieked Gracie, vehemently, the overwhelming misery of that meeting pressing upon her with aggravated weight; he made dishonorable proposals, such as were I a man, and had I a sister, and should the knowledge of such a proposition offered to her come to my hearing, I would have his heart's blood; indeed, mother, I would!" cried the girl, her slight figure dilating as she rose from her lowly seat. "What if he is rich, mother, what if he is powerful? is that any reason that he should come here with his insults and seek to dazzle the eyes of a poor girl, and debase her judgment, and insult her delicacy? Mother, poor father saw all this with the prophetic eye of death; he saw it, and trembled for me. You remember how he held my hand, as if he would draw me with him beyond the power of the wicked, but I trust in my father's God; he will shield the defenceless—and, oh! mother," she cried again, "I never want to hear that name, never again."

Like a statue sat Mrs. Amber, frozen into silence, and looking vaguely at her child. Child she had been accustomed to call and regard her, but she felt it must be so no longer. How strange a thoughtfulness shaded her brow, how altered and matured every line in her young face! And had the mother heard aright? Had she, thoughtlessly, subjected her young and pure daughter to an ordeal more trying, more terrible than the fire and flame to the three youthful Israelites? A deadly faintness came over her as she thought of the peril past; a sad sinking of the heart as she contemplated the future, and over and above all burnt indignation at the foul, attempted wrong.

At last, when she could sufficiently command her feelings to speak, she murmured, "come here, my child, come to me;"

and as Gracie threw her quivering form into her arms, the widow held her as she had when she was a little child, and felt as if her arms were a heaven of protection.

"I have been to blame, Gracie," she murmured, "very, very much to blame, for supposing that his motives were honorable, and his admiration of you innocent; I foolishly encouraged him, if not by word, by passive inattention. But the dream is past, my daughter; we know now that henceforth there is no other way but to treat him with cool contempt, and bear with Christian fortitude his unrelenting hate. For I remember what your father said of him once, that there was no man whose animosity he should as much dread as that of Paul Halburton, no man who would pursue an enemy more cruelly than he. I can fathom his unwonted kindness, now. You acted nobly!" she added, as Gracie described their interview; "thank God for giving me a child so virtuous and so firm."

"But suppose, mother, he should now insist upon his due to the uttermost farthing; suppose he should even exact back rent from the time father died?"

"Give him all he requires," said Mrs. Amber, resolutely "every cent. Take the little money we have and place it in the rich man's hand; let him see that he cannot buy our virtue, though he turn us homeless on the world."

"Oh! mother—how thankful you make me to hear you talk so. Yes, let us be poor—but how foolish! while I have health and strength we shall never want, mother, never. We both can use our needle, and how pleasant it will be to earn our own bread. Three, yes, two little rooms will be plenty for us, and we shall find friends. I'll retain my piano, and perhaps I may get a few scholars; or I'll keep a little school, or get a situation in some academy, as a teacher of drawing; even Master Willis says I am capable of that. Why! how many things suggest themselves! there's no danger of our starving, is there?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

JUPE IN TROUBLE.

It was waning towards noon of a fervid summer's day. Not a breath of wind stirred the moveless awnings, that in ghostly array lined each side of the busy thoroughfare, terminating at a ferry on one end, and Trimountain-street on the other. The clerks stood lazily in the doors of their various shops, and the butcher's boy, in a sanguinary mart, fanned himself with a huge meat knife. The few bonnets abroad, hunting needles and tape, thimbles and potatoes, hung heavy about the anxious features beneath them, and hot, flushed faces peered through closed shutters, waiting for the tired artizans to come to dinner. Granny Howell in vain shifted her pans, and laid extra sheets of coarse white paper under the serpentine swathes of new boiled molasses candy, that seemed endowed with an impulse of its own to run; and, in so doing, run away the profits of the smiling old lady, who, amid the sweets of well preserved age, seemed likely to live beyond the years of promise. Once in every three minutes she wheeled round to cast an anxious glance toward Minnie Dale's pale baby, a wee, fragile thing of three years, that seemed with every wail to ask the world to pity its helplessness. And if granny Howell might answer for a small epitome of that world, it responded nobly to that appeal, for never did mother watch with more unfaltering devotion than she above the miserable little waif. Some kind body, in whose employ the mother had been previous to her downfall, had determined to adopt the child when it should reach the age of seven, and meanwhile granny Howell received a small sum weekly, to defray its little expenses, and remunerate her for her kindness.

A shadow darkened the low green door, and a loud voice said—

"Good morning, granny."

"Good day, Jem Holden—I suppose I may call you Jem, (though you do live in a boughten house) for the sake of old times, eh?"

Jem swelled with conscious importance; he waved the badge of his office thrice, as he said with kingly condescension—

"Well, yes, I 'spose you may: yes, for old times' sake, which isn't at all like new times, you know. Folks think proper to redress me as *mister* Holden now, and I do git esquire tacked on to the subscription of my letters, hem; but I don't feel proud—oh! no, not the least proud; but then, law is law, you know."

"I havn't seen your wife this long time," continued granny Howell, bustling about, "but I seen her bonnet and shawl go by this window, and a face and body in it that looked somethin' like her; I should a' known her if she'd seen fit to come in, I should a' recollected her—oh! I'm sure I should."

"She ain't forgotten you, granny," said the policeman soothingly.

"Oh! she wouldn't a disremembered me, if she'd a had on a calicker, and come up to the corner bare-headed, to git a pound o' soap at the corner. Forgotten *me*—I wonder how she could, when three of her babies died in my arms, and I dressed 'em for the grave," and the old lady snipped up a bit from a stick of lingering "sweetness long drawn out," that had transgressed its bounds. "But, Jem Holden, if your lady doesn't see fit to gi' me a call, she can stay at home, you know; I can do without her, I can live, thank the Lord, even without beholding the face and eyes of *Miss* Holden. How's the family?"

The policeman was just replying with proper spirit and

sufficient dignity, when a skull cap, suddenly thrust in the door, began an animated bobbing, and a long crooked forefinger accompanied it with sundry becks.

"I say, dad," muttered an evil boding voice, "we've ketched him slick as grease. Oh! gorry! ain't we made a day of it though, Bob and I? Now you'll git two dollars extry, and I'll have that half you know."

Jem Holden hastily retreated from the atmosphere of boiling molasses, and joined his two sons, whose low faces were intelligent only with mischief.

"You mean the vagrand," he muttered cautiously.

"Yes, him as has disturbed mother's peace of mind, and been an eye sore to you so long, and a precious funny plaything for us. I'll tell you how we come it; I jest laid a fourpence in my hand, and ses I, 'Jupe, s'pose you had that, wouldn't you buy some of them goodies over there?' At that, he looked awful hungry, and there was water enough in his mouth to drown a man, I'll bet, and ses he, 'say, may I have that?' 'S'i, you fool you, do you think any body'd hand you money 'thout they meant you to take it?' and with that he grabs it, and there he sets all scrouched up in a corner a eating, oh! Jimmy! ain't he a eating, Bob? never thinkin'," and his mouth turned down at the corners with assumed commiseration, "that the high limb o' the law is after him with a wengeance."

The trio proceeded cautiously along, and suddenly turning one of the angles of an immense black, wooden edifice, called a tavern, they came upon the crouching Jupe, who, with the savage eagerness of starvation, was cramming the delicate morsels in his mouth.

Speechless with terror he looked, as he met the awful face of Holden, the policeman. His jaw fell and his hollow cheeks became livid.

"Say you," he cried, desperately, striving to force his way

by his tormentors, "you let me 'lone; you git away; I ain't done nothing."

The strong grip of the policeman, like an iron fetter, thrailed the shrunken shoulder of the friendless boy; and despite his struggles and cries for mercy, and gasps of agonizing pain, he was borne on, on to the receptacle of guilt, where Dick and Bob, like two half human apes, followed, to enlighten the public, the honorable body of whom seemed to feel an extraordinary satisfaction in the details, and to shrink with looks of horror from the miserable boy.

THE POLICEMAN AT HOME.

"It's done, now, and I'm satisfied law is law!" exclaimed Jem, depositing his heavy stick in one corner, and seating himself in a light, cane rocking chair, that trembled with his weight.

Mrs. Holden looked up enquiringly from her clear starching, for, fashionable as the fat little woman had grown, she could not give up her laces, and Jem's best collars into the clumsy hands of their only servant. But she starched like a lady, that is in her own serene imagination, with a pink ruffled dress, with large white buttons up the skirt, and excruciatingly tight sleeves, which with her old habit of wiping up superfluous moisture had changed to a sickly yellow, by frequent application to her perspiring forehead.

"The vagabones!" she exclaimed, on learning the important arrest; "I'm glad of it. He's enough to scare any decent woman, and there's no telling the harm he's done; stealing from your own son, too; Mr. Holden, I'd a cow-switched him."

The policeman pursed up his coarse mouth, wiped his face with a very large and faded bandana, and related the particulars of his visit to granny Howell.

"She indeed!" she exclaimed, with a complacent, rather than angry toss of the head, "a molasses stick woman, standing over that old stove and biling from morning till night, and then a hanging the great gob on wooden pegs and pullin' and a pullin' it, and then a sellin' it to little dirty faced young ones—she talk o' my coming to see her! Gracious alone, knows 'tain't 'cause I'm too proud, though I am an elevation above her, but she ain't genteel; she's kind o' common. I've done with them people. If we're ever goin' to climb the topmost ring of the ladder of good society, we musn't associum with people of that d'redge;" having said which with a look of exceeding wisdom, she proceeded to wipe a bit of smut from the bosom of one of Hart's shirts.

"Where's Hart?" asked the State's officer, when he had fanned himself cool.

"In the sittin' room with Letta," replied Mrs. Holden, with a sly look. "Letta's jest growing up for somebody, eh! Jem? La! why can't I break myself of that, and call you Mr. Holden? Yes, Letta thinks an uncommon sight of Hart, now I tell you; it takes my eyes to see that, and somebody'd be a fust rate match for Letta, and you know" (with several winks,) "if it's as we 'xpect, she couldn't do better."

"Don't worry yourself, old woman," rejoined the policeman, with a grim smile, "law is law, Hart's spoken for long ago. He and Gracie Amber ain't together so much for nuthin'! ha! don't you worry yourself, jest keep yourself free and easy, jest keep yourself perticklerly cool; Hart's spoken for."

Mrs. Holden's face grew redder and hotter than her furnace, as she stood in amaze, unmindful that her "bran new" ironing blanket was blushing to brown beneath the too warm salute of the ardent metal.

"No!" she questioned, prolonging the monosyllable till it seemed doubtful whether it was destined to come to a natural

end, "that cunning, decafeul, foxy creeter! I never thought of it. It seems to me some girls have more brass than would make a dozen kittles big as my wash biler. If she has got him, depend on't she's infagled him; I know her, the impudent, forrard thing"—reiterated the incensed woman, who could not overlook Gracie's intimacy with certain people whose acquaintanceship she could not aspire to—"and that after all I have——"

She paused, suddenly, for Letta, with face not less flushed than her mother's, came into the room that moment, but soon hurried out again.

THE FOSTER SISTER.

She was packing her foster brother's trunk, listening the while with painfully beating heart, to his encomiums on Gracie Amber.

"Put this little box nicely in that corner, dear Letta," he said, standing beside her; "Gracie gave it to me, and told me not to open it till I got to College, and settled. I wonder what it is? some preserves like as not. Don't you think there is something almost angelic in Gracie Amber, sis? I do. There's a softness about the eyes, those large dark eyes, that is absolutely enchanting; I wouldn't say so to anybody but you, sis, remember, but we are so intimate that I know I need have no secrets from you, besides I am sure you love Gracie perhaps as much as I do," and the light little laugh that followed seemed to say, "but of course you can't."

Letta echoed the laugh, though at the same time she bit her lips till the blood almost came.

"And this precious little book, sis, see, here is my name in her own hand-writing; doesn't she write beautifully? There's something there, though, that I shan't show even you," and still smiling, he carried the blank-leaf to his lips,

and then putting it in Letta's hand, told her in what particular spot to lay it.

A coal of fire could not have burned the palm of the girl more fiercely than that little book. And the flame went out therefrom to her heart and dried up its tenderness.

"Let's see," mused Hart—"how did I become acquainted with Gracie Amber?—oh! it was at that memorable theatrical exhibition; when—"

He stopped short, for the very emotions called forth at the sight of the hidden treasure, seemed to roll up at that moment over his breast; again he laid coiled up under the old meeting-house pulpit stairs, fearing, he knew not what, of ghostly visitants and demon intruders. Besides he looked upon the abstraction of the gold, now, with the sober eyes of eighteen.

Letta was gazing with wonder in his face as he roused himself from his reverie, and he smiled and blushed—the girl wondered why.

"I was thinking," he said awkwardly, "what a queer time we all had of it, and how funny some of your company took their parts. By the way, I saw Hinges, the broker, yesterday. I called at his shop for old acquaintance sake, and met with a sight there, that don't get in the newspapers often. An old salt, with a most venerable beard hanging nearly to his waist, stood at the counter, in the act of pawning a violin; a hard looking violin it was, but its sound was as sweet as the laughing waters. Old Hinges didn't seem inclined to take it, but the sailor was stubborn and a little intoxicated, and declared that he must have a few shillings on it whether or no.

"Well, Hinges was just deciding to give the money, and get rid of the sailor's importunity, when there appeared at the window, I do declare to you, one of the sweetest child's faces I ever saw. Oh! it was so innocently beautiful! and the old

man saw it, too, for he instantly slunk back, as though he was ashamed, and tried to hide the instrument. Presently the little creature, who caught sight of him, bounded in, crying out, 'Oh! Rink, Rink, don't you do it—don't sell my nice old violin,' and she laid her face against his tarry jacket, and put her snowy white arms about him, as if he was her father.

"'Rink,' says she, looking so sweetly up in his weather-beaten face, 'only think! we should not have any pretty music if you sell old Jessy, my nice old Jessy, that sings so sweetly—oh! don't sell it, Rink, don't. I'll get you some money when you're sober; now don't sell it, will you, Rink?'

"The old man looked at her, first with a sort of sorrowful way and then with admiration. 'Now ain't she a precious weasel?' he asked, turning to old Hinges, and then to me—'ain't she precious to wheedle an old Jack-tar, like I am, and make him do jest what she pleases? For I swear to you by all the mast-heads that ever kissed the clouds, I couldn't do nothing wrong when that little thing was nigh. Well, sissy,' says he, 'shall I keep old Jessy?'

"'Oh! yes, don't never sell old Jessy,' cried the child, imploringly, 'it's alive, ain't it, Rink? and you love it as well as I do, don't you, Rink? It's alive, and sings and whistles and goes soft, and goes low and high, and makes music just *like* anything that's alive, don't it, Rink?'

"'Aye, my pretty bit o' heaven!' reiterated the old tar, lifting her in his brawny arms, 'that's a craft, sir, as wasn't made for stormy water, sir;' he went on while the great tears came in his eyes, 'that's a craft as won't bear many heavy squalls, sir, I'm afraid the first one 'ud send her right into port, where the water is bluer than the sky, and the ship lays up anchors forever.'

"'Will you go home, Rink, and take Jessy, now?' says the pretty little thing, playing with his long, white curls.

"'Yes, breath o' heaven, we'll go now, and obleeged to ye, sir, all the same,' he said, turning to old Hinges, who I do believe was crying, or almost, and so they went away, the old Jack-tar led by the little girl."

Letta had suspended operations while Hart was telling this bit of romance, but she bent suddenly over the handsome new trunk, as the boy added—

"Somehow I thought of Gracie then; now if she had seen that sight, how beautifully *she* would have told it, or thrown it into poetry—Gracie's a genius, Letta."

His foster sister, unable longer to restrain the violent emotion that almost mastered her, sprang from her work and hurried up stairs into her little chamber. Her mother sat there crimping some lace, and to her look of genuine surprise Letta cried out, in the strong anguish of her spirit—

"Oh! I'm a hateful, homely, worthless thing, without grace, elegance, or genius. Why was I born to be so little cared for? what is it makes me so ugly, that I am hated and never loved? Oh! dear, I wish I was dead."

No soothing or Christian counsel awaited this young, disappointed spirit—no lessons of courage, of patient submission from the selfish and ignorant mother, but instead, motives of revenge and hate were subtly instilled in her bosom. From that hour she learned to regard the fair girl, who she deemed had wronged her, as an enemy; from that hour, with the green, suspicious eye of jealousy, she watched her every movement. From that hour she became willing to be the aider and abettor of any scheming plotter—who might from motives of revenge wish to injure the poor girl who had never done harm in deed or thought to any living being.

It is strange how depressing circumstances gather about some people, to dispirit and crush them—circumstances over which they have no control, but which seem to spring up thick in the path of onward life, and influence, for a while,

their destiny. Towards others they cherish no enmity, but every second friend to them proves false. Envy points her keen darts at them, and scandal darkens every little action, and glosses it with a brush dipped in gall. Are they for brief intervals successful, some rival springs up with power to supplant them. For many years, of youth perhaps, that should be dipped in rose color and gemmed with the dews of happiness, they pass through the valley of sighs, of sorrows, of sore temptations. But such spirits are always rare; choice blooms that shrink from the coarse, uncultivated earth, overshadowed by rank and poison growth, and they flourish not until transplanted into richness and beauty, when God gives them the sunlight of heaven and the smiles of his countenance.

JUPE'S TRIAL.

Will you go with us to a close court room, with its crowd of miseries, on this summer's morning—for as the policeman said, "law is law," and here are some of its most revolting phases.

Do you not notice the stolid look characterising almost every face in the throng of curious spectators?

Some with rough *nonchalance* hail their fellows, well-met indeed, and exchange tobacco quids—while a low current of coarse converse issues simultaneously with the filthy saliva from their stained and flabby lips. Others, to whom perchance the scene is new, stare about with an expression, half fear, half wonder, and fasten their eyes magnetically upon the various visaged row of prisoners, some of whom glance from under bent brows. Some face with bold and mocking smiles the whole paraphernalia of their impending trial, while a few, bowed down with shame, let fall the tears of penitence, that chase each other adown pale cheeks, and all unnoticed wet the ground at their feet.

On the morning of Jupe's trial it happened that both Paul Halburton, and short plethoric doctor Andover, bent their steps to the place of judgment, collected thither by the reputation of a recent popular member of-the bar, who was engaged on some important trial.

The petty cases were not numerous—first and foremost, an old woman charged with filching a pan of dough-nuts from an Ann somebody's kitchen cupboard, which prisoner opened with a key of her own, during plaintiff's absence—next, a thick looking Irishman, whose head hung forward apparently unjointed from the spine, as if originally intended for some hirsute animal to propel on four feet instead of two, charged with assaulting Mr. Malloney's small boy, a blythe, deformed and most vengeful looking imp, who, even in the court-room, busied his mischievous fingers with composing burr nets, to act as prickly tortures on some unoffending flesh. Two or three sad and sickly looking creatures, victims of sin and misfortune, one or two black-eyed, unblushing girls, and a half score of bloated, intemperate victims of the bottle, with Jupe, completed the list.

These were soon disposed of; Ann somebody proved to the satisfaction of the entire court, that the old woman aforesaid had long envied her her skill in making dough-nuts, and her nose being terribly tempted by the delicious flavor of a new batch, which the plaintiff averred were the most "illigant entirely that her hands had ever made," stole feloniously into her kitchen by the back window, and then stole the dough-nuts. The usual preliminaries being gone through with, it was proved that the old woman was guilty, whereupon she, mounting her seat and slapping one hand against the other, cried out in a shrilly tone,

"And if I did, your honor, she stole the flour they was made of, and I can prove it. Don't you lay hands on an old woman," she continued fiercely, to the official, who, nothing

daunted, removed her by force out of the precincts of the court, she jabbering incoherently all the while.

The thick looking Irishman betrayed himself by shaking his fist at the impish boy, and muttering so loud that those about him could hear, "Ye dirty blackguard, if I had yees I'd take the skin from yer bones." It took very little time to dispose of him, and the impish boy, highly delighted, left with his tender papa, who, in all probability, would come in some future time, not as a plaintiff, but a sad and heart-broken witness against his own child.

Jupe, haggard, wild, frightened, trembling, coughing and gasping, was regarded by all who saw him with horror, in which was mingled the strongest compassion.

"Ain't done nothin'," he muttered, glancing with a look of hate towards his accusers, "they gie'd it to me, they did." Perplexed, weakened with sickness, the poor boy received little mercy from his cross-questioner; but once, during the examination, a fiendish flash shot from his great hollow eyes, as he exclaimed, pointing to Jem Holden, "ever since he found the money under the old meetin'-house what's down in Bread Alley, he's been a hating of me; but I know it, how Jem Holden's got money—found it under the meetin'-us," he added, with his customary chuckle, and a glance of exultation, as if in exposing Jem his spite was satisfied.

Of this declaration little notice was taken save by two persons. One was Paul Halburton, the other the new policeman, Jem himself. Paul turned directly upon the conscious man a keen penetrating look, that drove all the blood from Jem Holden's bronzed cheek, and kept that fearful eye fixed there for a time, during which Jupe struggled with his cough, and writhed from his seat to the floor.

"I think," said one of the officials with an accent of pity, "this poor creature is fitter for the hospital than the jail."

At the mention of the dreaded word, Jupe sprang to his

feet, and with haggard, imploring looks, like one crazed with suffering and misery, entreated, implored, in the most frantic, impassioned language, that they would never send him to the hospital.

"I ain't afraid o' yer jail," he said, working fingers, arms, elbows and shoulders in a transport of agony, "I ain't afraid o' the dark, nor the stone place, nor the bread an' water, nor sleepin' o' nights without no bed, nor none o' them things, but don't yer take me to a hospittle; I won't go to a hospittle, I'd a ruther somebody'd take and done away with me to onc't, I had;" then, with an eager look, and eyes that seemed to palpitate, he glared in the faces about him.

"But they'll use you kindly there, my boy, and you arn't fit to be here;" said a pleasant voice at his elbow. Turning, he met the kind face of doctor Andover, but he shrunk with no dissembled horror from his presence, moaning,

"Oh! I wish I was out o' here, I do—I'm jest in a misery a achin' here'n there; but I'll jest die afore I'll go to a hospittle," and his eyes glared again as he looked wildly round to see if there was not some chance of escape.

One of the seemingly hardened and unblushing girls, who was awaiting her sentence, at the sorrowful words he said, and the sorrowful way they were uttered, burst into tears. The other looked a moment with quivering lips, and turned away her head, ashamed to weep.

"We'll settle this matter, doctor, he shan't go to the hospital," said Paul Halburton, nearing the scene, "and I'll pay his fine; you are at liberty, Jupe."

"But, man!" exclaimed the doctor, indignantly, heedless of the curling lips and supercilious sneer of the millionaire, "you don't know the condition the boy is in; a little quiet, a tythe of merciful attention, a cleanly bed and an experienced physician, might, if they did not lengthen or renew life, give slight alleviation to his sufferings."

"I mean," replied Paul, with a motion slightly sarcastic, "that we will provide better for Jupe, that at *present* he need not go to the hospital;" and a peculiar look eked out his intended mode of action better than words. "I don't think he need to fear this policeman any more after to-day," he added, with a satanic laugh to himself, for the doctor had turned away indignant at his duplicity.

"So the man who brought you up for stealing, found some money under the old meeting-house, eh?" he said to the skeleton boy, as he placed him in the care of one of his creatures.

"I didn't steal!" cried Jupe, indignantly; "I didn't steal his money. Yes, I know I've bin in limbo for hookin', but I didn't hook this time, I tell ye."

"Well, well, no matter about that;" said Paul, hurriedly, "if I was hungry I'd as lieve steal as not; what I want to know is, about the money that you said this man found under the meeting-house."

"'Twasn't him as found it," muttered Jupe, who with all his depravity, hated what he called peaching.

"Then who was it? come, if you don't tell me I'll have you in limbo again."

"'Twas his boy as did it, I heern him tell of it, how there was a theatre, and all that in the meetin'-us, and he found the money, somewher down stairs it was, down in the cellar; oh!" he cried, with a grim contortion, "it's the ugly feeling here'n there."

"Which boy?" asked Paul, impatiently.

"'Twan't nary one as gi' me the fourpence, no, nary one o' them, but a taller fellow an' a rale good feller, too, guess."

"Ah! ha, the sly rascal!" cried Paul Halburton, in a low fierce voice—"the sly thief, so, so; I have him there—I have him there!" he reiterated, drawing a long breath. "And his father, too—aha! his father too. I'll say nothing,

but the man shall feel me; he shall be my drudge—my slave. 'I despise your gold!' she said; vengeance for that—'your character is written on your brow;' vengeance for *that!* oh! sweet, sweet, sweet shall your revenge be, Paul Halburton—sweet with nothing bitter mingled in."

Charging his man to see carefully to Jupe, he left them together; and the boy for once in his life trusting in his kind, dragged himself away in fancied security, little thinking that the morrow would dawn upon him in a hospital.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FASHIONABLE CIRCLE.

It was a scene of elegance, of high and haughty life, that Paul, on the night following poor Jupe's arrest, graced with his presence. Serene and smiling, courted and flattered—the lion of the evening—our aristocratic Paul, who might not envy him the charming glances showered upon him, like flowers, on every side? Who would not have thought "there goes a man whose life is one summer's day of pleasure—who, his fortune boundless and his name honored, must surely be the happiest of his race?"

Disposed in pretty groups about tables filled with flowers, or at the different instruments of music, presided over by fair hands and beautiful faces, the ladies formed their little coteries of gossip, and in sugared language gave form to their pretty little ideas, in a manner that imparted the usual interest appertaining to ladies' small talk.

Turning over slowly and absently a fine collection of prints, the Reverend Gilbert Waldron listened with little ap-

parent interest to the conversation of a delicate looking young man, who was expatiating upon the peculiar temperament of his sister, a deaf-mute, who sat in some remote part of the room.

"She was," he said, "so excitable and nervous, and among her own sex took such violent fancies and unalterable antipathies, that he hardly dared to meet the result of his experiment, (*i. e.*) bringing her for the first time in a large company.

"It is charming to behold her truthfulness, her entire dependence upon those who make her happiness, her child-like innocence," rejoined the Reverend Doctor, but his attention was arrested at that moment by a laughing, melodious voice that was saying, "why, don't you know what's the matter with him? I thought everybody knew it; he is love-lorn to be sure, and does nothing but write poetry and look at the moon. Some months ago he went to the continent, was foolish enough to fall in love with a rich and distinguished girl, who was foolish enough to dislike him, so he has never been himself, exactly, since."

A curious expression gathered over the doctor's transparent countenance.

"Julie, love," murmured her mother, drawing the wild girl away: "never repeat that before our minister again, for it is reported that the reason he has never married, is because he was disappointed. He was affianced in Canada, and ready to be married, when some horrible developments forbade the nuptials, and since then he has been a lonely and perhaps an unhappy man. Never speak of such things before him again."

"Most assuredly I will not, mamma," cried the young beauty, busily disengaging a bright long ringlet from the golden fringe of her fan, in which pretty employment Mr Halburton found her, and gallantly offered his services.

Bright blushes played over her face as he untangled the lock, saying, "if I were a Pope, I would avail myself of this opportunity," and bearing the graceful ring to his lips, he glided away, leaving in her young bosom the impression of his beaming smile. She turned to Kate Homer, a noble-looking girl, that moment coming towards her, and, her mind full of the fascinating Paul, exclaimed, "did you ever see so elegant a man as Mr. Halburton?"

"His manners, his face, his apparel, are elegant," said the queenly girl, with a smile, "but, my little Julie, I don't like the man."

Paul Halburton stood nearer than they were aware of—so near indeed that he heard every word, and fastened it in that vengeful spirit. He knew the speaker: had heard of her through various sources. Report said that she had been the means of saving her father, of rescuing him from the dreadful curse of the gaming table; that wherever he went she also, like a guardian angel, glided at his side. The father he could see from where he stood; a noble wreck of a noble man. Like the stately ruin of a palace, the deciphring upon whose illegible mouldering walls, tells in decay of past splendor, so the bent shoulders, piercing eagle eye, massive projecting forehead shaded by iron grey hair, told what the man *had* been in the fullness of his days. "The passion is not dead yet," thought Paul Halburton; "it lives in the occasional flash of that smouldering eye; it lives, but sleeps, and I will waken it."

But to Julie, Kate Homer had said with her singularly impressive manner, "I don't like the man."

"Do you not take very strong dislikes?" asked Julie, gazing at her with a half doubting look.

"Very," said the other, her tones still lower, but not less firm, "and my impulses never betray me. I do not speak my opinion before it is formed by casual but striking develop-

ments. For instance—shall I go on? or, perhaps you do not like to be disabused of a preference.”

“Oh! go on,” returned the other, with blushing cheeks, and biting her fan; “I am resolved to like no one who is not thoroughly good, though he have the grace of an Apollo.”

“Would that all my sex had formed the same determination,” said the queenly girl—“goodness! simple goodness; how seldom is it thrown into the balance against the deformity of low born vice! That shield, more powerful than the strong armor of Achilles, how little in our fashionable society is it used, to gain the respect as well as the admiration of the world! How he towers forth in whose character this ingredient, more worth than all the gems of genius, intellect or beauty, gives tone to the whole inner and outer man. You think I am preaching, now, but Julie, it startles me to see in the society of this church, presided over, too, by such a self-denying, pure pastor, so few of the elements of Christianity. The last time I attended, the gentlemen played cards.”

“Cards, oh! that is a common thing,” said Julie, lightly; she was looking down and did not notice the ashy cheek, the sudden thrill that seemed to shake the frame of Kate Homer, as the latter turned her eye to where her father stood in earnest conversation. She did not notice these extraordinary signs of agitation: but simply remarked, “come, tell me what you see so very strange in Mr. Halburton, because you must know, he is a bit of a favorite with me.”

“Rather play with a deadly serpent, Julie, than encourage the attentions of that man,” replied Kate Homer, while Paul Halburton moved stealthily away, with a bitter vow registered in his heart, and a muttered curse upon his lips; “don’t go into raptures about him as the rest do; I tell you if you had seen his fascinations exerted towards that most beautiful deaf mute, whom young Professor Balch has brought with him to-night, you would feel as I do. If you had seen her eye kin-

dle with no common light at every motion of his white fingers, (for I tell you, he can converse by signs as aptly as otherwise) you would have felt your heart grow hot and cold with indignation.”

“And yet he is equally attentive to that plain, overdressed girl, who is here for the first time. I think they call her name Holden. She joined the sewing circle last week; poor thing! she has seemed so uneasy here, and so out of place. I’m sure it is very kind in Mr. Halburton, a gentleman so accomplished, to give his attention to one as homely and awkward as she.”

“I suspect he has some motive,” said Kate, unguardedly.

“Oh! now that is ungenerous.”

“Ah! you are hard to be persuaded,” returned the superb fault-finder, noting the quick, deep blushes that suddenly burned upon the pretty little belle’s cheek; “you think me envious, slanderous; but I never can see a man like him without feeling the deepest abhorrence, and longing to warn every woman against his seductive wiles.”

“Do you really know anything—any unworthy action that he has committed?” asked Julie, incredulously.

“Only,” said Kate, excitedly, in a lower tone, and speaking with great rapidity, “only that I had a pretty sewing girl, to whom I was greatly attached, who appeared at times to suffer keenly some shocking remorse; only that I saw poor Minnie, (for it was Minnie Dale, old granny Howell’s protégé) several times when he knew it not, walking with him, upon the common—only that I warned her as I have others, but without avail—only that she was ruined—only that I saw by chance the other day, but the last Sabbath, her poor grave in the old burying-ground, upon which some indignant hand had placed the words, ‘another victim.’ Another—remember! so there were more.”

“Oh! it is dreadful! horrible! too horrible! are you sure it was him?”

"Her destroyer—certain; I am not more sure that the sun rises and sets, although, poor, devoted creature, she never accused him. I loved the girl; she was a sweet, womanly thing—a bud that might have blossomed to the fairest flower of white virtue—but, she is dead—poor Minnie!"

Julie looked up; Kate's eyes were brimming with tears; and with a half sob the fair young girl murmured—"I will never more encourage him; I thought him as manly and sincere, as he was courteous and polished."

"Where are the gentlemen?" asked Kate, looking round with a start indicative of alarm, "this is a new feature."

"They are only gone to take refreshments," said somebody, but Kate still looked about anxiously. She had seen Paul Halburton approach her father; had seen the latter grow eagerly pleased, as the suavity of Paul's manners and his varied knowledge, so gracefully imparted, won upon him. He knew what he was. Strange, that men will blandly smile upon the profligate of their own sex! and yet a *diplomate* so skillful as Paul Halburton, would win his way almost into a heart of adamant. He had been to-night successful, beyond his wildest wishes. In another room, lighted with a mild lustre, furnished with voluptuous elegance, he with a few "choice spirits" had ushered the reformed gambler. There, almost imperceptibly, the old man himself could not tell how, amidst the flow of sparkling wine and conversation, cards were introduced. With that basilisk's eye pouring its skillfully disguised hatred in a fire of magnetism, or whatever influence which to the evil disposed is imparted by the father of lies, into his, the stately old wreck, led by a sort of fascination, consented to play. Once seated with the cards in his hands, his form dilated, his glance kindled. From the majestic brow all traces of care vanished. The crimson flushed his cheek; his lean hands trembled with the suddenly roused passion that had so long laid dormant: with the rapidity of lightning his

eyes passed from face to face, as he watched the different emotions called forth by the chances of the game.

"You are lucky!" chuckled Paul Halburton, surveying the progress of this infernal contest with eager looks.

"I always was—until—" the old man paused, towering yet more erect; "until one night my luck deserted me, but it has returned; I will yet—" he hesitated again; he would not confess his weakness. Why did he not at that moment remember his child?

"My friend," said Paul, in a voice intended for his ear, "your fortune is reduced; trust to me, I will put you in the way of repairing it. Aye! you shall be rich, *rich!* with your luck, why not?"

"Why not?" echoed the old man, relapsing into his usual indifference, as they entered the drawing-room; an indifference that was now assumed; for the fires of an ungodly passion had been kindled by the arch fiend, Paul Halburton, in that brief half hour. "You shall be rich—you shall be rich!" how the words echoed and re-echoed through his brain! The renewal of former splendor, the brightness of days long vanished, when gold bought all the pleasures that fancy painted. In his inmost heart he knew the meaning of those magic words, and as a mother forgets the pangs of travail, so he forgot the anguish of his past career, remembering only the rush of excitement, the joy of possession, the rapture of success.

Kate greeted him with an anxious look, but he would not meet her eye. Then she turned with a feeling of dread, yet felt impelled to turn towards Paul Halburton. Why that triumph in his glowing face? The manner, the expression were not quite legible to Kate, but she read enough to fill her mind with vague terror.

"The deadly serpent will make you feel his fangs," muttered Paul Halburton between his teeth; and then he turned to Letta Holden, who was just on the point of leaving, alone,

and without asking if it would be agreeable, and as a matter of course, followed her out, walked by her side, and saw her safely home. How skillfully he led her on to talk of Gracie Amber; how subtle the art that laid bare the simple heart and guessed its choicest secret—that she loved her foster brother despairingly; that she considered Gracie a rival, and very nearly hated her; that she was credulous, vain and vulgarly ambitious. When he left her at her father's door, it was with an outward semblance of respect, but an inward contempt. It was true, as Kate Homer had said, in his condescension towards the stevedore's daughter, he had an object to gain. As he walked home he reflected. He had learned that Hart had gone to Cambridge, how often he could write, come home, etc., and his bad heart grew big with the black rapture of villainous success. He rung quick and angrily at his own entrance, cursed the porter because he did not anticipate his arrival, and hold the door open ready for him as he mounted the steps; hurried through the well-lighted hall, averting his head from the dark and open parlor, ascended the stairs, and entered his own chamber, which was ablaze with light. A delicate perfume filled this room, beautiful flowers stood in vases on mantel and table, and in every niche, and poised upon brackets of most exquisite workmanship, were statues of exceeding symmetry. The chamber looked like one furnished for a bride—the bed-curtains of white silk, were lined with dainty rose-color; the mirrors draped with white muslin. Paul was a voluptuary. Nothing that was not the choicest, the most perfect in finish, the most fastidiously nice in all the details of arrangement, suited him. Therefore his room wore an air of Parisian elegance; what wonder! from Paris he had imported his choice furniture.

PAUL HALBURTON AT HOME.

Once in his room, Paul first walked to the mirror, gave his hat, gloves and cane, into the hands of his obsequious *valet*, passed his hands through his curls, and turned side glances now to the right, now to the left, till the faultless face reflected back a satisfied smile. Sitting down to the iced wine placed before him by the servile lackey, he loosened the ruffled shirt-band, and lolled back in his great smoking chair, the picture of luxurious ease. The servant stood for a moment, and began retreating backward.

"Come here, sirrah!" cried Paul, like a despot; "unbuckle my shoes; turn up the sleeves of my dressing-gown; pour out some water. Sirrah, see what time it is; what! not yet twelve? Go into the library—bring me the last new volume. Now," he continued, as the obedient drudge—an English servant, of course, and stupid in everything but his fidelity—"see that the water is brought up at nine to-morrow, an hour earlier; do you hear? Bring me another bottle of rose-water; pour it on my handkerchief—now go, but sleep like a cat."

Put a pistol to the temple of Paul Halburton, and tell him that if he does not retire before twelve, you will blow his brains out, and he will dare to hesitate. No power can induce him to enter a bed before the ghostly hour of twelve—who can tell why? It may be a habit, grown stubborn by long indulgence; it may be a whim—it may be a—dread. And never, since he has lived in that princely house, in that princely style, has the light gone out through the live-long night. That is another strange whim of his; he cannot abide the dark. It must be light; not ordinarily so, but flashing, dazzling, blinding. Especially in that chamber must the light be brightest. He can sleep with the whole flood pouring down upon his closed eyelids. He dreams it

is dark sometimes, and wakes up, gasping, as if the thick night choked him. And then, starting upon his couch, he glares at the light with parted lips and wide eyes, till the shivering and suffocation are gone, blessing it, as the earth-worn pilgrim might bless Heaven. No, Paul Halburton cannot abide the dark. Would crime do so? Would crime not rather call for the rocks to fall upon it?

Paul, as he sits there, allows his eyes to rove. They rest upon the paper of the day, folded and unnoticed before. He yawns, as he carelessly lifts it from the low, gilded stand, draws it nearer, glances at the date—springs from his seat—dashes the paper from him, exclaiming in a paroxysm of feeling, "the twenty-seventh of July—good God! I had forbidden it should be brought up; and that stupid rascal! curse him!"

Nothing is heard now but a low, muttering sound, that may be words, or may be a tremulous moaning, such as a soul makes, stricken by strong anguish. It takes long for him to master himself; he lifts his watch—his eyes are riveted on the dial-plate—he crouches—mutter—shrinks; his eyes glow like two shining pieces of phosphorus, gleaming from two dark caverns—he never lifts them. Slowly, slowly, oh! to him what an eternity it seems! The minute hand approaches the climax that shall denote another hour gone. His breath grows short, and one could fancy it comes hot from his lungs; his eyes glare yet more; his white teeth are firmly set; a spasm now and then shakes his hand, and the brilliance from the diamond-set watch refracts, in a thousand rays, a thousand hues. A long, exhausting breath—a movement of relief, a relaxation of the body, as if every bone, muscle, sinew, nerve, had loosened from some intense and high-strung mental pitch; he falls back in the chair, holding the watch loosely, whose both hands point to the figure twelve.

Now he may seek his rest. The color is coming to his

cheeks; he essays to laugh—it is more like the faint wail of the expiring; it is hollow; it is not the laugh of a man.

An hour has passed, and Paul, the aristocrat, sleeps. It is not often he sleeps at home. He has his room in the best hotel in town; he has fitted up another in a magnificent establishment on the corner of two prominent streets, where the lights burn till morning, and the rattle of dice is heard unceasingly, and flushed youths and haggard men come and go. To be sure Paul does not gamble—only occasionally, but this alluring place of resort is his; he owns it, from the frescoed ceiling down to the coal in the cellar. And it is not the only one he owns. Is it any wonder that Paul is rich—that he is a millionaire? Paul has other favorite resorts, needless of mention; suffice it to say that he, with all his expensive tastes, sleeps seldom at his own house—and it was this thought that held him in such uneasiness, "why, of all nights in the world, should I be at home to-night?"

He sleeps. The dull, dim, white statues in the room seem all to turn their faces towards him, and lift their fingers and point at him. Dim, I said, for strange to relate, the lamps are going out. Yes, all of them, from that great silver urn swung in silver sockets, to the four glass globes on the four alabaster brackets, quietly, slowly, down they sink, the bluish white flames, till the shadows of the bed build a coffin on the floor; and the shadow of the great wardrobe flings a pall over it, and edges it towards the sleeper, closer and closer to his beautiful couch, creeping coyly up the fringe of the silken curtains, up, up, over the curtains, darkening the heavy linen over the breast, glooming the face of Paul. The features change into lividness, as if some invisible hand were painting them—then fade into indistinctness, until the face, the snowy drapery, the very location of the bed is lost—the lamps are all out. Solemnly, like a march, mysteriously, like a dream, they have all gone out.

And Paul Halburton still sleeps, unconscious of the fact; a dreaded fact it would be to him, could he know it.

The hours pass; it is the dark interval between midnight and early dawn. Paul in his sleep hears one despairing cry for mercy; it is an illusion of the brain, but it wakes him—wakes him to dumb horror. No light; he starts, then cowers beneath the bed clothes like a silly child. His hand gropes for the bell-rope, out of reach, or in the confusion of his mind not to be located. In his fright the bed trembles beneath him, the beating of his heart vies with the tick of the great clock at work below in the hall; you can hear them both. Visions of murder start the hair upright from his head; was it treachery—a preparation for some foul deed? Agonizing silence; no, not quite silence, for there is a moan, and another, and another, like some one in pain or scared slumber. He can bear it no longer; if death lurk near, he must move; so springing from his bed, he calls his servant, throws over a dressing-table, stamps upon the floor, and then, as if impelled by some vague horror, passes his hands over the bedclothes. Nobody there! he almost thought to feel a bearded face, stout, strong limbs. Now the chamber door is opened, and the terrified servant enters, bearing a lamp, and followed by the slight figure of a girl in *dishabille*.

"Sirrah! you shall pay dearly for this," cries Paul, in a voice of smothered anger; "the lamps have been neglected."

The man gazes at him stupidly, and no wonder. The face of his master is *stamped* with fear; bleached white; a frightful ghastly white, in which like two tomb-lights, his eyes are deep set, and flickering; his lips have no color in them. The girl, with her sad, pale face, looks at the lamps one by one; they are all well-filled and carefully trimmed.

"What does it mean?" mutters Paul to himself. The cast away newspaper lies at the foot of his couch, and the letters at the top seem swimming in blood, "*July twenty-*

seventh." What is it that tugs so hotly at his heart? covers him with a cold dew? makes him shiver through to bone and marrow?

"Shall I go now, Paul?" asks a soft and timid voice, after the lamps are lighted, and order is restored.

"No!" is the quick, almost harsh response; "take the book yonder, read me to sleep; then watch till the morning breaks."

And unfeelingly he listens, unfeelingly sleeps at last, keeping that poor girl, his abject slave, up till the dawn; rousing her from a bed of recent illness, that she may minister to his weak fears.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE COFFIN-MAKER'S HOUSEHOLD.

At the coffin-maker's house, the whole family were flying about, in a small tempest of excitement. In one door might be seen Dick Holden, who was always ready for fun, reciting scraps of theatrical rhapsodies, with a huge wash-tub on his head; at the other his impish brother, with small parcels in his hands, hugging them against his dirty jacket, whose filth was redeemed by a light sprinkling of flour. In the apartment called the kitchen, various occupations were going on at the same time, such as washing clothes in one corner, washing dishes in another, preparing sweatmeats on the only table, and filling a smoky fire-place with quantities of wood. Two or three bits of coffins added grotesqueness to this queer medley. They had been brought home to be finished, and stood upright behind the closet door, imparting a lesson that none of the giddy beings there thought of taking to heart,

much less moralizing upon. A little girl with frowsy hair, was up to her elbows in the suds, her face brightened with a lively impression of four-fingers, "done" in molasses on each brown cheek, and who to her sister's repeated cries of "git out," invariably responded, "I won't," and grinned sardonically, in which grin the eight molasses fingers played a conspicuous part. A child of three years, chubby and dirty, took particular pleasure in rolling himself in every puddle of soapy water that his infant comprehension could detect, while another interesting juvenile, after a series of sly glances, pecked the different papers at intervals, and filled his mouth with sweetmeats. A flying blow from a soapy hand admonished him, that detection with its train of attendant evils, was at hand, and to avoid the wet end of a broom-stick handle, he jumped for the door, upsetting in his laudable haste, a pitcher of milk, that had been placed very conveniently and carefully upon the floor. At Sally Merlindy's energetic cries for justice, Dick, who in his expressive language, "took up" for Sally, sprang over accumulated evils into the passage, found Jimmy, and "licked him like git out," he said.

And then arose a great noise from the poor little frowsy-headed washerwoman, who, crying most fearfully, was wrathfully ejected from the kitchen, where she lay down outside the door, and kicked and screamed in chorus.

"Oh! dear me!" ejaculated Sally, standing in slip-shod shoes, "I don't never b'lieve I shall have things put to rights. I wish ma wasn't forever sick!" she added, impatiently.

"We'll all help," said Dick, "you know we go halveses, and as it's part o' my gittin' up, why, I'll take hold."

"Well, then, you and Bob *take hold* o' this wash-tub and help me carry it down cellar. I declare to gracious, I ain't agoin' to finish this washing;" it was done. The rest of the blue-Monday trappings were disposed of likewise, and snatching hold of the dirty broom, Sally proceeded with more

energy than method, to sweep. And such a sweeping! It seemed as if that broom, like a small tornado, took everything in its path. Shoes wet and shapeless; here and there some piece of crockery encrusted with dirt—a straw hat, leather strings that were used as belts by the boys; an unwashed "dickey" that the old coffin-maker had thrown from his neck to the floor that morning, stockings, well-thumbed books and pamphlets, without covers; all, everything, even to the sudsy boy upon the floor, were borne down by the resistless torrent of that fit of cleanliness. The heap resulting, was carried in baskets, to the cellar, there to be "picked over," after which Sally gathered all the dishes from the great closets, and with the expressive declaration that they should only get "a lick" from her, proceeded to put things in order. The closets were soon remodelled, the floor received an ablution, the chairs were severally dusted, and wiped with the tan-colored cloth that had done duty for the dishes; an old settee, with the assistance of Dick, soon found itself on one side of the room, a nice new table-cover graced the old pine table—the goodies were safely locked from longing eyes and light fingers. "Hookie!" thought Dick, "if that Sally Malindy isn't about the smartest girl."

Bob volunteered to crack nuts. Sally Merlindy "knew there was ever so many hatchits in the house," but after running up to the rafters and down to the lowest foundations, she hunted up a heavy flat-iron, and Bob, with a grin and a watery mouth, set down to his task at the hearth. The next job in course was the large front room, called by way of compliment, the parlor. Therein stood a cradle with its rockers in the air, having been used by the younger members of that progressive family, to represent an animal, who, though he is sometimes given to kicking his heels over his head—or the head of somebody else, does not ordinarily walk with his legs reversed, as the unfortunate cradle had been

made to do. The chairs that had served as coaches to the aforesaid horse, were tied together, the mats rolled up for seats, the shovel and tongs, broken and rusted, had been metamorphosed into unwieldy whip handles; in short, the whole room looked like "riding out."

So thought Sally as she threw open the window, and gazed with dismay upon the seemingly sysiphus task she had undertaken. Putting her hands on her hips, she soliloquized after this fashion—

"I don't see into it anyway. We're always into just such a hubbub. I don't see what makes it so. It's dirt Monday morning, and it's dirt Saturday night, and it's dirtiest of all of a Sunday. I'm real sick of dirt—I do'n know what's the reason. Mother, *she* don't seem to care, though everything *does* go to rack and ruin. She jist says, 'let 'em play gals,' if they've got the chiny tea-set to play with. It don't make no odds. I wish I could git out of this way; there ain't any place I go to looks so bad as home. There's Miss Holden (wonder if Letta is coming to my party?) she used to be as common folks as we are, but somehow her place looked so snug and nice. I know ma's sick, but it used to be jes' the same when she was well. Pa, he says, 'look at that picture;' well, what if I do? things ain't fixed here as they are there. They look neat and tidy, and I'm sure we *never* do that—oh! dear!" and to work she went again.

Poor Sally! There was a sense of harmony somewhere, in that uncouth character, a nicety of comprehension that took pleasure in seeing the good effects of order, yet knew not how to continue them. She felt there was another than this way of confusion; she felt it every time she visited in the humble circle of her acquaintance, and therefore, her home, where all was waste and untidiness, had little charm for her. She wondered often if there was no help for it—and why the children were being eternally scolded, and

always in mischief, always defiant, always unruly; and she would think till her brain ached, and then in the spirit of reckless improvement, fly to her labor, only making matters worse by her stormy manner and impatient temper.

In process of time the parlor made some faint show of decency, even of taste, for Sally had found several broken ornaments in the corner cupboard, and fancifully arrayed them on the high, wide mantle, with their rents and unsightly fractures turned to the wall. But half satisfied with the appearance of this "company room," she forthwith hurried into the kitchen when Bob Holden was laboriously cracking nuts with big, puffed out cheeks, that might have been the natural result of such wearisome labor—might have been, but was not, as Dick charged him with filching the meats.

From there, the tired girl went up into her mother's chamber. Little variation from that below stairs did this part of the house present. Clothes strewed the floor and filled the chairs. All sorts of untidiness ran riot. A sister, a year or two younger than herself, sat in a heap of dirt, spangling a pair of common looking white shoes. On the bed laid a clean white dress, well starched, well ironed; Sally's triumph in the laundry line. Scanning it with a careful eye, four counterparts to four little fingers, busy below stairs, became visible. The poor girl no sooner saw it than she burst into tears, provoking fretful remonstrance from her mother.

"La, Sally, seems to me you're always crying," murmured the languid looking female, in tawdry cap and soiled ribbons, who sat in a large, much worn rocking chair, with another white baby, as limp and good natured as the last, laying over her lap, its head dangling contentedly backwards, its lazy blue eyes staring at the wall behind it, at the risk of overturning the brains in the white, flabby, shining pate, as yet guiltless of a lock of hair.

"Well, mother, it's too bad, hard as I've been working to

get everything ready, to come and find my clean gown daubed up with molasses!"

"La, child! what could I do, and such a head as I have got! Betsy came in with bread and molasses, and I couldn't a moved if she'd a throwed it out of the winder. Seems to me you needn't make such a fuss. It'll wipe right out."

"It *won't* wipe right out!" cried Sally, indignantly; "it'll have to be fixed and fussed over, and all the stiff'ning taken out; oh! dear, such a house as this is!" saying which she sorrowfully sat herself down to the task, and had nearly effaced the stains to the great detriment of the gloss and the starch, when Dick Holden called her with the pleasing intelligence, that the old man had come to supper. Throwing her dress back on the rumpled bed, with a very red face she hurried down stairs to set the table and get an early tea. Allan Beauvine had pretended to be very much averse to the party that his daughter Sally was taking so much pains to prepare for, and so it happened that as Dick sat on one side of the old man, and she was busy on the other, that side nearest the latter was full of smiles, the one next Sally was austere, almost frowning.

"Well, what time about is this here silly affair coming off?" he asked of Sally, one sober eye turned towards her, the other winking at Dick.

"I expect the girls'll be here about seven," replied his daughter.

"Well, 'slong's you're going to have a time, you might's well have a good one, I s'pose, so I ingaged old Rink down there to Harkness' boarding-house to fiddle for you."

"Oh! father!" cried Sally, her trouble all forgotten, "that is so kind in you!"

"Well, if it's so kind in me, hurry up with the tea; I'm as dry as a fish. See here's a dozen lemons you can make a drink of; s'pose that'll be enough, won't it?"

"Oh! thank you!" exclaimed the now delighted Sally; "plenty and plenty."

"I've spoken for some old Noyeau," cried Dick, eagerly.

"Well, then, you can just unspoke 'em," replied Allan quickly, turning about. "I don't allow nothin' of that sort in my house, old Noyeau or young Noyeau, old wine or new, and you know it, Dick Holden; whatever I do, I mean to keep my children out o' temptation. Providence ain't set me to making coffins for nothin'. Here, Sally, here's a ribbin for you," and he unfolded a bright blue silk sash, that set Sally's eyes to sparkling, as they had not before that day.

"I declare!" cried Allan, throwing his hat at his feet, jerking his neckcloth into the middle of the floor, utterly oblivious of Dick's crestfallen visage, and depositing a horrible quid of tobacco on the doorstep, "you look as nice as a new pin. Have you enviten Letta Holden? she's a nice girl."

"She won't come, Dick says; she's too good for us," replied Sally, tossing her head a little.

Allan looked up from his tea, then at Dick, who sat bobbing his head—"true as trumps, dad!" exclaimed the latter—"my sister Letty's got too infunnely good for anybody, sense that Halburton walked home with her the other night. And the old woman! 'twas precious fun to hear her say, 'my daughter goes with ladies now,' he, he! you musn't look on *me* as one o' that family at this present time; don't, I beg of you; don't, I entreat," and with an air of mock distress, the hopeful young gentleman clasped his hands in imitation of the theatrical stars he saw nightly. At that moment Sally Merlindy thought she liked him almost as well as Jack Flint, the baker boy, who, by the way, had turned into groceries of late, and was now a thriving clerk on a salary of three dollars per week, and *not* found.

"Did Halburton wait on Letta home? well, now, where from, pray?"

"Why, at some thingumagig of the society, there at old Walleye's, he took and waited on her home, and coz he's a rich old one, it jest sot the old woman up. Why, she can't talk of nothing else; and when we had greens the other day, she said to me, says she, 'will you have some, Paul?' and I told her yes, 'a small piece of the pocket, if she pleased, the slice where the pocket-book was,' ha, ha! he, he! And if we have halibut," continued Dick, delighted, whenever he could set the old coffin-maker laughing, "she's sure to want some Halburton—oh! and then I tell her she ought to have some *mint* sauce with that—he, he, ha!"

"Dick," cried the old coffin-maker, solemnly, as he wiped the tears of recent mirth from his eyes, "you're too sensey, boy, you'll die of your brains, sometime, and the crowner's jury will wash your father's hands clear of it, for it's plain you didn't git it from him; oh! we must have little Angy here to-night, send Betsy round there," he added, turning to Sally, who was hurriedly washing the dishes.

"And Jupe!" cried Dick, starting up—"my! but we'd have fun alive with that feller, if we could on'y git him."

"Well, you can't," said the old coffin-maker, while a shade of regret stole over his face; "poor boy, he's got where he dreaded to go, at last—he's in a hospital. He's sent for me to-day, and to-morrow I'm going to see him. Now the hospital's the best place in the world for a boy like him, but it'll shorten his life, I ain't no doubt. But he'd better die there than be kicked and cuffed about the streets, and made sport of by rude, unmannerly boys."

"Much better," rejoined Dick, with a low, hypocritical voice, and a solemn face, while he winced under the look of the old man—the rebuke in his eye—and knew that he had made the boy miserable many a day.

THE PARTY.

It was much the same as children's gatherings of the present time. True, it was in a poor man's house, and poor children graced the festive scene. There was much vulgar mirth, many coarse speeches, but, thank heaven, there was honest, genuine happiness there.

God has let into many a lowly heart His choicest sunshine, His divinest light. There pleasures spring spontaneously, like fruits in a genial clime. He has given a beam to the eye, and a joy-light to the smile that holds content in its sunny breadth, and drops pearls upon the thorns that hedge up his way. And on many a wealthy man he has bestowed a soul, barren and arid—a heart that leaps only at the click of dollars and cents—his face is as yellow as his gold—a parchment face wrinkled up with rich misery.

Let no poor man undervalue his worth. The most imperishable monuments of fame, are hewn from that rough granite, that lines the quarries of honest poverty.

Sally was happier than a queen. Her red locks had grown quite brown now, and so long that she never tied them up in two little pigtails with scarlet ribbon; but turned them up with a tasteful horn comb. Her mouth was still a trifle too wide, but it had a good natured curl at the corners and an agreeable dimple on each side that made her otherwise plain face look at times really pretty. She was very much dependent upon dress to heighten the interest of her good points; and the Sally with tangled hair, upturned sleeves, ragged, dirty gown and heelless shoes, was a very different personage from Sally well-dressed with the shining blue sash and her cheeks painted by health and expectation, as she appeared on the night of the party. Even the mother raised herself the seventeenth part of an inch forward to admire her

appearance, before she went below stairs, and a deep rim round the big eyes of the good-natured baby, proved that he, too, was adding his quota of admiration.

They were all very merry, twirling covers, playing forfeits, when suddenly there was silence at the advent of beautiful little Angy Harkness, dressed like a young princess in a robe of white tissue, over a pink skirt that was sparkling as if a box of diamond dust had been sprinkled thereon. The child clung to the hand of the old sea-dog, Rink, who as he came forward hugged the fiddle close to his long, grey beard, and bowed and hobbled about on all sides, much to the merriment of the company. The child was all grace, and a conscious, though infantile dignity surrounded her presence. Many a hand was stretched towards her, and many a smile followed her as she still walked beside the old sailor to the farthest part of the room, where the fiddler was accommodated with a comfortable seat. There he seemed undecided what to do, and stooping over, whispered—

“Shall I play yet, Angy?”

“No, Rink,” she said, shaking her head in her own maturely wise way, “it isn’t time yet, you must wait till they ask you.”

Poor Rink seemed ill at ease. He laid his huge brown fingers one over the other, then rubbed his forehead and face hard with the back of one hand, smiled benignantlly on little Angy, and putting his face forward, seemed every moment disposed to speak with her; looked round him gravely, with a sober, meeting-like face, crossed his legs, and finally searched about in both pockets, thrusting his hands deep and pursing up his lips, and drawing forth a little lead covered box and a pen-knife, took a plug of tobacco, and essayed to carve it.

“Oh! Rink, you musn’t do so!” cried little Angy, softly, “it isn’t right, here.”

“Why not, breath o’ heaven?” whispered the sailor, withdrawing his knife from the tempting morsel.

“It’s a party, Rink; don’t you see how we’re all dressed up?”

“Yes, breath o’ heaven, I’ll put it back, but when am I going to play?”

“By and by, Rink; they’ll come and tell you when.”

Little Angy would not leave Rink till old Allan Beauvine came suddenly into the room, with the lumpy baby dangling over his shoulder, then the child ran to him, caught him by one hand and looked up in his face with loving eyes, at which old Rink seemed a little uneasy and fidgetted about his violin.

“Why, bless my soul!” cried Allan, “so it is, Pinky! don’t stop your fooling on my account,” he added, waving his hand to the company, “glad to see you all—hope you’ll enjoy yourselves,” and he, too, took a seat by the old musician, who was scraping away preparatory to a dance. And soon the old floor trembled to the measure of merry footsteps. Mrs. Beauvine, above stairs, enjoyed the music heartily, in her way, until she heard her husband coming, then she collapsed her features into a frown, and found time to clasp her head suddenly; so when Allan entered with the white lump inanimate in his arms, (what set other babies crazy with delight only put this young piece of somnolency fast asleep,) she had just voice to murmur, “oh! Allan, they’ll kill my poor head.” And when he declared he would go right down and stop them, she said in a distressing way, “no, no, I’ll try to bear it,” and so she did, good woman.

Meanwhile, refreshments were going the rounds below stairs. All counted, there were just exactly six peanuts and three walnuts apiece for the company, one ginger rusk, one horse cake, one peppermint and a paper motto; and as Dick Holden had professedly put in half towards the expenses of the party, he acknowledged it by most voraciously appropriating to himself by much the largest portion of any one pre-

sent, so that some were obliged to go without. The lemonade did its duty bravely. Not only was there enough, but a little over, as after all had been helped, there still remained sufficient in the yellow stone pitcher to nearly half fill a tumbler.

By this time little Angy, notwithstanding her childish love of excitement, was half asleep, leaning her head upon her hand, the elbow resting on the old fiddler's knee, when suddenly her eyelids opened wide, and she sprang to her feet trembling with delight. And well might one believe it was an angel who sang; for the strong, sweet, clear voice went right up in a perfect gush of melody, surprising, entrancing, thrilling even the rude pulses there assembled. It was the voice of Ella Van Ness, the young orphan girl; and it was very evident by her retiring, unassuming manners, that she did not know her power; did not know how sweet a bird was imprisoned in her throat; knew not what a large fortune of yellow, shining, ringing metal those clear notes might yet coin. The humble child of poverty knew no wealth, but that of pleasure in her own wild carolling, and neither knew she that which to possess is indeed to be destitute, poverty of heart.

Dick Holden accompanied the fair singer to her home that night, though he lingered at the uproarious close, hoping to see the "grocery," as he called him, take his departure before him, but in vain. Grocery was determined not to start till the field was cleared of every man, woman and child; and Dick Holden managed to tread hard on his toes as he left the room, dodging to escape a heavy tumbler which the exasperated youth had just taken from the table, in order to test if there might not be a little lingering sweetness, long (since) drawn out, left in the bottom. Rink with a dollar in his pocket, little Angy fast asleep on one arm, and his violin tucked under the other, marched sedately homeward.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JUPE CARRIED TO THE HOSPITAL.

THE last we saw of Jupe, he was left in professedly friendly hands, and Paul Halburton had given orders concerning him, which were to be strictly fulfilled.

That evening, he ate his supper in blessed security, but happening to be awakened in the night, or soon after he had laid down, by a violent rattling somewhere near, he lifted himself on one elbow and peered out into the darkness.

"Say," he cried in eager, tremulous tones, "you, where am I? Seem's if I'm kinder lost somehow nor ruther; guess it was a dream; this don't seem to be no hospittle, coz they has lights a shining up and down all along the places."

For a few moments he sat still, now listening to voices that seemed to be outside his door, and then to the impatient stamp of horses' feet.

"Do'no 'bout this," he muttered, his old fears stealing painfully over him, thoroughly rousing him from his sleep; "if it warn't for this achin' her'n there I'd run off, I be bound," and he held his head lower to catch the subdued whispers that seemed to come almost through the key hole, till the warm drops that covered his body, the dews of disease, turned icy cold; and shivering he stole from his bed and sought the door to find if he might escape.

"No you don't, young rascal!" cried a harsh, coarse voice, to which pity had never been known; "we calculated for your cunning some'at, and now we've fixed you. It'd been better if we'd taken you sleeping, but as it is, you must go anyhow," and rudely throwing a heavy quilt about the almost stupified boy, binding his limbs closely in the large envelope,

he thrust Jupe in the carriage and followed after. The poor creature strove to supplicate, but his accents died away in inarticulate terror; his teeth clashed together like miniature castanets, and a rattling away down in the recesses of his hollow chest seemed like the clanking chains of his imprisoned voice.

Away they drove, fast and furiously, past dim, sickly lights that threw contracted red flame for the space of a foot, where they seemed licked up by the darkness; past opening streets that appeared to be swallowing enormous mouths full of blackness, past now and then a house, sending forth a few welcome rays to enliven the dull gloom; past now and then a drinking saloon, from which issued the sound of revelry. Then the wheels seemed rolling over softer ground, the lamps grew more occasional and the street corners likewise, and though Jupe saw it not, presently there came in sight the faint skeleton of a long building, outlined by small reddish windows, and in a moment more they drove up to the door.

It was a prison-like looking door, very black and heavy, and after some delay, it swung back with an unwilling creak upon its huge hinges, and Jupe was taken from his cramped position, and led up the long steps, helpless and gasping for breath. Oh! woe, woe! that sight upon which his glaring eyes fell—the long rows of white, still beds, the lamps swinging ghastly, the hollow cheeked surgeon, who with night cap on head, and lamp in hand, was just retiring; the tall, portly, and, at that moment, really cross looking nurse, no wonder he clasped his hands in terror, crying in a husky, tearless voice, "oh! I ain't nobody to come here, oh! I ain't sick, nary might on'y a achin' here'n there. It's a cold what I've got; don't put me in nary bed, don't let nary doctor tech me; I'll go out o' yer sight and won't trouble nobody nary more—oh! don't yer—don't yer; le' me go," and it was with much coaxing and some force that they finally deposited him

in one of the sweet, clean cots. It was in vain to attempt to administer medicine, or try to keep him in his bed. His temper, which was naturally spiteful, defied their vigilance, and at last they allowed the refractory patient to sleep under his cot, where he scorned even the pillow they gave him, and laid moaning with rage and pain, and beating the floor with his clenched fist. But when the cheerful morning sun came in, the following day, and laid loving hands upon the snowy curtains and neat, clean furniture, then Jupe had grown too weak to battle longer. He passively allowed himself to be attended to, ate with relish the wholesome food which had been prepared for him, and laid looking at the great ceiling with large, lack-lustre eyes fastened thereon, nor deigned to speak with any one.

There were but few patients at that time in the hospital, but most of these were sick with mortal disease, and that they might not be disturbed, Jupe was retained in the lower apartment, where he had no companions but the nurse and sometimes the doctors. It is impossible to express the loathing, the heart-sickness which the poor boy felt whenever the latter came near him. He would not answer their most cautious inquiries; only exclaimed again and again, "needn't be scar't—I ain't going to die in yer cussed old shell." And when they were gone, how the large tears would roll over his wasted cheeks, and his mouth be drawn in with concealed but choking sobs, as the conviction that perhaps he *might* die there, flashed across his weak mind, followed by visions of long tables and men with bare arms and cruel knives in their hands, and his body, his own friendless, unasked for body, laying there a prey to these dreadful things. He could have shrieked at this shocking vision, but that his diminished strength would not allow him. Not a hope, not a sweet thought, not a tender recollection cheered his solitary fate; all was black, blank, hopeless and horrible. He longed to die,

and yet in his intense love of life, cheerless as it was, a something that bade him cling to earth, cling to care, pain, want and hunger, held the almost severed cord together, and warred constantly and fiercely with his anguish.

It happened that one of Doctor Gilbert Waldron's poor members was at present a patient in the same place; a child of loneliness and poverty, like Jupe, but his sad, yet smiling face, told a story of patient resignation; of willingness to bear all the burthen for the sake of Christ, his master; and it was when coming from the cot of this Christian, with whom the pastor had left bunches of costly grapes and a dozen sweet, juicy oranges, that he saw and started at the spectre-like figure of Jupe. Dacker, accompanied as usual with books and papers of scientific research, had come with him for the purpose of consulting with the learned medical men, upon a new invention in medicine, exclusively his own, and which he gravely unfolded to them, undeterred by the broad smiles which his ignorance and presumption could not fail to elicit. But his exhausting pumps, different sections of which were ludicrously marked out with awkward alphabetical letters to explain them, and his inverting swing, wherein the patient was to sit head down, heels up; his rotary bandages for quickening the circulation, were dismissed with a quiet contempt, that the poor fellow construed into respectful and awe-struck reverence.

"I think they are half convinced, doctor," he said, walking nimbly down stairs; "I think the Dacker invention will yet be one of the reforms of the day, and my name will be handed down to *posteriori*, which is the Latin for posterity, I presume, to the last generation. But—heavens! I've seen that face before!"

"So it seems to me, have I!" returned the pastor of the old church, as both paused opposite Jupe, whose hollow eye lighted up. The boy lifted his head eagerly, as he exclaimed, "say, you git me out o' this, won't you?"

"Are you the poor boy that used to live round by the old meeting-house, somewhere?"

"Yes, I'm Jupe—p'raps the old sexton's told you 'bout me; he said he'd bury me, and so he will if I don't die here. See, you, I'm a' most well now, won't you git me out o' this?"

"Why, you look very comfortable here, my good boy, nobody can take such good care of you elsewhere as they do here."

"I don't want to be took care of," he said, tossing the book, at the pictures of which he had been looking, from his grasp and lying back; "yes," he added, sharply, "I'll be took care of, I know how they'll take care o' me—don't I? oh! granny!"

Notwithstanding this attempted jocoseness, tears stood in the strange looking eyes, as the boy queried again with a distressful earnestness, to be taken "out of that."

"It's better on the darned old wharf," he continued; "I love to hear the waters agoin' and agoin'. I love to hear the sailor's swinging out—I guess as how I was born somewhere down there," and he wiped his eyes with his knuckles, "coz I remembers a ship the first thing I remembers; and I alleys liked to see a jolly ship in the theatre. It's the theatre'd git me up, if I on'y could git there onc't."

"God, alone, can get you up now, my boy," murmured doctor Waldron.

"If they'd only try my exhausting pump," muttered Dacker, who looked as if hardly restrained from laying violent hands on the boy, and bearing him off to test his improved apparatus upon.

Jupe looked up as the minister spoke, not that he was attracted by the words, but the *manner* was so impressive, so solemn and unusual.

"You know who God is?" pursued the good man, in a half questioning way.

"I never heer'd much," replied Jupe—"I s'pose he's a grand one, though; what lives in great houses, and I don't think he cares for Jupe."

"He lives in no house on the earth, Jupe, and though he is, as you say, a 'grand one,' his habitation is as often on that wharf you speak of, on that sea, in this very place where you are, Jupe, as in great houses—aye, oftener. He made the world—he made you and keeps you alive."

"Well, I'd jest as lief he wouldn't," muttered Jupe, whose bodily suffering triumphed over his curiosity; "it seems to me, if He knewed what a achin' I had, an' if he see what a lookin' I am, he wouldn't be very proud to think he'd made me."

This speech, solemn though the matter was, provoked a smile from doctor Waldron, who, however, soon forgot the occasion and talked of heaven to Jupe. But the poor boy only yawned and seemed so wearied that he went away with heart-felt sorrow for his obtuseness and misery. But he left food for thought, vague as was Jupe's comprehension; and through the long night the words of the good minister wandered through his brain.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LITTLE ANGY VISITS JUPE.

AGAIN, another morning dawned, and Jupe was despairing. No hopeful change for him, no welcome face to bring him comfort. And yet there was a face, a face he had seen in dreams—what fleeting ones came to his pillow—and this morning, though he laid crying and moaning, refusing to eat

even the breakfast the nurse brought him, and which in a harsh way she insisted he must take, while he as resolutely declared "darned ef he *would*," those gentle angel eyes seemed dancing about him, and the softness of their light soothed the trouble in his soul.

"She keeps jest a comin' and a comin'," he muttered, turning up the sleeves of his long white gown; "I feel 'sif I was looking at her a' most. I wish she would, 'cause she's a angel or *fairy*, I don't know which;" and with a sly, cat-like glance, he arose with what little force he could collect, and peered again and again through the long room. He often did so when alone, and seemed calculating how much strength it would take to enable him to crawl to the window, which was left open opposite his bed.

"I wa'n't nary so limber-like as now," he murmured with a heavy sigh, "seems like my fingers was all pieces o' wet paper, and my head a big chuck stone; I guess the doctor's is a working of me!" and the tears rolled as they did lately at a serious thought, without any effort to bring them or control to send them back.

"Seems 'sif I was a thinking of all them things," he went on, "my old wharf, and Jem Holden, cuss him!" he repeated, savagely, and half springing forward with clenched hands. "Seems 's if I was hearin' the music that Amber woman made, dressed in mourning, on the piany; seem 's if I see the old meetin'-'us," and the tears rolled faster.

Just at that moment the nurse came to say, that a man and a little girl had called to see him. Jupe hid his face till he had wiped the tears away, but they ran faster at sight of old Allan Beauvine, leading little Angy Harkness by the hand. The child came forward with slow, almost unwilling manner, and Jupe's defiance had like to have broken out in the midst of all his grief for fear she did not after all want to see him; a strange pride the friendless boy had, but in a

moment she came along more briskly as if she had only just recognized him.

"Shew! Jupe, you don't say, well, poor fellow! how are ye, pretty lively, Jupe? keeping spirits up, hey? See! I've brought little Angy; she wanted to see you, pinky did; and good Mr. Taylor, he's comin' too. Shew! Jupe—well, you *are* in a nice place; what nice beds and what a clean floor! spick and spanky like the man in the song; ses he—

"My wife's so tidy,
The floor is like the snow;"

and then ther's something 'bout a

"Little heaven below;"

but I reckon that last part belongs to some religious psalm."

Jupe had been gazing his fill at the sweet face of little Angy, which lighted up with a sort of mournful interest as she gazed on him, but the moment the coffin-maker said, "you are in a nice place," the old blazing fire burst out again, and he shook his head angrily, as he exclaimed—

"It's a hospittle, this is, I'd rather a died than come here."

"What's the matter with the hospital, my boy?" a mild voice asked on one side of the bed. Jupe looked up and recognized Abram Taylor. He strove to press his loathing of the place; his lips and his fingers worked convulsively, but he only articulated, "what's the use o' bein' done and cut up with knives—ugh!" and he shivered fearfully; the idea was overpowering.

"What do you care what becomes of the body, Jupe, as long as the soul is beyond?" said the sweet voiced preacher.

"When I die 't'll be the last o' me; say, you, git me out o' here!"

"My poor poor, when you die a heaven or a *hell* awaits you," exclaimed Abram Taylor, with an energy that brought the boy upright in bed.

"You go long," he cried with clenched hands and fierce look; "you clear right off; you git out o' here. I don't want to hear you talk. I ain't got no soul; I don't want no soul; you git out o' here."

"Oh, Jupe!"—cried little Angy, horror struck, recoiling from him, "oh, Jupe!"

In an instant the boy suspended his savage gestures, and quivering in every limb, laid looking at her, then buried his face in his hands. When he again raised his head, she was gone; at a sign from Abram Taylor she had moved to the recess behind his bed.

"See, you have driven her away," said Allan, "with your naughty talk; believe this good old man, Jupe, little Angy loves him very much."

"You jes' let her come here again and see if I won't!" Jupe cried with imploring eyes: "I'll do anything you say, if you'll let her come."

Angy was called. She sat up beside him on his bed; she took his hot, wasted hand in her's, so little, so white and cool; she even, so tender an equality feels childhood, leaned over and kissed his shining forehead—very painfully shining, and pale it was!

Then Jupe began to believe he had a soul; he sobbed outright. The touch of those pure lips had sent a new thrill through his veins; the smile of that innocent face made him feel more human—and, yes—Jupe believed he had a soul, for did they not treat him as if he had? especially this little angel, who was not ashamed, although she was robed in beautiful garments of the costliest kind, not ashamed to touch his forehead that had so often laid in the mire? Yes, Jupe acknowledged that he had a soul; he listened to the accents of the devoted preacher, his eyes fixed on Angy, till the latter left him.

Then the light all went out with her; he began to doubt

again, and to yearn for his old haunts; the air seemed stifled; oh! for one moment on the old pave—for one glimpse of the musty smelling warehouses, the damp, unwholesome wharf, the filthy docks with their slime, the great shell-covered, gloomy, streaky hulls of ships, the oaths and kicks of the coarse stevedores—even the persecutions of Jem Holden, even the hateful mirth of the stout, healthy, sailors, even the growls of the woolly-headed cooks as they threw the remnants of their dinner over to him—for sights and sounds like these he would almost barter existence, unless he could always have the dear smiles of little Angy. And when he began to reflect, that everybody who saw him there, said what a fine place it was, odious and hateful as it seemed to him, it grew yet more revolting. His dreams were of knives and blood, and often, often, he sprang from uneasy slumber, feeling the cold edge of the dissecting knife on his flesh. He had a sort of nameless horror that they would use their skill on him, those fierce looking surgeons, while he yet was living, and his case being very complicated and baffling, assuming at one time the hue of rapid decay, at another promising to be curious for many years to come, the attendants of the hospital did feel an intense interest, which they manifested by coming often to his bedside, and with staring eyes, asking questions, and examining with queer looking instruments the different locations of disease, till Jupe “died a death” every time their bearded faces appeared at the door. He had now been an inmate of the hospital a fortnight, and the really kind attentions paid him, with the medicines that he sometimes swallowed, had so far proved efficacious; so that while for want of his accustomed stimulus to exertion he grew weaker in strength, yet the disease itself seemed yielding to superior skill. Not so thought Jupe; if he could but escape from this dreadful place, the fear of which had become the one overruling mania of his life, he felt that health would come—or if not, death anywhere were preferable.

One delightful evening when the vivid moonlight fell in showers upon the earth, and its soft beams penetrated the darkest nooks of grave-yards and solitary churches, sending its holy calm into sick men's chambers, and breathing delights upon lovers, the boy yearned more than ever to escape. He was alone in the long dim room, and he could look into the calm white night, could see that silver disk when the warm breeze waved asunder the slight foliage of the two young elms. A wild thought entered his brain—could he not escape? There was the open window—this the first floor or ground story, the nurse had been called up stairs—he tottered from his bed and without giving a single thought to his condition, dressed as he was in his long white gown, he sprang from the window.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TROUBLE FOR THE AMBERS—THE BABY'S DEATH.

“Excuse me, madam, I doubt it,” and so saying, Paul Halburton pulled on his glossy gloves, and lifted his hat to go.

“I have nothing to excuse, sir,” replied mother Mott, with a tinge of olden pride; “it is of God you should ask pardon, since it is his word you doubt.”

The lip of the other curled, an expression of half scorn, half derision crossed his features as he said—

“I have lived long enough, madam, to find out that if a man has the *will*, the *energy*, the *tact*, and the talent to succeed in life, succeed he must. It matters not if he be infidel or Christian. With the chances of successes of business, God

has nothing to do, it is the man himself. A good heart! pshaw! what has the heart to decide in the matter of money? nothing! The question is never with me, has the man a heart, but does he know his business? And, whoever thoroughly understands that, has nothing to fear; he can take care of himself. Suppose I told you, now, that I knew a man who was never troubled with this *thing* you call a *heart*; who lived for himself *exclusively*; did what seemed good to him in his own sight—called no man his judge; loved, respected, feared no man—cared for none—put aside those who stood in his way without ceremony; crushed whom he pleased—built up whom he pleased; suppose I told you that this man prospered from the beginning; aye! *from the beginning*—that hearts full of love, sympathy, and all that nonsense you speak of, bowed down to him—suppose I told you that *I knew* such an one."

"From the beginning," mused mother Mott, very softly; "from the beginning"—then looking up with a sadly serious expression, she said quietly, "aye! but has not the end to come?"

"The end—humph!" sneered Paul, "you Christians are terribly practical"—but the question sent a shiver through his nerves, stout as they were. He bowed hastily and left the room, and mother Mott shaking her head, as one in doubt and apprehension, slowly went up stairs.

It was in the dwelling-place of the widow Amber that mother Mott and Paul Halburton had met for the first time. Paul—now and henceforth the inexorable landlord, had come to demand his money—his rents, present and past must be promptly paid, he said, or there should be legal steps taken to enforce his claims. So, mother Mott, not knowing all the circumstances of the case, and supposing some slanderous tongue had given him false reports of the Ambers, had reasoned with him, until she felt, even with her gentle heart

that there was something black and wrong about the man; for when she appealed to his sympathy, she found it like pouring water through a sieve—a fruitless effort; he seemed to her like adamant or iron.

She went slowly up to Mrs. Amber's chamber. Gracie sat rocking the baby whose cheeks were flushed with fever, and her mother, pale, nervous and sick, stood reckoning money at a little table. Two other children, uneasy-looking and bright eyed, with a something too vivid in color and sparkle, worried about their mother, half crying, half laughing, but very annoying they seemed to the disordered nerves of the widow. She was counting money in bills and silver, and occasionally small gold pieces, and now and then a tear dropped and a slight quiver of the lip told that sorrow had in some way connection with this appearance of plenty.

Mother Mott drew the little ones to her side, and soon succeeded in amusing them, though she noted with uneasiness their restless manners and burning breath.

"I make out only one hundred and twenty-five," at last said Mrs. Amber, in a despairing kind of voice; "oh, dear! and we owe him two hundred and fifty—the cruel, cruel man."

"We'll make it up in some way, dear mother!" Gracie said with a hopeful voice, "don't worry. But, mother, hadn't you better send for doctor Andover? The baby frightens me, she looks so strange, and I can scarcely bear the heat of her head."

"We've no money, Gracie, to pay doctors' bills," Mrs. Amber answered, fretfully, pushing the little pile away; their present distress had for the moment clouded her maternal perceptions; "she isn't worse than she has been a dozen times—oh, dear! how shall we pay this cruel landlord!"

"Ten dollars from me, you know," said mother Mott, adjusting two little heads comfortably upon her bosom.

"No—never. I can't take your widow's mite, my good sister, don't ask me; I never should lift my head again."

"Not a word—not one word now," replied mother Mott, a sweet smile softening the command in her voice, as she laid a bill upon the table—"you know me," she added, lifting those calm orbs to the widow's face. "Now," continued mother Mott, "go look carefully at your baby! I'm afraid she is very sick, and you know it is said that the scarlet fever——"

Before mother Mott could finish, a strange choking noise sounded near—and the babe was in its mother's arms. Speaking in a low, hoarse whisper, while her face was almost convulsed, the widow said fearfully distinct, "my dear Lord! my baby must be dying!"

The words had no sooner fallen from her lips, than Gracie, with a scream rushed down the stairs, and flying with streaming eyes and head uncovered, to the house of the good doctor, she appeared in his presence like one frantic, and incoherently, begged him to go with her.

Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed before the two returned: a strange hush awaited them. They went silently and hastily up stairs; the mother had fainted entirely away. The babe had just breathed its last in that terrible fit, in the arms of mother Mott; the children looked on in a flushed and heavy stupor.

It was so sudden, so overwhelming, so terrible, that Gracie sank back as helpless as the pale form of the widow.

"I don't wonder," murmured mother Mott, with quivering lips and streaming eyes—"we none of us thought the babe in danger. It died in a fit, doctor."

"The most malignant type of scarlet fever!" said the good physician; "and these children are threatened, pulse heavy and rolling—eyes fiery and yet sleepy. I must work with all possible despatch in this case. Gracie, my poor girl—your mother is reviving, had you not rather be near her? It will be better if you carry the babe in the next room, that

she may not see it. Mother Mott, you will stay of course—or——"

"Certainly, I shall stay as long as she needs me; especially in this fever, she could not get a nurse for love nor money," whispered the gentle Christian, bearing the form of the beautiful corpse into another room.

In a very short time the two little girls were in bed in the next apartment—the room in which sat Mrs. Amber, pale as a ghost, and unable to realize this agonizing loss, was darkened and put in order, and a strange heart-thrilling quiet reigned throughout the house.

It was twelve. The doctor was just leaving the bereaved mother, with words of hope and comfort on his lips, when the door flew open, and the eldest son appeared, his face all alive with passion and excitement. He did not notice the singular silence of the room, its arrangement, or his mother's paleness, but burst into their presence, exclaiming—

"Oh, mother!—Mr. Halburton has discharged me, just as I was going to get four dollars a week; and because he said he had missed money; think of it, mother—because he believes I am a thief; an old scoundrel to say such things to me."

With whiter lips and wildly heaving breast, the poor distracted mother waved him away. She could not speak, she could not tell him that her cup of anguish was already full—but he paused at the sight of her distress, and seemed suddenly to comprehend that some extraordinary thing had happened, for he turned pale, exclaiming, "why, mother, sis, what is the matter?"

The doctor had come forward and placed his arm about his shoulders, saying, "my dear boy, do not distress your mother, now, she has met—you have all met with a very sad loss; your dear little sister is——"

"Lost! dead?" cried the boy in a voice of distress; while

Gracie held her head down and wept, and the pale mother wrung her hands—"dead!" he repeated bewilderingly, "oh! doctor, no; *don't* say she's dead, oh! doctor, *don't* say so," and the poor boy was led from the chamber, heavily sobbing, while to Gracie it seemed as if troubles thickened with every breath she drew, and she longed for mother Mott's consolation; longed to go somewhere and unburden her soul—but she knew not how; she felt to rebel against the decree of the good God, as if she had heard him say, "smite the child."

The little creature had always been a very lovely, quiet darling. So silently had it entwined its little being around the blossoms of their affections, that they did not know how dearly they prized it till it was gone. Gone! the chill in that word—the heart shuddering—the lonely, looking round, as if expecting some fair vision to spring forth that always disappoints—that is always far away. Gone, millions have murmured it, and like a heavy stone thrown in a deep river, it has sunk down, down, and laid at the bottom unchanged as when it first entered the heart. That lonesome shudder!—that listening expectancy, forever cheating itself with vague imaginings, and forever coming out of them as from a dream, with cold impassive eye, and shuddering moans that as some old bard repeating always the same strain, keeps murmuring "gone."

Oh! who that has known it feels ever after the same towards each and earthly things? Who but would put his heart in an urn and shut out the world forever? But duty, imperative, despotic in her commands, will not allow the sorrow to overwhelm the sufferer. Mrs. Amber did, with the utmost difficulty, succeed in rousing herself from the grief that shrouded her. It was with a nearly breaking heart she listened to the well meant consolation of the old sexton. She knew that when he went out he was going to bring the coffin home, and bending above the flushed faces and heaving

chests of the two little girls, something whispered that he might need soon to bring home more than one.

As for Ingerson, he shaped his course to the shop of the coffin-maker, with whom he held a hurried consultation.

"Show!" was that good man's first exclamation, in a tone of real sympathy, as he turned from his bench—"show! poor thing, well, now—I declare the poor widow! *don't* she have the luck of it? You *don't* say?" he added in a startled voice as Ingerson imparted some extra information—"well, now you *don't* say so? That is *too* bad—I declare that is dooced hard; how long's the fuss bin?"

Ingerson communicated farther in the same mysterious manner, at which Allan puckered his mouth, wrinkled his forehead, and gave a series of short sagacious nods, and then turning his attention to the coffin, examined it all over with a shrewd air.

"Have a plate on, I 'spose," he said.

"Yes," Ingerson replied—"and make it look as nice as you can for the very smallest sum."

"Of course," exclaimed Allan, "I shan't make a stiver on it; and between you and I—*don't* say anything—I'll wait her convenience if it's a year;" and he hummed,

"Rat, tap, tap,
The mother is weeping wild,
For this rustling satin so fine and white,
All crimped and plaited will fold to-night
The brow of her sinless child."

"A bit of nice cotton will answer as well?" he half asked, half suggested, as he looked over his trimmings.

"Just as well, very fine and soft," returned the sexton. "I shall give in my services," he continued, "and I think I can get her a grave for a reasonable sum; it won't take much room—but then these things cost, they count up."

"Show!" ejaculated Allan, in a sort of soliloquy. "I

feel right down bad for *Miss Amber*. She was always a real ladylike body, was Tom Amber's wife, and a delicit—seems to me such delicit things always has a host of trials and tribulations, as Abram Taylor says, but I 'spose it's all for the best. There's Harkness down here, he's jest fell and hurt hisself in a way, somewhere about the *spinal narrow*, as they call it, that he's laid up for life, if he don't die directly. His wife, you know, they say is the best man of the two, and she'll carry things on gloriously. Queer woman—queer woman that little Pinkey of mine has got for a mother; they say she didn't seem to feel so very bad for him, but kind o' mad like. Now that's what I call flying in the face of Providence, don't you?"

Ingerson assented, and Allan went on—"they say that little critter, Angy there, is a reg'lar woman, and stays by her father all the time. I hope he'll learn to prize her; seems 's if he never did know what a blessing he had. There! that's as neat a little turn-out as you'd find in a day," he added, scanning the coffin over with pride. "It don't look cheap, does it? no, not a bit of it. Now I'd rather give that *there* away," he continued, waxing earnest, and taking out his old silk handkerchief to wipe the well-varnished lid, "I'd rather give it out and out, than make a concern for some all-fired mean, rich people. I got a real handsome concern up for a feller as well off as Creakus, and what do you think? he sent down and wanted to know *if I wouldn't take it out in salt fish and mackerel!* That's a blessed fact"—he reiterated, in reply to Ingerson's gaze of astonishment. "There! there's the coffin—as pretty a little thing as I ever turned off; and I guess Steel, the engraver, will git up the plate cheapest. Tell Miss Amber I'm proper sorry for her loss, that is—I do' no—p'raps it'll make her feel worse—and take care how you expose yourself, Ingerson; I'd rather have small pox than scarlet fever, any day."

A sombre darkness had gathered over the rows of coffins in Allan's shop, as Ingerson left it. Sweeping up his tools—for in his place of business, Allan managed to keep a sort of method—barring his shutters, and fumbling in his pocket for the key, Allan soon followed, and passed leisurely up the close, narrow street, having a jovial word to speak with all he met—receiving smiles from dirty-faced women with filthy-faced babies, who seemed to thrive best in mud, and pert speeches from wicked looking, precocious children.

The darkness came fast, after he was gone, and the coffins of different complexions seemed to huddle close together and speculate upon their future tenantry. There was a shivering and a rattling sound that increased as the gloom became more dense; then the stillness seemed broken by a light footstep, that moved softly and very slowly around. Then came a crash, as if the coffins felt the solitude of their rendezvous broken in upon, and resented it; then a trap-door opened cautiously, out from which a thick shower of shavings fell, and a strong smell of pine proceeded. And then came the blue, naked foot of a human being, thrust forth slowly; presently its counterpart rested beside it, and in a minute more a ghastly object crept stealthily down, with a painful effort, and turned its pinched features to the right and left, and so suspiciously descended. Then, when it was wholly down, it seated itself with a faint moan, and folding its white, worn arms, laid its shaggy head thereon.

"Seem 's if Allan might a knowed I was here," at length it muttered, lifting its head again with a moan of pain, "nif he had, like's not he'd a shuffled me off to the hospittle again. Soon rising, he limped along, keeping his eyes steadily fastened upon the dingy panes over the shop door, that were growing brown in the rapid twilight. It was plain that Jupe had been injured by his fall. On the night of his exit from the hospital, he had, for a brief time, laid inani-

mate, fortunately upon a heap of straw that had been emptied from some sick bed and not yet removed, and that broke, in a slight measure, the violence of his leap.

With the return of consciousness, the pain of his bruises was terribly severe, and he gave himself up to die. But he was yet within the hated precincts of that dreadful place. The thought nerved him with almost superhuman strength; he lifted his head from the straw, and, giddy as he was, crawled on his hands and knees to the rude cross tree, which in that time served the purpose of a gate. Once without, on the free causeway, a new energy appeared to animate his almost lifeless limbs. Very slowly and cautiously he crept along, meeting but few persons, and those shrunk from him with an unspoken dread, until he reached the lower and more crowded streets. Then by dodging into alleys and doorways he managed to gain, nearly unobserved, the street in which stood Allan Beauvine's coffin shop. The watchman by whom he glided, in that vicinity, sprang back at the sight of the white and ghastly figure with almost a scream; and one woman was heard with many contortions to assert, that now she did believe Beauvine's old place was haunted, for she saw a ghost herself go under the rotten old gate, or, as she expressed herself, "it vanished off entirely, and left a great coal of fire in its place."

This of course was poor Jupe, creeping through crevices known only to himself, into the "shell shop," where he thought he could rest till morning. He knew, also, for he had often lounged in the old coffin-maker's establishment, that the men and boys employed in hurried times, left their working clothes there, and he had determined to fit himself to some sort of a suit, and travel off, away from the city, and go where he should never be seen or known again. Till the morning, in spite of his bruised condition, he slept soundly upon the shavings. All the next day he dared not

leave his prison-house, for fear Allan, good friend as he felt him to be, might carry him back to the hospital; thus he had lingered, hungry and faint, and as he muttered savagely, "a achin' here'n there."

Now stooping, he groped in the deep darkness, but presently the moon coming up, lent a little light, a very faint ray it was, for it came through layers and layers of crusted dirt, but Jupe could see by it sufficiently at least for his purpose. Finding his way to the tool box, the boy discovered a pair of over-alls and a green baize jacket. They were both much too large for him, but he jerked into them, groaning at every motion, and with something like thankfulness munched a crust that he found along with a handful of old tobacco, in one of his pockets. The bread was vilely odorous, and tasted more of the weed than the wheat, but—Jupe was hungry. It was not long before the uncouth boy crawled in his usual dragging step up the street from his late hiding-place. The sights and sounds, vulgar as they were, along that degraded locality, seemed like old friends to Jupe—only once in awhile, like the breath of sweet summer wind in the midst of a putrid heat, came the vision of a child's face—the face of sweet little Angy Harkness.

CHAPTER XXX.

NEWS FROM HART HOLDEN.

It was night at the widow Amber's. Gracie stood in the hall within sight of her mother and mother Mott. The former sat near the head of the bed, looking in a listless and half despairing way on the two little girls, who were both

moaning in the delirium of the fever. Mother Mott was standing above them, now replacing the bandages and moistening their parched lips, again soothing them with her soft voice and changing their hot pillows.

"They are both going to die!" exclaimed Mrs. Amber, rousing herself a little. "God will take all my children from me—I feel it."

At this Gracie cried silently, and abandoned herself yet more to her grief.

But mother Mott gently remonstrated, speaking words of hope and comfort, quoting beautiful promises from scripture, until even in Gracie's bosom there stole a sensation of quiet, of peace, and wiping her eyes she descended to the parlor. Sad sight! it was dimly lighted, and the little baby laid in its coffin—that pale little child, whose eyes had opened upon her with such unearthly light in the morning. Yes, only in the morning, those white, plump cheeks were rosy red, and those dear, plump, white fingers, tied together now with white ribbons, clung hot and dry about her neck. Oh! how she felt! what choking and grieving, and sad, heart-aching as she stood over that little coffin. How very steadily and earnestly she strove to think she was only dreaming, that the babe was up stairs in its bed, sleeping the beautiful sleep of infancy, or at any rate, somewhere, still living, still breathing, still ready to smile upon her again. Somewhere—but not here, poor girl! Somewhere, above—beyond—in the holy home of angels—somewhere, the sweet little blossom is twining its new, strong tendrils—the young angel is fluttering its untried wings.

It all came at last to the cold, hard reality, and she bent her head over the still face, and passionately wept. Her eldest brother, who had been sitting at the door, his face hidden in his hands, came forward now, pinching his lips bravely together, and frequently shutting his eyes and opening them very wide again.

"Don't cry so, Gracie!" he said, with all a brother's tenderness.

"I can't help it," she replied, looking up through her tears; "it's so hard to bear, Frank, so very, very bitter."

"I know it!" said the boy, and he turned away hastily.

"She was a sweet little thing, and so good!" and Gracie burst into fresh sobs.

"I know it," again murmured Frank, after a little silence; "everybody said she was too good to live. Do you remember how she clapped her hands at sight of that little coffin, when Mr. Ingerson, on his way home, stepped in to get some water—wasn't that strange?"

"Every thing she did was different from what other children do," responded Gracie, her sorrow turned for the moment from its channel, by dwelling upon the peculiar cunning little oldish ways of the child. "What did Benny say when you told him?"

"He went right up stairs and laid down crying on his bed; I don't believe he's well either, for he is so hot! and fast asleep with all his clothes on."

"Oh, Frank! suppose we all have it, that dreadful fever—what shall we do? Where shall we go?"

"To your heavenly Father, my child!" said mother Mott, who had just come down stairs. "He who doth not willingly afflict his children. Look at me—I have lost nine of my little birds, but they have all flown to a better home than I could give them, and this night I am glad they are in heaven—yea! I thank God that he called them early and honored them by his choice. Now you must not sit up another moment; I will watch all night. I have just persuaded your mother to lie down a few moments and catch some sleep. Do you go to your chamber, my dear, and you too, Frank—I may need you; if I do, I will call you both."

"I forgot," said Frank, after casting a sorrowful look to-

wards the coffin, and swallowing, as if something staid in his throat; "here is a letter for you. I went to the post-office, and met Letta Holden there. *She* had your letter in her hand, and I happened to see your name, and asked her for it. She looked red for a moment—I don't know why she should, and said, that being your friend she had taken the liberty of asking for you, for she knew there must be a letter—there was one for her."

"She was very kind," murmured Gracie, wiping her eyes, and eagerly receiving the letter.

Alas! where was all the joy she anticipated on the first reception of a missive, such as she knew this to be, from her lover? It came not at her call, for engrossing every other emotion was the sorrow of her dear, dead little sister. Yet her hands trembled as she broke the seal, for, with all her apathy, she could not refuse to read, and her heart gave one tumultuous bound as the words, "My dearest Gracie," for the first time in her life met her eye. As she read, she smiled faintly, then wept again, for he spoke of the time they had last met, and she remembered how she had dressed the child, whom he little thought was dead, in its best, in honor of his visit; and how it had prattled so earnestly and sweetly, that he kissed it again and again, and declared he had never seen so wise and beautiful a babe. And as he left this subject and went on to speak of his fellow collegians, she read more eagerly:

"They're a fine set of boys, Gracie, and while in company with them, I feel as if I had found my equals. This may seem considerable for me to say, but I tell you candidly, Gracie, I *have* always felt above my station; I couldn't help it. The thoughts would come, I am *with* but not *of* these. It was not because they were poor, for I likewise felt that I was poor, and I don't know as I ever had any very great desire to be rich. It was not because they were not kind,

for it seems to me as if they had been kinder than to their own children. But it was, I think, their several traits that jarred against my tastes and my perceptions of right and wrong. There was a something selfish in them, a something common—I would write my thoughts to no one but you, dear Gracie, for I know you will hold them sacred—a something grovelling, that all the love and gratitude I felt towards them could not blind me to. I will except Letta—she has always been a dear, kind, good girl towards me. I think she is very smart, and if I had not known you, I am certain I should have felt stronger than a brother's love for her. But she is neither so handsome, graceful nor talented as you—as you! my dear love, there is no comparison between you. Only I mean that she is excellent as an ordinary woman, much better than any one of her class that I have ever seen—but you—you are extraordinary, and the world will know it yet.

"Paul Halburton—I write his name with my teeth clenched, for I can't think of him but I feel like striking him—came yesterday to the college, so I have been told, to see the professors about a nephew who has just come. A great to do was made over this thing, as if Paul Halburton was other than a mean, rich villain, whom it would do me good to cowhide; as if it was anything of an honor to be related to him. Were he my father, I should hold him in abhorrence. This nephew, Lovejoy, is a tall, pale, slender boy, with blue eyes, light hair, and a voice like a woman. He is very handsome, and has a winning way with him. And, moreover, he has taken a liking to me. His smile is very sweet, but I expect he is an incorrigible dunce; and yet I like his daring and his roguery, and as he is hostile to his uncle—detests him, I think, Gracie—I mean to like *him*."

This was not all that Gracie read, but, as she folded up the letter, a weight settled deeply, heavily, drearily, upon her

spirits. The cloud that was for a moment parted by a faint ray of sunshine, gathered again, enveloping her in its thick darkness. Soon she slept, but it was to be awakened out of a frightful dream to find Frank at her elbow, haggard and complaining of a violent headache.

"I didn't want to trouble mother Mott," he whispered, as his sister sprang up; "I thought maybe you would give me something for the pain. Did you ever feel such a sinking and dizziness? do you believe I am going to have the fever?"

"Oh! no, no!—don't think of it, Frank!" exclaimed the girl, a sickening sensation running from head to foot; "to imagine is as bad as to suffer. It is excitement, perhaps what Mr. Halburton said, and hearing the bad news so suddenly, that have overcome you. There, now, I think you will be better soon; lay down on my own bed, and I will sit up, or," she added, tightening the bandage, "if I feel sleepy, I will lay right down beside you. How does Benny seem?"

"Keeps groaning out in his sleep, and thumping about," replied the boy, closing his eyes gratefully.

This was sad news to Gracie. The little girls both sick, Benny feverish and tossing as she found him when she left Frank; her mother weak, ill and dispirited, and mother Mott, with all her high courage, old and broken down, and surely unable to nurse a whole family of sick children. Of the probability of her own illness, the brave young girl never once thought. If Benny and Frank should be very sick, she wondered where she could get assistance. All their neighbors had young children; they would not dare venture in the way of contagion. She, herself, felt strong enough for almost any effort, but there was the work to be done, the baby to take care of—"no, no, no!"—shuddered the agonized heart, while the fair head hung down, and the frame heaved with sudden sobs. She had forgotten that a colder pillow than her loving bosom, would bear that dear little sunny

head to-morrow; and every time she thought of it, it struck her with a new grief and a nameless horror.

The news of the death and the illness in the widow's family, spread fast, and no one came near the house. It was very lonely and terrible to Mrs. Amber to go to the burial of her baby. Gracie could not be spared, for the doctor had pronounced both Frank and little Benny in the first stages of the fever; mother Mott remained with the sick little girls; so only an old uncle and an old aunt, and two or three lonesome people, who had long ago become seasoned to dangers of all sorts, kept her company. She neither wept nor raved in the graveyard, as she knelt to look at the infant loveliness stamped upon the tender face; she only moaned, and pressed her hands hard against her bosom, saying again and again, "it is thy will, my Father, thy will, thy will." And those who saw her led from the closed grave, walking as if she knew not whither, looking as if she saw nothing beyond the blackness of her bereavement, told of it with tears; for they said, "it were better if she had screamed a little, than look so white, and rigid, and indifferent."

When she returned, Gracie met her at the door, led her tenderly in the room, mastered her own grief as she untied the strings of the black bonnet and the mournful veil, and then seeing that her mother only looked straight at the table covered with its white drapery, without speaking or moving, she fell on her knees, hiding her face, and crying—

"Oh! mother, mother! you frighten me! you frighten me!"

At this the poor widow started—passed her hand in a bewildered way across her forehead many times, then laid it gently on her daughter's head as she murmured—

"Don't cry, Gracie; He who gave me strength to bear your father's death, will support me still. He will, my child, I know he will, for has he not said it: 'Yea! though I lose

them all, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear *no evil*, for Thy rod, Thy staff, they comfort me.' Do not fear for me, Gracie, I have not borne half my allotted trial," she said solemnly, and rising, she moved wearily to her chamber, and knelt in prayer. And in the midst of her sore anguish, the voice of Abram Taylor rang still upon her ear, and these words seemed stamped on everything she looked upon—

"Lord, help the mother to give up her little lamb willingly, for Thou hast need of him, or Thou wouldst not have called him."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANOTHER HOUSEHOLD IDOL TAKEN.

In a day or two, the school above stairs was closed, the parents not daring to expose their children to danger. Granny Howell sent especially word that she hated to stay away, but the little girl in her charge was sickly, and a breath might carry it off. Dick Holden came once to the widow Amber's to say that he wasn't afraid to sit up with Frank if they wanted him to, but his mother screamed at his impunity, and declared if he went he shouldn't come back again. Allan Beauvine came to the door, "jest to tell 'em," he said, "to keep up their 'sperrets,' for it was allers the darkest afore day," and essaying to condole about the baby, at which Gracie began to cry, he choked up, and with an inarticulate good-bye, hurried off again.

It looked very sad for the Ambers now. Paul Halburton, in the midst of all their trouble and sickness, sent a threat-

ening note to Mrs. Amber, which she read without emotion, save a quick flush that passed away as rapidly as it came, and then turned to the sick bed of her noble Frank. He, poor boy, in his raving, seemed always in the presence of Paul Halburton. "He called me a thief, mother, *he called me a thief*," rang out often in the still hours of the night, in a piercingly plaintive voice, and then the widow, looking up to God, would plead silently, but oh! how wildly, that he would keep her from hating this hard, monstrous hearted man, who could so coolly heap torture on torture.

"If he would only come here and take the fever, it is all I would ask!" exclaimed Gracie, passionately, as her eye fell on the note.

"Hush, my daughter," said Mrs. Amber, in a voice of stern reproof, "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay. If he wrongs us he will reap the reward of his doings. You must have more the spirit of a Christian, my child."

"Oh! mother, how *can* you talk so calmly, you—" who are always so easily overcome, she would have said.

The widow lifted her head and glanced reverently upward—that look, so unearthly and sweet, so almost angelic, brought tears to Gracie's eyes.

"Perhaps, Gracie," she said, solemnly, "some time in your deepest trial—for trials you will have—you may feel your greatest joy. Not joy springing directly from the trial, my child, but from Him who sends it. Oh! my daughter, the Christian only feels the inexpressible worth of religion in such a time as this; a time of danger, fear and death. God is my all, Gracie, my all in all; what should I do now, without God?"

Frank grew alarmingly ill. Doctor Andover looked serious when he came on his second daily visit. He did not shake his head, but it was the same as if he had; Gracie

gazed tearlessly on. She felt as if she had given up tears. But what could she and her mother do? They were both worn down with watchings and fatigue.

"You must have a nurse," said the thoughtful, good-hearted doctor, "you can get one, and an excellent one, for five dollars a week. Better to do that than to run yourselves down. Here's this boy here, one up stairs, and two girls in the next room, all requiring constant attention."

Not long after, came a muffled knock at the door. Mrs. Mott answered the summons, and presently appeared, ushering in a mild-faced woman, who said she "had been sent to them by the veiled lady," and to Mrs. Amber's objections, faintly enough urged, she said she didn't know what she could do but stay, for she had been paid down ten dollars in gold, a fortnight's advance, and she thought she should find it all right—didn't they send for her?

Thus, with hearts overflowing with gratitude towards their unknown benefactor, they felt, in a measure, obliged to accept the nurse; and now that they had no fears on the score of compensation, they were thankful enough to do so. The nurse proved skillful and gentle—but with all her care and attention, and the utmost efforts of Dr. Andover, Frank, the handsome, noble boy, shut his eyes forever on the outward world, passed away from a gentle sleep to that sleep which knows on earth no awaking; and, as his humble funeral cortege moved onward to the tomb, many of the neighbors stood respectfully round, with tearful eyes. A costly wreath of roses and everlastings had by some unknown donor been sent to lay on the boy's coffin, and Gracie, as she placed it there, fell in an agony of grief to the floor. When she awoke, Frank was buried.

THE SOURCE OF THE WIDOW'S CONSOLATION.

"Mother, you are a wonder to me!" Gracie said one day, as she sat rocking one of her little sisters. "You look so calm under these sore afflictions?"

"I am a wonder to myself," returned the widow, with a faint smile. "It is well that I appear calm, for in reality my sorrows seem greater than I can bear. Since Frank died, I have had the same lonesome feeling that came over me after your father's death; but then the thought has occurred to me that God has taken him from some dark evil to come. And now that this wicked rich man has commenced hostilities, he will spare no one; he would perhaps have ruined Frank—he had already charged him with dishonesty—my noble boy, who would not take a pin without permission," she cried faintly, overcome with the thought of the accusation, and wiping the tears from her eyes. "But although we have few earthly friends of any influence, God is for us—and who can be against us, to work us permanent evil? I live for no love of the world now, Gracie—duty and the care of my children may keep my life from being a burdensome boon, but my treasures are in heaven—there is my heart also."

"But there are *some* treasures left, mother," said Gracie cheerfully; "will they not make life pleasant?"

"My dear child," murmured the widow, while her lip quivered, "perhaps I may be very happy yet; in your love I certainly shall—for never was mother blessed with better children; but this world, Gracie, has few, very few attractions for me now."

"You make me gloomy, mother," said Gracie, sorrowfully.

"I would not, my child. I would tell you how beautiful seems the religion of the lowly Saviour. It never was so sweet to me in prosperity; then I fancied I was a Christian;

but in this overwhelming trouble, God has, as it were, come down to me; He has even made me rejoice in my bereavement; He has enabled me to look triumphantly beyond the dark tomb, and feel that my blessed children are yet mine—that it is better with them than me—that there is some providence hidden under this storm that will eventually work for my good. And feeling so, ought I not to be cheerful—ought I not to rest satisfied that all is well?”

Gracie looked long on the glowing face of her mother—fearfully on the rich crimson hectic on either cheek, and the sunny lustre of the soft blue eyes. She knew that there were times when nature triumphed over faith, for she had been awakened in the dead hour of night by her mother's stifled sobs; and she had seen the tear-stained pillow of the morning, and witnessed the anguish with which the poor woman contemplated whatever had belonged to her dead children—she felt vaguely that her mother was changed, physically changed. At times a slight cough troubled her, at times her breath came short; but when she saw her noble strife for composure, her hardly-earned serenity, there seemed a sublimity in her every act, a lofty, Christian heroism that awed while it awoke admiration.

Just as the widow had finished speaking, mother Mott called them in to tea. Little Benny, nearly restored to health, sat in a large chair by the window, in at which came delicate clinging vines, and with which he was amusing himself, childishly. The tea smoked hot on the table; the butter, in little glass dishes, some of mother Mott's best preserves in her own real cut glass, and tempting biscuit, white as snow, formed a combination more delightful than ordinary, for it was all arranged with mother Mott's faultless taste.

“How beautifully you do set a table!” exclaimed Gracie, as they busied themselves with supper.

“I learned that when I was a child, from my old grand-

mother,” said mother Mott. She had no silver ware, and seldom any delicacies, but she had a way with her that made everything look elegant. I remember so well when we used to have company,” she continued, cheerfully, seeing Mrs. Amber's newly awakened look of interest; “table was covered with a damask cloth many times folded—for it was one of enormous breadth and length, and represented the twelve apostles at the Lord's supper. It was fine thick damask, such as is seldom seen now, even on the tables of the wealthiest. It was an heir-loom, you see, and she had a set of several dozen little napkins that were quite as beautiful, and some of them she used to lay under her bread, and some beneath her cake, and almost every dish was thus dressed off. It used to look so beautiful to me! What a light, pleasant kitchen this is,” she added, after the first mouthful; “I don't know where I see a room so cheerful; I always feel brighter here.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Amber, “I shall leave it with regret; all my children were born in this house,” she continued, mournfully; “I feel as if parting with it would sever my very heart-strings, almost.” A few tears dropped, and mother Mott was sorry she had reverted to the subject.

“It may be made all right yet,” said mother Mott, gently, “and certainly if you pay him what you can, he will not be so *ungentlemanly*, to say the least, as to persecute you, a poor widow, for the remainder. How long has Mr. Halburton owned this property?”

“It changed hands when Gracie was four years old. Mr. Halburton at that time bought largely, and my husband also speculated a little. But he was obliged to sell again, consequently, he never profited by the increasing value of the land. If he could have retained what little belonged to him at one time, we should have been wealthy now.”

“All for the best,” cheerfully responded mother Mott,

"So I believe; although my lot has been a chequered one, we shall know hereafter why God has tried us so."

"Is Mr. Halburton an American?" asked mother Mott.

"I really do not know. They say he has no relatives here——"

"Yes, mother!" interrupted Gracie, with a respectful manner, "he has a nephew who is at college with Hart."

"I didn't know that," her mother went on; "I am sure I have heard again and again that he had not a single relative in the North. I believe he claims to belong to the South, at least that is what people say."

"I had rather be his friend than his enemy," mused mother Mott.

"Why?" asked the widow, looking up with sudden interest.

"I don't know, except that I fancy he has a very cold, cruel disposition; I am glad you have concluded not to stop here;" and she cast a side glance at Gracie, who during the conversation had scarcely raised her eyes.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GRACIE'S EFFORT.

THE children continued to improve rapidly—but not so the Ambers' pecuniary affairs. After the few debts of the two funerals were paid, there were only a hundred dollars left, and on this little store the widow was obliged to encroach to buy necessary food for her children. Gracie, dressed in deep mourning, set out with high hopes of youth, to find some kind of congenial employment. Professor Rose had kindly

given her a certificate of capacity, a very flattering one it was, and creditable to his heart. With this in her pocket-book, she commenced her task; that weary, seemingly hopeless task of gathering scholars, to whom she might impart instruction on much more reasonable terms, than any man would be expected to exact.

Her first effort was at the house of a wealthy family, whose two little girls she knew had yet no instructor. As she was ushered into the fine parlors, very richly furnished, and very dark, she caught sight of Miss Maligna, who was at that moment ascending the stairs with a bundle.

"No hope for me here," thought Gracie, as she encountered the glance of that severe black eye, and she felt her heart sink, as a lady, elegantly attired, entered the parlor where she sat. In a faltering voice she disclosed the object of her errand, and modestly offered her reference. The lady smiled, and gazed with peculiar interest, upon the remarkably sweet face, in its sombre border of black; then going towards a magnificent piano forte, that stood open, she requested Gracie to play. Timidly the young girl seated herself at the instrument, but the very first touch gave her a warm glow from head to foot, the tones were deep and mellow, the action easy, and before she was aware, she was playing with her own sweet, accustomed grace. With a face all aglow the other listened, sometimes bending forward to catch the faint, flute-like echoes that Gracie's genius brought forth like an inspiration, then gazing, apparently lost in wonder at the small hands, that, as they moved, seemed the very pulse of melody, so she stood, and as Gracie looked up, abashed at her earnest glance, she whispered, "play on, my dear!"

And the young girl, who had played none but mournful tunes, tender and plaintive as the memory of the lost, gave loose to her emotions, and improvised an air so touching, so

full of the soul of harmony, that it drew tears from the eyes of the listener.

"I don't wonder now," said the lady, as soon as she could command her voice; "at the extravagant praises I have heard of your performance."

Gracie turned, astonished.

"Mr. Halburton, my dear, a friend of yours, has often spoken of your wonderful musical gift."

A deep crimson overspread the face of the young girl, and consciously averting her head, she bent above the piano. The pain she felt was acute, as the pang of a pure conscience at the half admitted temptation; she had done no wrong, and yet she bore the reproach of having been admired by him, even aided in the very matter of this musical education. Would he still speak in her praise? Certainly he could condemn nothing in her character—or her talent. She knew not Paul Halburton.

The lady smiled, and thought it a very innocent countenance, with its dark, drooping eyes, and low, clear brow.

"I have two little girls," she went on to say, "who want to learn music, but are very shy of the professors. I have no doubt they would be quite docile with you, I know you would not frighten them, but how can you, with that genius, bring yourself down to the hard, dry task of imparting the rudiments of a science so difficult?"

"My father is dead, madam," Gracie simply said, and mastering the tears that came brimming to her eyes, she did not weep. It needed nothing more—the picture was finished and framed. A keen sympathy betrayed itself on the countenance of the fair woman; she felt like opening her arms to the young stranger, and pillowing the sunny head over her heart. So young, she thought—so innocent looking, to battle with the hard world and to seek its bounty! Greatly interested, she bade her come on the morrow, and

she should know her decision, which she more than hinted would be favorable. Gracie left her with a grateful heart. She for the time forgot her unpleasant meeting with Miss Maligna—but the latter had not. So when the lady of the house returned to her sitting-room, where the busy tailoress was superintending the making of a suit of summer clothing for the little boys, Miss Maligna proceeded in silence with her task, only glancing sideways now and then, until her employer, speaking of Gracie to a sister, who sat with her, said, "she's a beautiful young girl, and she must be as gentle as she looks."

The tailoress, lifting her sharp eyes a moment, interrogated—"Were you speaking of Miss Amber?"

"Yes, I quite forgot that you might know her: what kind of a young lady is she?"

Upon this the tailoress pinched her lips together, and speaking very solemnly, she said, "If I can't say anything good of those I know, it's my principle always to be silent."

How skillfully she sharpened curiosity upon the whetstone of her malice! Both the lady of the house and her sister paused from their employment. With a severe look, for Miss Maligna was not a favorite of her's, the first speaker exclaimed, "then you had better have said nothing at all."

All the acrid in the slanderer's nature was roused by this. Before the iron of her resolve had been somewhat blunted; the edge wanted keenness, and this provocative to revenge, sharpened it into activity. Now she went to work with a will.

"Oh! very well, Mrs. Lakely," she tartly replied, "it was only the interest I felt in your innocent little girls. I hope I may be pardoned."

"No one could look more innocent of any evil intention than that young lady," returned Mrs. Lakely.

"Look innocent!" repeated Miss Maligna—and oh! the

lengthened cadence—the absolute and yet meek horror that sat on those two thin, pinched lips—“look innocent—yes, madam, she can look as innocent as an angel. But a young lady that is going into meeting-houses in the dead of night, with male company, a young lady who boasts of intimacy with such a man as Mr. Paul Halburton, and takes presents from him, *I don't call innocent.*”

“Is this really so?” asked Mrs. Lakely, aghast.

“Yes, it is really so!” exclaimed the slanderer, with the satisfaction of a fiend, “and if you don't believe me, ask Mr. Halburton himself. Of course he wouldn't say anything against a young girl, but mark how he acts when you speak of her.”

Like lightning, the fact of Gracie's blush and confusion at mention of Paul's name, flashed across Mrs. Lakely's mind. “There is something in it,” she thought sadly, “and if so, I cannot receive her into my family as I intended, for she might corrupt my own children. Yet with that face—that truthful manner—could it be?”

The next day Gracie was surprised at a message sent to the door, that Mrs. Lakely had another teacher in view. It was very strange; she had felt hope amounting almost to a certainty that she should obtain the two little girls for pupils, and she had even carried her instruction book with her. Slowly and almost discouraged she returned home. Her mother was inditing a note to their landlord, trusting to soften his obdurate heart. As she desisted, she noticed the dejected air and disheartened countenance of her daughter.

“I am disappointed,” Gracie said, in answer to her kind inquiry, “and I cannot help thinking my evil genius has said something against me. For, mother, you cannot think how very kind Mrs. Lakely was to me, and how she listened to my playing, even till the tears came into her eyes; and to-day she sent down word that she thought of another teacher—

would not have me enter the house,” and poor Gracie felt like bursting into a passionate fit of weeping. Only the thought that time was precious, and she must soon go out again, restrained her.

Mrs. Amber sat for a moment deep in reflection.

“It must be that this woman has tried to injure you in the estimation of Mrs. Lakely; but don't cry, my child, nor be cast down; to-morrow, I will call upon Mrs. Lakely. I know her, and she knew me once, many years ago, when her husband was my father's clerk. It is my fault, I suppose, that we have never since been intimate. I was too proud to retain my old friends after I became poor. It is a mistaken policy, since there are many good and tender hearts that would still cling to our adversity, if we would only let them; but our foolish selfishness shakes them off, and they are lost and forgotten. I will learn what this means; to-morrow, Gracie, I will know what Miss Maligna has been saying; and if she has tried to make trouble for my child, I will report her to her church.”

“Mother, is Miss Maligna a Christian?” asked Gracie.

“It is nothing to you and I, Gracie, if she is not,” replied her mother; “she is probably acting from her own selfish motives, and therefore is no criterion by which to measure the standard of religion. Did you never hear, my child, of wolves in sheep's clothing? So she is clothed with her profession, and is more careful for the garb than the heart that beats under it. Do not, because she claims to be a Christian, and is false to the spirit of Christ, do not therefore condemn all or any who bear that name.”

“No—my mother,” Gracie said, reverently and sweetly, after a moment of thought, and looking up with a smile, “not while I have you for my exemplar.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

SICKNESS intervened, and a week passed before Mrs. Amber, attended by her daughter, went to call upon Mrs. Lake-ly. The house seemed deserted, and the girl gave word that her mistress had gone away, so far away that it made it impossible for them to reach her; and as the servant did not know where, it was only "out in the country," they could get no satisfaction.

"Never mind, mother," said Gracie, hopefully, "I have only made one trial, and somehow I don't feel at all discouraged at my poor luck. But you, I fear, are sick; your hand burns so, and your cheeks are so red."

"I am not sick, my child," returned Mrs. Amber.

When again at home, Gracie sat down, and on a little card wrote the names of all the ladies she could think of, that she might call upon them in the afternoon. They were in hourly expectation of receiving a note from Paul Halburton, nor could they dare hope for a favorable one.

"Gracie," said her mother, "have you thought of Letta Holden?"

"The very one, I do believe!" cried Gracie; "strange I have not remembered that she has no teacher at present. I met Mr. Beauvine yesterday, mother, I forgot to tell you. He said if I couldn't get any scholars, he'd a great mind to hire a piano for Sally Malinda; it seemed so laughable to imagine a piano in that dirty place, but, indeed, was it not kind-hearted in him? He said, also, that a woman by the name of Hallet, I think it was, that lived near him, had just

got her daughter a piano, and was looking out for some *cheap teacher*; that made me laugh; but I told him I would call, and so I shall to-day. I'd rather go somewhere else, but beggars musn't be choosers the saying is, so I'm going now up to Letta Holden's."

The walk was very warm. Gracie pitied granny Howell, as she caught a glimpse of her through the open window of her shop, waiting upon customers, with poor Minnie's little orphan in her arms, and then came admiration of the great heart, the great benevolent heart lighting her handsome old face, that went out with a love that was almost holy towards the helpless burden that could as yet be little comfort to her. She lingered at the gate of every garden to watch the beds of brilliant flowers, blooming in unconscious beauty, untouched yet by the hand of avarice or the slimy fingers of speculation. Huge elms overshadowed the narrow pave, and grape vines clung with trustful tendrils to the sides of neat dwellings, holding their plenty within reach of little hands at the chamber windows. Gazing at these things, for her heart was full to the brim with poetry, Gracie forgot the heat, and the stifling embrace of her black clothing, which though chilling to the eye, invited the most fervid glances of midday. She was startled once on perceiving leisurely pass her, slowly and stately, a female, whom she felt rather than knew, must be the veiled lady, and she gazed as if fascinated upon the graceful undulations of the surpassingly noble figure, while the constant wonder of who she might be, was as active as ever.

Reaching the house where the Holdens lived, a small brick tenement, with a huge shining plate upon the door, setting forth the name of the distinguished J. Holden, Esq., (and he had actually caused the engraver to word it as we have written, which fact provoked many a smile from the neighbors in the vicinity,) Gracie had put her foot upon the first step, when she was startled by a most unexpected vision. For, at that

moment, Paul Halburton appeared, followed by the policeman, who carried fear and fawning in his face. It is not strange if her manner expressed both the dislike and the contempt she felt, nor that she shrank away till he passed, which he did do in an indifferent, careless manner, touching his hat to her, but leaving the impress of his sardonic sneer imprinted on her memory. She was not at all calm when she went into Mrs. Holden's little back parlor, and sat waiting for Letta, but she feigned placidity as well as she could, and smilingly met Letta Holden in her over-trimmed morning dress, which the latter did not think worth the trouble of changing only for Gracie Amber.

A vivid jealousy stirred the heart of the stevedore's daughter, as she sat gazing on her rival, and felt the power of her charms.

"How is it," she thought, "that she in that simple black gown, without any ornament whatever, looks so much more genteel than I do, all dressed up? What is that grace Hart talks so unceasingly about?"

"Have you heard recently from your brother?" Gracie said, without lifting her eyes, after a few commonplace themes had been exhausted.

"Oh, yes!" Letta replied with a flush of satisfaction, "I have received two or three letters within the last fortnight."

"Why! how strange that I have not had one!" exclaimed the young girl innocently; "I should have thought—" here she paused, blushing rosy red.

A slightly scornful smile curled the lip of Letta Holden as she continued—

"Hart is a great favorite with all the teachers, and most of the young men. Hart is so handsome and sociable, you know. Did he say anything to you of a beautiful young girl, a sister of one of the collegians? I thought, by the way he wrote, he was almost distracted about her."

Gracie felt cold; she shivered, and said, as she moved from the window, that she had got so warm walking in the sun, the east air chilled her.

"La! Gracy, how dy do? How's your mother, child?"

"Mother is well—that is—I—I mean she's not very well," said the young girl faintly, turning towards Mrs. Holden, who, in the brightest of cap ribbons, the pinkest of pink dresses, with furbelows running up to a top-knot on each of the shoulders, entered in time to catch Letta's last remark.

"Yes, I tell Letty," she continued, seating herself laboriously, and lifting the palm-leaf fan, which, being broken, flapped ludicrously as she waved it, "that somebody'll ketch Hart 'fore we get a chance to look at him again. That place is famous for handsome gals, and they do say they lay all manner of traps to catch the studens. 'Sides, Hart was so fond of looking at beautiful girls, wasn't he, Letty?—and—a little—I used to tell him, a *litttle* too fond of making love to 'em, wasn't he, Letty? 'Seems as if I could hear him now—'there goes a pretty girl, wouldn't I like to kiss her'—didn't he, Letty? ain't that just the way he used to go on? Hart was so perceptible!" and she laughed, or rather chuckled with a way she had when she was pleased or spiteful.

Gracie smiled faintly; how could she but smile, when Letta sat looking steadily in her face—but her heart—oh! her heart felt like lead.

"He was so fond of Letty, too," continued the vulgar-minded woman, "that if she hadn't been cuter than most girls of her age, she'd a went and liked him too. Now some young females, you know, Gracie," she slyly continued, "when a feller tells 'em how he likes 'em better 'n anybody in the whole university, takes to 'em right off, and believes all they say; swallows it all down; but Letty don't do that, she's been brought up different."

Even her daughter started aghast at the bold *coup* of Mrs.

Holden, but the rapidly changing color only looked to Gracie like so much proof of the indirect statement, and an indignant feeling sprung up in her bosom against her lover's duplicity.

"Besides," continued Mrs. Holden, with a satisfied air, tossing her head and striving to look with great benignity upon Gracie, "Letta can do better for herself than that; when such men as Paul Halburton seeks the honor of my daughter's acquaintance, we can afford to disperse with penniless young men."

By the time she had finished this sentence, she was out of breath. So tremendous a statement was calculated to upset the equilibrium of a narrow little mind like hers, and she sat panting for several minutes after, her cheeks puffed out very much, and her cap ribbons fluttering. Letta looked demurely down.

"I came to see if you had a music teacher," said Gracie in a few moments, when she had mastered the choking in her throat, for it seemed as if all her bereavements had been in the last few moments placed in review before her, and this last blow was almost more than she could bear. She arose as she spoke, and bending over, touched a few notes on the tinkling old piano.

"No, Letta said she got tired of learning the first quarter, that she had about made up her mind to give it up, but why did you ask?"

"I intended to offer my services," replied Gracie, coldly; "I am going to teach, for I must earn a living now for my mother and myself."

A singularly expressive look passed between mother and daughter, then the former spoke, saying—

"I thought you were provided for."

What did it mean—that speech? Gracie turned with flashing eyes—"you knew my mother was a poor widow," she said, "and I a poor girl with poor brothers and sisters; you

must have know that! How then could you possibly think we were all provided for?"

Astonished at her vehemence, for the gentle young girl appeared in a character entirely new, Mrs. Holden sat silent, not daring to give utterance to her base suspicions. Gracie waited a moment before she said again, "what did you mean, Mrs. Holden?"

"I meant that I heard, that I understood some of your friends was agoing to, that is, had provided for your mother," stammered the woman.

"If you hear it again," said Gracie, with proud calmness, and a dignity that caused Letta almost to rise from her seat, "tell them she has a daughter who will never leave her mother a dependent upon the bounty of friends. Tell them she has a daughter who is not ashamed to labor with her hands if need be—who would do so, sooner than accept a single offer of aid from false and foully interested wealth. Tell them, too, that she might have lived in splendor and without labor, but she prized her own dignity too highly, even to become the wife of a rich, dishonest man. Will you tell them all this, Mrs. Holden, and you, Letta?"

"Oh, yes," and "certainly," came faltering from two astonished tongues; then Letta, with a serious look, asked her a few questions relative to her terms, and Mrs. Holden, somewhat crestfallen, added, "she didn't think they could let Letta take any more lessons, for it kept herself working too hard."

"Mother—I don't believe a word that Miss Maligna said about her," exclaimed Letta when Gracie had gone, her naturally good heart conquering the temporary fit of jealousy into which she had fallen. "I do believe Gracie Amber is a thoroughly good girl."

"Oh! well then, Hart and she are well matched," replied her mother with apparent suavity. "How pretty she grows!" she continued with low, sagacious cunning; "I never noticed

afore what bright big eyes she's got. She took all that joking about the girls naterally, but if you'd as lieve's Hart should have her, why that all went for nothin'. Why didn't you give me a sign? Howsomever, I'll set it all right the next time she comes. Hart 'll git a pretty wife. You'd better give up them two letters you've got, for if you don't work the card right, he'll be on here soon, and if we don't git her so mad she won't see him, why the fuss is all up. They'll git together, and a little sweet talk 'll undo the whole."

"It would kill me if Hart should marry her," cried Letta, with a passionate sob, and bursting into tears.

"Then don't you let him, that's all. It won't be any harm. Ain't it plain enough to be seen that she don't begin to set as much by him as you do? Do you think she'd a set there so still and quiet when I told them things, if she had? She only coketted with him like, or whatever you call it. 'Taint 'sif she'd a bin brought up from a little thing right by his side, which, in consequence, must make love deeper."

"She *couldn't* love him as strongly as I do," murmured Letta.

"No, indeed, and so where'd be the harm? I take it 'twould be doin' a good deed by the young man; what is it but makin' him happier to give him the one that loves him best? No, no, you persevere—I tell you it'll all come out right; just follow my instructions. I was always a hand at managing. Jest see how I brought your father up! When we was married he only had sixpence in his pocket, and we lived in a cellar, and——"

"Oh! mother, don't tell that again," cried Letta, an expression of horror crossing her features as she spoke, "you don't know how vulgar it sounds."

"Well, I was only saying," persisted Mrs. Holden, "how we began with nothing, but I managed, and managed, and scrubbed, and saved, and raked, and scraped till here we are."

It's true, somebody, I don't know who, has been a very good friend to your father, and lent him I don't know how many hundreds of dollars, but it's all got to be paid back I 'spose, and——"

"There—stop that!" exclaimed a gruff voice.

"La! Mr. Holden, how you startled me; wasn't that Mr. Halburton in the front room?" queried the conscious woman, for she knew she had been treading on forbidden ground, and wished to change the subject as quickly as possible.

"Well, I don't know but it was," he muttered, sinking into the unoccupied rocking chair; "'spose it was, what then?"

His wife read in his face something of doubt, something of encouragement, so she proceeded—

"Well, you might tell a body what he wanted."

"I don't let women know my business, law is law," sagely remarked the little great policeman.

"I'll tell you, ma," cried Dick, thrusting his skull cap, with which his head was seldom unadorned, into the room—"he told me."

A half gratified smile played for an instant round Jem Holden's mouth, and Dick wriggled in with a huge piece of pie in one hand, from which he took an enormous mouthful, then cried out—

"Mr. Halburton's got me a place as is a place—five hundred dollars a year—hooray! After this *won't* there be a rise in groceries? FLINTS are goin' to be scarce, too, you see if they don't. Pooh! Let gentleman Hart go to college, gentleman Dick 'll beat him."

At the mention of Hart's name, the policeman put on a woefully lugubrious face, heaved a deep sigh, declared he couldn't have thought it, and shaking his head three times, leaned it on his bandana, that, hanging in graceful (and very large) folds adown his arm, gave to his swarthy complexion and black hair a decidedly picturesque effect.

"La! pá, what is the matter?" queried Mrs. Holden, her fat face assuming a distressing look of anxiety.

"It's about Hart," said Dick with a leer; "he's agoin' to be a hard one, for all he's so sanctissimo and harmonican; I told you so;" and running his greasy fingers twice or thrice across the keys of the piano, he gave one final thump, and amidst Letta's indignation and scolding, sprang out of the room."

"Hart ain't agoin' to be an honor to us, I'm afeared," groaned the policeman.

Letta straightened herself and looked hard at her father.

"What is the matter?" cried Mrs. Holden.

"He's a cuttin' up," replied Jem mournfully.

"And only been there a month!" responded Mrs. Holden, glancing at Letta.

"It's false," said Letta, "they always get up some scandal about the new students."

"I hope you told him he wasn't our son."

"Told who?" cried the policeman in a voice of alarm.

"Why, I suppose you heard it from Mr. Halburton," said Mrs. Holden, tremblingly; "you know Hart writ to Letta, that Mr. Halburton had a nephew there, don't you?"

"Well, yes," replied her husband, seemingly relieved, "yes, it was him—no—I only told him he was an adopted child—the son of an old friend—mind that—always remember, *the son of an old friend!*" he said, emphatically. "I have my reasons for saying so—money reasons, recollect, reasons that'll make us all rich if everything comes out right—the fact is, law is law."

Jem Holden had never learned to calculate how many wrongs it took to make one right.

"Further he could not tell," he said, "only Hart was growing very wild. He was always afeared," he added, "that Hart was too onnateral good for a boy, and that the

evil that must of necessity be in him, would come out at some time or nuther; however, it didn't matter, all boys had got to sow their wild oats."

Letta thought Hart *might* have been a little indiscreet, but how, or in what way, she could not possibly imagine. And it seemed something strange and mysterious, too, that her father should be so serious over it. It was not like him.

"Even if he did do wrong, I would love him and marry him," she repeated, going to her chamber. "I wonder if Gracie Amber, with her high notions, would do the same?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

REFLECTIONS OF MRS. AMBER.

GRACIE was discouraged, and a feeling, such as she never knew before, weighed down her spirits. She had made several exertions, heart-sick as she felt, after leaving Mrs. Holden, and had obtained one scholar on a starving recompense, and promise of one more pupil. This she communicated to her mother, as cheerfully as she could, adding—

"You see we shall get along famously, if you could only find a few small scholars and open a day school."

"And strive withal to be content," said the widow, and then she went on while Gracie listened with reverence, saying what we shall take the liberty of embodying in our own language.

There is no toil that cannot be made comparatively easy, with the aid of a ready will and a cheerful appreciation of the blessing that work ever brings. And there is no labor so hard, but hath some cheer in its accomplishment. We are

apt to judge of our work and estimate its difficulties, as well as its pleasures by comparison; and in this manner we exercise more of the baleful spirit of envy, than we are perhaps aware. As the traveler at the base of a high mountain, looks wondering upon the fair visions which distance and the atmosphere create upon its summit, so the humble laborer gazes upon the steep of occupation to that point which the world has fabulously called famous, and imagines that those who have gained it have nothing to do but recline on beds of roses, and while their time in indolent repose. The traveler journeys up with many a sigh and many a bruise, while his limbs ache with the effort and his brain grows dizzy; and he finds the castles and glorious creations, have melted away with the mists of the morning, and longs in the glaring sunlight for the shadow of the lower grounds. Just so the humble laborer, if by a mighty effort he bursts the shackles of his present bond, and step by step ascends the higher regions where fancy kindles her fires, and science lights her altars, finds the progress at every step more difficult—learns that fancy is a slave to her faggots, and science too often a victim on her own altar; and he too, looks back upon the quiet hours, and the child-like trust of his former condition, and wonders how he could leave them.

Thus if we would be happy, we must win contentment to our hearths and homes, and consecrate our labor by the heart we bring to it. All business, necessary, useful or elegant is tiresome, and at times overwearies the mind and body. It is one of the agents appointed by God to hurry mankind to its final goal, this universal toil, and it matters little whether it is dressed with flowers, as lambs for the sacrifice, or bearing its scourge as the victim to be hung carries his halter.

The young girl who plies her needle werrily, sitting at the small window that looks upon some public street, sighs as she

sees pass daily the well-dressed music-teacher, with her notebook or music-roll in her hands. It must be so preferable, she says to herself, to earn money by an elegant accomplishment. Ah, she knows not the sorrows hidden by the forced smile yet revealed by the pale cheek of the music-teacher. She sees her only in her tasteful attire—she beholds her glide through the aristocratic doors of the wealthy, knows that she stays but an hour, hears the thrum thrum, perhaps, of the deep-toned piano, nor dreams that every note is a torture to the sensitive ear, and that the constant repetition of dull phrases that *must* be gone over with, wears upon the delicate nerves till they feel as if laid bare to needle-points. Meanwhile the poor music-teacher must endure the yawning stupidity, the careless mistakes of some listless child, who has eaten too much dinner, and at the end of the term be encouraged by the remark that "Sophrony Maria don't seem to know nothing more than she did when she began, and a new teacher must be got." The needlewoman, making no mistakes with her neat hand, is promptly, though perhaps not so liberally remunerated; she can take her work home, nor be under the supervision of fault-finding eyes; dress less expensively, and be to a certain extent mistress of her own time.

The music-teacher, meanwhile, fatigued and nervous to the highest degree, returns to her home, and listlessly takes up the last new work. As she reads, the glowing description rivets her attention, fascinates her senses. She turns to the title page. "Ah! written by a woman; would that I could write," is her murmuring remark; "she need not wear her life out, by fruitless effort; the world applauds her, her publisher remits by hundreds of dollars, and she can rest at her ease till she has opportunity to write another book."

How little she knows of the sleepless nights, aching head, and wearied fingers, that have contributed to her pleasure so

liberally ! How little she thinks that perhaps in some poor house, with invalids forever in sight—their moans forever in hearing—with constant demands upon her means by helpless little ones, that was written. How little she knows how the soaring imagination must be brought down, and feasts, portrayed with glowing words, exchanged for a dinner of herbs. That the couch bearing the imperious beauty, with her garments of rustling satin, dwindles to an unvarnished and broken sofa, with here and there a brass tack, and that with its head broken off. That the generosity of the noble hero, who at any time can fish out a pocketful of cash, changes in stern reality to the call of the landlord for back rent, and the rueful face of the butcher as he presents his bill with appropriate gestures. That the heaven-sent individual who arrives with help just at the critical point of the heroine's misfortunes, has not a type in the prosy creditor, who claps an attachment on the aforesaid broken sofa, and puts a "flea in the ear" of creditor number two.

She thinks not with what constant devotion the pen must be wooed; how many rebuffs must be met and taken; how many mental difficulties strugglingly overcome; how many tears be shed in secret; how much envy be quietly borne, or she would never wish for fame. And then if she knew for what a trifling sum, perhaps a hundred dollars or two, the copyright was disposed of in a time of necessity, she would cease to imagine the treasury golden, or the home of the author abounding in luxury.

And yet, each co-worker in the great hive of humanity may make labor, trials and all, subservient to the higher purposes of life, and thus bring to the work a measure of comfort and happiness, receiving a fair share of the same in the final result. If the author have no aim to improve humanity and make the world better for his having lived in it, he can never know true happiness. If the music-teacher, or the sewing-

girl, or the humblest artisan consult self-interest entirely, laboring only for the things that perish in the using, theirs indeed will be a toilsome life; a mere delving, slavish existence.

"Ah! mother, but it's hard to be contented under persecution," murmured Gracie; "have you heard from Mr. Halburton yet?"

"Yes, and he exacts every farthing, and says if we cannot pay him but the sum we have laid by, that we must leave the piano or he shall put us to trouble."

"Oh! mother!" cried Gracie, clasping her hands, "trial on trial! How can he treat the widow and the orphan so? *Will not* God hear us—*will* he not look down upon us? I can't part with my piano that father worked so hard to pay for; I can't! What shall we do?"

Mrs. Amber sat at the window with one of her invalid girls upon her knee. She replied not, but as Gracie looked up she saw the tears raining down her cheeks.

"Oh! mother, don't! I'll give up anything if only you won't look so sorrowful; I will try to be content even with the loss of my dear, old piano!" she cried, springing to her mother's side. "We shan't be so very bad off, after all, for Professor Rose told me to go any time to his house and play and practice all I pleased. Let him have the piano; only," she added, with bitterness, "I hope we shall find another house soon, for dear as this my birth-place is, I cannot bear to sleep under its roof. It seems sometimes when I wake up in the night as if I heard my father say, 'go, go!'"

"I feel just so, daughter," rejoined her mother, "but it is getting late in the summer now, and a place such as we should like it will be difficult to find. I went this afternoon on the new land, and saw a pretty and cheap house. But the situation is unhealthy, I'm afraid, and I was told that in bad weather the cellar was flooded. Besides, it will be out of the way of your scholars."

Gracie sat thoughtfully for a long time after this, and then she repaired to her own chamber. A neat and tasteful room it was, adorned with many little pictures, the work of her genius. Over the bed hung snow white curtains, prettily fringed, and all the arrangements made the chamber look as that of a young girl always should, a model of simplicity, neatness, and humble elegance, and bearing the stamp of purity, seated by her own desk, a large, mahogany, old fashioned affair, that Allan Beauvine had made for her when she was a little girl, and as a token of gratitude for some kind service rendered by her father, towards his family, she lifted the lid and took therefrom Hart's last letter. This she perused and reperused, leaning her cheek which had grown pale upon her hand. There was nothing there that led her to think that Hart had become cold. He mentioned no beautiful girl—why should he confide more to Letta than to her? It was puzzling to conjecture. And had Hart so successfully hidden his weak points from her? That he should admire others she considered no crime; but to mention strangers, or speak of any woman in terms of familiarity, that she despised. She reflected that she had never seen Hart at his home; that possibly the coarser influences to which he had been exposed from infancy might have tainted his morality.

And she remembered he had expressed such a hearty, honest dislike to everything common, mean and groveling; his very looks, high, haughty and generous, were a denial of these ungenerous suspicions. Might not what Letta and her mother alluded to, have been some ebullition of fun, which, in a mere boy, would be excusable? With such thoughts she perplexed her mind till midnight, perplexed and yet relieved it, for with every generous excuse the burden grew less, until with a prayer, and a blessing in her heart for the young collegian, she sank to sleep.

SPOTTED PAUL.

The day following, Mrs. Amber was troubled with a distressing headache, and upon Gracie devolved all the domestic duties. These she had completed; the cool shaded kitchen with its cleanly floor, the darkened hall, the neat sitting room that opened on the opposite side, gave evidence of her thorough handiwork. "If poor father were alive," she mused, gazing about her with a satisfied air, "how pleased he would be with this!" and then lifting the little red curtain, she looked through into the desolate shop. How still and solemn it was! the counters empty—the shelves unoccupied—here and there a box turned on its side, and the old counting-room stool still standing behind the tall green desk, at which her father had so often sat. She turned her glances up to the old stained ceiling overhead, from which hung countless webs of dusty spiders' silk; she even counted the nails on the opposite wall, and saw, through dimming tears, the old almanac still on its customary peg, that, in removing the effects, had been overlooked. A long, thin and ghastly sunbeam shot straight as an arrow through the room from the one-eyed shutter, and the minute particles with which it was thronged, forever whirling in a mazy motion, seemed to Gracie, excited as her imagination had become, her father's dust. The iron grey stove, with its broken funnel, the long sign, lying at its length on the floor, like its once owner, a name and nothing more, were objects of intense interest to her.

"I wonder why it has been so long unoccupied!" mused the young girl, when suddenly a flood of light was let in by the opening of a door, and two stout men, followed by Paul Halburton, entered, talking in loud tones. Gracie suddenly dropped the curtain, though she still stood there for a moment, and heard one of the men ask in a coarse voice, "Well, when are the premises to be vacated? We want the whole house."

Determined to hear nothing more, Gracie stole up stairs and looked in upon her mother. She was reposing in a sweet sleep, with the two little girls both asleep, in graceful attitude, beside her. Benny was at school—so, confident that she should enjoy one hour at least of uninterrupted silence, she carried her inkstand, pens and papers in the sitting-room where the atmosphere was coolest, and sat down to write. So thoroughly absorbed had she become in her task, that she had not heard the cat-like tread slowly advancing behind her chair, nor knew she that Paul Halburton, excited with wine, stood near, until a rude kiss upon her cheek startled her from her reverie.

In a frightened glance at the small mirror before her, she saw the features of her persecutor, and with one rapid movement, on the indignant impulse of the moment, she seized the inkstand she had been using, and emptied it directly in the very face of the elegant Paul. The black fluid fell in great blots upon his snowy white ruffles, and as he lifted his white gloved hand, smeared it mercilessly.

Before he could recover from his astonishment, Gracie had sprang from her seat, passed him, and fled breathlessly up stairs, where she fell with a faint scream at the bedside. Her mother, roused from a dream, sprang up on the instant, gazing vaguely on her daughter, who cried—

"Oh, mother! go down in the sitting-room and see what I have done to Mr. Halburton! I couldn't help it; he was rude to me and I *couldn't* help it."

The poor girl was almost hysterical, for between the ludicrous recollection of his dripping face and variegated garments, and fear as to what might follow, she both laughed and cried at the same time. Mrs. Amber, however, came to comprehend the drift of her frightened exclamations, and wonderingly descended the stairs. There she paused, alarmed for a moment at sight of the spotted Paul, who with the most deep

and awful blasphemies, was striving to remove the stains, and distractedly walking the floor.

"Look, madam! see how your cursed daughter has *dared* to treat a *gentleman*!" he exclaimed in accents smothered with rage—"by heaven! I'll never forgive her this to the last day of my life! By heaven! I'll have my revenge!"

"You were rude to my child, sir," said the widow, her voice trembling with apprehension; for the tone, the manner, the very words of Paul Halburton were terrible; "you must have been rude or she never would have done such a thing."

"Be silent, madam! is your daughter gold dust?" thundered Paul, "is she more delectable flesh and blood than any other common baggage, that she should set herself up for a model of purity and prudery! By the Lord that made heaven and earth, I'll humble her for this," and his white lips quivered, while a pallor like that of death spread from the roots of his hair to his throat.

"Leave the house, sir, or I will call assistance," said the widow, firmly; "you have insulted both my child and myself."

"By heaven! woman! do *you* leave this house to-day, do you hear me? to-day! I did come here with peaceable proposals; I go from here a sworn—never mind!" and he closed his lips, while a demoniac expression gathered all over his face. Then folding his handkerchief across the stains on his bosom, and thrusting his gloves in a side pocket, he went towards the window and directed some one without to call a carriage, at the same time throwing a dollar on the pavement.

"Now, woman, this house must be thoroughly empty by to-morrow; do you hear?" he continued, still walking the floor in a furious manner, "humph!" he soliloquized, "I, a gentleman, to be treated in this manner by a paltry grocer's daughter, the impertinent baggage!"

"I hope that ruffled shirt will be preserved as a memorial of my child's virtue," exclaimed Mrs. Amber, for it was her turn to show the anger that under such provocation she found it impossible to keep down.

"Madam!" he exclaimed, roused afresh, and turning haughtily on his heel—"I shall tear it in ten thousand shreds, I shall burn every fibre that it contains; and as to your child's virtue—bah! a fig for it!" and he snapped his fingers contemptuously in the air.

All the spirit in that frail body was roused at this unmanly speech; walking with flashing eyes towards him, she exclaimed in low, deep, unnatural tones—

"Mr. Halburton, as you live and I live, the God of the widow and the fatherless will punish you for the words you have said this day. You may persecute and try to injure my poor fatherless girl, if it is any *honor* to your *manhood*, but you cannot harm her—I defy you while God is on the throne of justice. As to stopping here another night—I will sleep in the street, first."

With speechless gestures, Paul Halburton cast a look of defiance on his tenant, and as the carriage had just driven up, he left the house.

The widow immediately rejoined her daughter.

"It was a thoughtless deed!" she exclaimed, bitterly, "was there no other mode of resentment?" At that moment the fear of this terrible man overwhelmed her.

"Mother!" cried Gracie, with flashing eyes—"how dared he kiss me? Do you blame me, also, you who have said so often that even to kiss lightly is almost to commit a profanation?"

"Did he dare take *that* liberty?" asked Mrs. Amber, intensely excited, "then I have nothing to say; I thought it was only some trifling remark that you resented—there is no

time to lose," she continued, drawing a deep breath, "I will not stay here another day—we must pack up, Gracie."

"Where are we going?" cried Gracie, tearfully.

"I don't know," returned the mother, "I shall trust God and work,—some shelter will be provided."

"But, mother, how can we get ready by night?"

"Easily; I shall send for three strong jobbers, and you and I must assist."

Gracie gazed at her astonished. The slight, almost girlish figure towered as she stood there, a brilliancy overpowering in its lustre, shone in her deep blue eyes, and a bright crimson, like two well-defined rosebuds, stamped her cheeks. A terrible suspicion that they were neither the light nor the color of health struck painfully on the chords of her daughter's loving heart; but, nevertheless, she arose and went out with her mother.

By nine o'clock, that evening, the house was destitute of furniture. Mother Mott had been round, working with might and main. She insisted that the little family should go and stay with her until they found a house, accordingly Mrs. Amber had her provisions sent there; she had stipulated with Allan Beauvine that her furniture should be stored in a part of the old house, still unoccupied, in which he resided, and which, being said to be haunted, had been for years without a tenant.

"Mother," said Gracie, with a serious face, as they were leaving what had for so long been their home, "the Maxwell's never send for me now—and I meet them frequently, but their manner is so cold towards me!"

"Never mind, my child, you will be all the more exalted yet, for your unjust persecution. Only trust in God—only become a *true* Christian, Gracie, and you will find that all things—even those seemingly evil in their tendency—will work together for good to those that love Him."

CHAPTER XXXV.

PAUL AND HIS TOOL.

PAUL HALBURTON'S rage did not cool upon reflection; it grew more intense, though quieter. On his return, he retreated hastily to his room, and the offensive garment was speedily destroyed, but not till he had registered a terrible vow—a vow that, if fulfilled, would bring certain destruction upon his humble victim. And, apparently, he could have crushed a more powerful foe, with wealth, influence, and his master, the devil, to back him. Uneasily he sat in his rich chamber, ever and anon starting forward and clutching the arms of his chair, and grinding his teeth in all the impotence of anger.

"Show him up!" he cried, with a snap, as the servant announced a visitor.

"Ha! nephew!" he continued sneeringly, lightly pushing towards the new comer a chair with the point of his toe, as the fair faced, elaborately dressed young man came forward; "be seated, *nephew*," he said again, and at a repetition of the word laughed lightly. "So, how do things go at Cambridge?"

"As near right as the time allows, uncle," replied the other, repeating the last word with hesitation, and immediately adding, "I suppose I must call you uncle—making a virtue of necessity."

"Of course you must! and how do you get on with the precious youth I wrote you about? If you succeed, remember Kate Homer is your's. She's a splendid girl!"

"Yes! but, at the same time, I'd rather you wouldn't think so," said the youth, flashing up.

"Oh! ha, ha!" laughed Paul, "you believe I'm irresistible

with the ladies—but be easy, boy—that is, be quiet, my *dear* nephew, she bears me no great love."

"I know that," said the youth coolly.

"Ha!" and in a moment Paul's face grew dark; "her father is a reformed gambler—a reformed gambler—bah!" he sneered.

The young man's face worked uneasily; first contempt, then indignation, overspread his features. Paul bethought himself, and suddenly changing his manner, said—

"Well, well, nephew, joking aside; her father may be a beggar, you know, but she is an heiress in the right of her aunt, and I think there are no difficulties in the way of your success. As to her father—don't you understand that I want to use *him* for *your* sake? for, remember this," and he lifted his finger significantly, "the girl loves her father, and will do any thing to insure his happiness short of absolute dishonor. If, then, in gambling, the old man gets involved, you see, I have an additional bond on her, and there is so much the more chance for you. Are the fellow and yourself friends?"

"Fast!" rejoined the other, slapping his knee.

"Good!" reiterated Paul; "now you must know there is a young lady who is violently smitten with you. She is clever, handsome and poor."

Lovejoy, as Paul Halburton had designated him, opened his blue eyes wider, and, with a look of intense surprise, fastened them on Paul.

"This young lady, I repeat, is violently smitten with you. She resides at the North End, and her name is—Gracie Amber!"

The young collegian started: "Hart has already partly made a confidante of me," he said; "he loves her very much."

"I know it, but I say this young lady likes *you* very much; make what use you please of the information—you understand me!"

"I do!" replied the collegian.

"And we'll manage it so you can become acquainted with her through the Holdens."

"Certainly!" returned the other.

"What has been your programme for the last four weeks?" asked Paul, after a short pause.

"Oh! well," carelessly returned the collegian, "interchange of violent affection—I've managed to room with him—we talk together, walk together, and, in fine, are so devoted to each other that we are already dubbed—he Damon, and I Pythias. Humph!" he chuckled heartlessly, "I pity Damon."

At this Paul Halburton indulged in a hearty laugh, then, offering wine, they chatted and drank together.

It was Paul Halburton's boast that he had plenty of confederates, but not one *confidante*, which was true. He used men for his interest, but in his deepest schemes they labored apparently for their own advantage. In this sort of private diplomacy Paul had no little skill. He would make a man innocently do the deadliest evil, and he, the prime-mover, be never suspected—his aids, seldom. If the latter were, it all eventually redounded to the glory of cunning Paul. He was most powerful in his generalship, and a long series of successes had confirmed his faith in himself.

Lovejoy, the youth of whom it will be remembered Hart made mention in his letter to Gracie Amber, was drawn towards Paul by no ties of relationship. Paul, in some strange freak of fancy, had nominally adopted him, and had thus far educated him. Supercilious pride and personal vanity were the boy's strongest traits, and he was cunning and deceitful as a fox. His mother was a milliner, very pretty and very shallow—his father styled himself a gentleman, and walked the streets pompously, attired in seedy garments and flourishing a (imaginary) gold headed cane. However, the boy owed his good fortune to his face, which was exceedingly

handsome, though rather feminine. Good fortune it had been had he learned no other lessons but those acquired at schools. But, alas, he was an adept already in every kind of genteel vice, and he had capped the climax by falling in love with a beautiful and queenly girl, of whom already my readers have heard, the noble Kate Homer, whose father Paul Halburton was striving to entice to the gaming table.

His temper was deadly, but he could smile in the very midst of its fiercest paroxysms; his disposition was malignant, and woe to those who provoked his animosity. In beauty, in wisdom, of its kind, he was a very serpent; and like the serpent, there was poison under his tongue and murder in his purpose.

This, then, was the tool which Paul Halburton had determined to use in accomplishing the destruction of both Hart Holden and Gracie Amber, *if it was possible*. He had made accomplices of Jem Holden's family, only that he might strike more surely; conciliating Jem by offering his eldest boy a situation in one of his gaming-houses, and effectually debarring him from any sympathy with his foster son, by making him painfully aware that he knew the secret of his sudden rise in the world, thus holding that toadying spirit completely under his thumb, and controlling his every action by his indomitable will.

Of Lovejoy, the collegian, it is only necessary to repeat the private opinion of one of the Professors. "If that boy could be stripped, and a carter's frock thrown over him, and he be transferred into some common wayside hovel to live, and eat, and sleep with poverty, and earn the wages of toil, he might make something yet; as it is, however, he will only be an accomplished fop, not to give him a more heartless character."

I said before, that Lovejoy passionately loved Kate Homer, and solicited Paul Halburton's influence, thinking

as he did, that the rich man had power to aid him in any scheme.

And Paul had said, "If you will do precisely as I tell you, she *shall* be yours. In the first place, presume in her presence to abhor me."

Lovejoy started.

"In the next place, this youth, this Hart, as they call him, must be led into excesses; cautiously, though, very cautiously. And to him you must declare yourself my enemy."

"Strange advice," muttered the young man, a sneer faintly curling his faultless lip.

"Did I ever advise you without a motive?" queried Paul; "however, if you are not disposed to listen——"

"Go on!" cried the young man, with an eager voice; "I pledge myself to do as you say. But why do you seek the downfall of this young man?"

Paul turned, and with his lustrous eyes full fixed upon him, smiled a meaning smile. It said as plainly as it could, "I never tell my reasons."

But to return to this interview, Paul said, with his glass poised daintily near his lips, leaning his elbow on the table and just showing two brilliant diamond studs, elegantly disposed in his faultless wrist-band, "Miss Kate Homer and her father are still at Cambridge. Do many of the students visit them?"

"A great many," replied the collegian, uneasily.

"And Miss Kate treats them all with equal consideration, I suppose," he continued, sipping his wine.

"I did think I was the favored one, till," he paused a moment, then said abruptly, "she is at present very *complaisant* towards young Holden!" A shade of malignant envy crossed his face.

"Ah, ha!" cried Paul, with a prolonged cadence; "that's the way it lies—the young villian. Pity the wretch has such a handsome exterior."

"You do think him very handsome, then," said the collegian, nervously replacing his glass.

"You have only to divert his attention by playing your cards skillfully," parried Paul; "get him as jealous as lucifer of Gracie Amber, and he will forget all other women—oh! psha! make nothing of it, the thing is as easy to do as kiss your hand," he continued, rising. "It is mere by-play with me, which I would not indulge in only for your advantage. The little excitement of the adventure diverts my mind from more serious business. As for this Hart Holden, I tell you in confidence, that he is not what he seems; the water was muddy before you threw dirt in it; I could convict him to-day if I pleased for a thief—true as gospel. And as to Kate, I pledge you my word that a year from this day, if you hold the same mind, you shall marry *her*. Will that satisfy you?"

THE INTERVIEW.

"And now for this veiled woman or monster," muttered Paul Halburton, as his psuedo nephew left his presence. "I will again *demand* an interview. I will know *why* she dogs me, threatens, denounces me! she shall see me, or I will have her suspected as some dangerous government spy—I will find some means to lessen this secrecy.

He pushed his easy chair towards a small ebony stand, and sitting down, drew paper and ink towards him. He wrote one note with elaborate care—destroyed it;—another and another grew under his pen. At last, drawing a long breath, he muttered, "that one, I think, will do;" and folding it, he arose from his seat.

Five minutes after, a tall, dark figure descended the same steps, and looking an instant after Paul through the folds of her thick veil, she turned and walked slowly in another direction.

Yes, there had been a strange and silent witness to this interview—none other than the veiled lady herself. With the connivance of a well paid domestic, she had, not an hour before Paul's return, entered his residence for the first time, and proceeding to his chamber, seemed to take an inventory of all it contained. She opened every drawer in the elegant rosewood escritoire. In the last, displayed by a spring which she chanced to press, laid a magnificent gold watch, rimmed with jewels. Starting as she saw it, she clasped her hands, then carefully lifted it with its massive golden chain—saying in an undertone, "this will be proof enough that my evidence is true when I am called by the inscrutable will of God, to give my testimony against a villain," and hiding it in her bosom, she turned to leave the chamber, when she heard his voice on the stairs. Springing to the curtains that divided a recess from the main room, she hastily concealed herself. There she heard the interview between Paul and his pretended nephew, and there learned for the first time, Paul's cruel intentions towards Gracie Amber.

Verily that which is hidden in the secrets of the night shall be revealed upon the house-top.

GRACIE AND HER MOTHER.

Gracie and her mother were holding a conference together. Leading into the apartment was a small, dark closet, with no windows and a very heavy door that bore the appearance of ill usage. In this place it was said, mysterious sounds had been heard, mysterious sights seen. There were, indeed, dark spots upon the floor, a ring bolt in one corner, and a huge crooked spike overhead that looked as if it might have been wrenched awry by the weight of a heavy body. This was little Benny's terror, this disreputable room, and no per-

suation of his mother, who was but little tainted with the superstitions that even in that late time were rife, could induce him to go through it alone. As I said before, the whole house had been rented by Allan, who was poor and could not afford to pay much, for a very trifling sum per annum. It had been, heaven knows what in the Colony times, a governor's or a lord's. The ceilings were covered with, here and there, a patch of moulding, elaborately finished; the ceilings were high, the rooms quite too spacious for the cold air of winter, although pleasant in summer, and paper of various colors and several thicknesses hung here and there loosely. But with Gracie's tearing off and pasting on, and scraping various parts, and cleaning all, it had quite a respectable appearance the very day after they entered it. The furniture was nicely arranged, two carpets laid and pieced together, though of various colors, helped to adorn the room, and when the table was spread for the evening meal, scanty though the latter was, an air of comfort pervaded the surroundings. Gracie and her mother sat together, piecing some parts of the children's clothing, for things *will* grow old, and they had not wherewith to buy new. Mrs. Amber was cheerful, but a cough had gained on her, and though she strove to suppress it, Gracie could tell that it was a very painful, and she feared, dangerous cough. Again did they put to each other the question, "what shall we do now?" the question so often and so helplessly asked over dead fires and dead hopes; so often responded to with sadly aching hearts, and dying breath.

"To-day," said Gracie, with a half smile, "I give my first music lesson. I wonder how it will seem, especially to such a pupil? I wish—" the lips were closed abruptly. Gracie was going to say, "I wish I had my piano," and her mother divined her thought, for looking up sadly, she said—

"It was very hard of Mr. Halburton to reduce us in this

way; I hope God will forgive him. But you can still go anytime to Professor Rose," she added, a moment after.

"Oh, yes!" responded Gracie, "I had almost forgotten Professor Rose; do you know, mother, I never went there but I found Mrs. Rose in tears, and so miserable! and there is a strange, solitary feeling in his house. But then he has such a grand piano!" she said again, speaking with enthusiasm, "its tones ring out with such liquid melody that I don't mind the annoyance of—of—"

"Of what?" queried her mother.

"Why, of persons looking after me as I go from there," replied Gracie, reluctantly; "it seems as if every shutter and every pane of glass was peopled: I'm sure I don't see what there is very interesting about *me*," she added, laughing, "but so it is."

"There certainly can be no *harm* in your going there?" half questioned her mother, thoughtfully.

"Why, no—why should there be? I'm sure Professor Rose has always treated me as a daughter, and I've been there off and on ever since I was a little girl. Unless Miss Maligna has been meddling, I don't know what it can be for," and the young girl sighed deeply.

"Never mind," said her mother, more cheerfully, "she can only injure you for a while; our Father will not permit her or Mr. Halburton, or any others, to triumph over the widow and the fatherless child. To change the subject, I wonder if I could get some plain sewing? In the morning, when I feel fresh, I could do considerable and help along. I can teach little Emily to wash the dishes and make herself useful, and we can both set down to—to—slop work."

At this little Emily, a beautiful but fragile creature, sprang up, her blue eyes sparkling with delight.

"And I too!" cried Delia, a child of five years, laying aside her wooden doll and joining her sister, "mayn't I

sweep up the floor, and fix all the chairs and make 'em clean with the big dust rag?"

"And I'll learn to rub the looking glass, mother," eagerly cried Emily, her eyes roving about the room, "and set the closet up, and—and—wash the hearth, and clean all up nice," she added with a smack of her ruby lips.

"Yes, darlings," murmured Mrs. Amber, "you can both help mother very much."

"I was thinking of my little Sabbath school scholar," said Gracie, slowly: "Angeline—Angy they call her, a beautiful, earnest little creature; her mother keeps a large establishment where sailors' clothes are made; I wonder if I could get work there?"

"I dare say," sighingly answered Mrs. Amber; "if we must, we must; at any rate this false pride must be put down, that is certain. We have two good friends, nay three, and I hope more—Doctor Waldron is one, Mr. Taylor is another, and Doctor Andover is the third. Still they can none of them aid us that I know of, in the way of employment, and till my health is gone and my energies entirely worn out I shall not ask their charity."

"No, indeed, mother!" said Gracie, earnestly.

"Have you had a letter from Hart, lately?" asked her mother after a pause.

Gracie blushed, held down her head and answered, "no, that she was greatly disappointed," disappointed in everything, she would have added, but the swelling tears prevented. She arose, hastily, and retired into their one other room, where for a blessed moment she allowed her grief free course, held her hand over her eyes and heart, after which she most energetically bustled about, threw cold water on her cheeks and temples, and subdued all outward manifestation of feeling

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GRACIE GIVES HER FIRST MUSIC LESSON.

GRACIE'S bustling about had come to something. When she again entered her mother's presence she was arrayed for a walk. It was October now, and the weather had become chilly. Gracie's three year old shawl had done her good service, but as she told it, speaking to the poor dumb thing, as she put it on, it had got to serve her another winter yet.

Mrs. Amber looked up inquiringly.

"I'm going to give my first music lesson," said Gracie, with a brave smile; "I suppose I must put on a very sober and professor-like phiz; if I only had a pair of green spectacles now. Oh! mother Mott!" she exclaimed, bounding forward, as the kind old lady entered, lighting up the room with her shining face; "I'm so glad you've come to keep mother company, she is so lonely when I'm away—welcome." And Gracie assisted her off with her neat bonnet and over garment, then drawing a chair ensconced her beside her mother. Leaving them together, she proceeded through the great gloomy hall into the street.

This she accomplished by almost walking over two of the little molasses-smeared Beauvine children, sprawling on the floor in the midst of their grotesque toys, and passing the girl next to Malinda in age, who was seated on the door step with a bit of broken looking-glass in her hand, arranging spit curls around her full-moon face. These surroundings were not what Gracie Amber was accustomed to, humble as she had always lived; and she passed the dirtier thoroughfare with a blush on her cheeks, and hastened along to her duty. Her cheeks changed to a more painful red as she paused before

the door where her pupil-to-be resided. A great scampering and fluttering was the result of her timid knock, and for sometime nobody answered it.

The house was one of the oldest Boston tumble-downs, situated on a corner, with a sloping roof, dilapidated windows, and a sort of leaning-overishness from every point. The windows and shutters were closed, the door steps were dirty, and the yard, a kind of octagonal affair, was overgrown with rank weeds, and wore an air as neglected as a forgotten grave-yard. Presently there was a sound of steps; the door was opened, and a snuff-colored, disagreeable face, surrounded by a long flapping cap border, presented itself with the words—

"What ish you wants?"

The queerly dressed child that clung with both hands to the garments of its Welch grandmother, at sight of Gracie began to scream horribly; and the old woman caught it with frantic haste to her bosom, slapped it heartily, and then listened in the confusion for Gracie's answer, that naturally took the form of a question.

"Is there a scholar here who intends to learn music?"

"A sholer—yeh! to learn museek," replied the old woman with wry contortions—"oh! yesh, I guesh it is ees; hur'll walk in."

At this moment appeared the face of the young aspirant to musical favor, her hair tied up with very long tumbled ribbons, her face and hands so scrupulously clean that they shone like wax, and a clean apron tied over an untidy looking long gown, that might have been the best she had, nevertheless.

"Her cousin died, that's the way she got the piany," said her mother, who was dusting furiously as Gracie entered, and who seemed anxious to apologize for the possession of a luxury that contrasted strangely with the meagre chairs and uncarpeted floor. "Moll wanted to learn, and she's got quite an *air* for it; and so her daddy, ses he, 'we'll let the girl larn

if it don't cost too much, seein's she's got such an *air* for it. Can't you play us some right smart jig?"

Smiling faintly, Gracie sat down to the old piano, that looked as if every key had been mortgaged to hard times, and essayed to play a lively air. The moment her fingers touched the keys, she shrank back; the wires jingled, and every note was a discord. The piano was lamentably out of tune, and so was Gracie. However, rallying, she mentally shut her ears, and with a great effort rattled off a hornpipe.

"My, but that's good!" muttered the hard working woman. "I guess I'd be glad if any gal o' mine could touch off the tunes that smart. Come, Molly," she added sharply, turning to the girl who was grinning with delight, "now do you mind your p's and q's, or your father will see to it; remember what he said—that he wasn't agoing to pay away money for nothin'. Now, miss teacher, do you see that she minds you and keeps straight. If she don't, call me, and I'll give her an a-l-l c-o-n-f-o-u-n-d-e-d whipping, such as she's had many a time."

Gracie turned, pained and astonished, from this virago to the girl, and then, more astonished that the latter did not seem to mind the threat for her implied disobedience, she proceeded to manage for the first lesson. There was no stool, of course, but with the aid of a tattered old German Bible and a couple of thin blocks, a seat sufficiently high was procured, on which Molly, all grins, placed herself. The old grandmother then went out, but in a moment returned with a twin on each arm, and the scarcely more than baby dragging at her frock. Four boys and girls of different ages followed her, ranging themselves at convenient distances from Gracie, who, though much annoyed, could scarcely keep from laughing at the direction the affair had taken, and the queer figure they cut, grandmother, twins, children and all.

She would have spoken and desired a lessened attendance,

but every time she essayed to do so there was danger of an explosion; and she bit her lips and addressed herself to her task, avoiding the steady and ludicrous gaze of a cross-eyed urchin complacently seated almost at her feet. Molly, her pupil, grew restive, continually calling a, b and c izzard, and so striking the jingling keys that the nerves of the poor teacher were made as sensitive as though exposed to the points of cambric needles.

"That is F," repeated Gracie for the fifth time, with almost despairing energy.

"Hur ish a shtupid girl!" chimed the old grandmother reproachfully.

Gracie—hopefully—"Oh! no; it is new to her, and very tedious at first—it was to me."

Grandmother. "I say hur ish a shtupid gal, for she makes pother with de patch work."

Pupil, indignantly. "I say I ain't stupid, old gran; you hold your tongue, now."

Gracie. "I wouldn't say anything—you will get along nicely if you only try hard."

Cross-eyed urchin at her feet. "You, I'll go tell mother if she bothers you, and she'll git a fine licking."

Pupil, her eyes blazing anger. "Mind, you'll git a horse-whipping when dad comes home."

Gracie grew impatient. Molly slammed the keys and pouted defiance. "If I am to teach," said the former, firmly, turning round as she spoke, "I must be alone with my pupil. Perhaps if you leave the room and go to some other place, she can pay me better attention, at any rate we *must* be alone together."

"Yeesh," articulated the old Welsh woman, looking at her stolidly but not moving a jot.

"Perhaps you don't understand me," said Gracie, again tears of vexation filling her eyes.

"Yeesh, I understand," said the other with perfect composure, "but there isn't no odder room to go to. De old man hash the chamber up stairs, and de old night nurse hash de odder. Mene daughter she washing in ter kitchen, and don't want to pe troubled wit hur shildren."

"Then I can do nothing in the world," said Gracie impatiently; "I might as well go home," and she commenced tying her bonnet strings.

"What's the matter?" cried a new voice, as a frowsy head was thrust in at the door. "What's the piany stopped fer?"

Gracie stated her trouble, while all the children shrank cowering against the walls, springing out with cat-like agility as the woman came forward. Putting her hand on the old grandmother's shoulder, the latter said harshly—

"Here, take them babies and go over to Miss Fletcher, you hear, don't you? and never you come in here again when Molly's takin' her music lesson; if I'd a knowed this before, I'd a made quick work of it; come, mind," she continued, as the old woman very reluctantly arose, "you're getting your home here, and you must do as I say; march quick." The old woman obeyed. "Now you're all right," she said again, turning to Gracie, who did not think it best to betray her astonishment at this summary proceeding, "you go on with your music lesson. Is she goin' to make any thing at it?" she asked, suddenly popping in her head again.

"Oh! yes, I hope so," Gracie answered in a cheerful manner; "after the first two or three lessons she will feel more interest in it; but the piano should be tuned."

"Should be *what*?" ejaculated the woman, thrusting her whole body into the room again.

"Why, you see it is in poor order; it makes a discord," murmured Gracie faintly; some one ought to tighten the strings, and it would sound much better."

"Makes a dish-cord," repeated the other slowly, "what in

the world of mercy and creation is that?" Is it anything you can see?" she queried, peeping under the old black cover.

"No!" said Gracie, laughing at the ludicrous question, "but it's something you can hear. Now listen to that!" and she struck a chord, which was any thing but a chord on the stained ivory notes.

"Laws of creation! it sounds right enough to me!" returned the woman, who was not, like her daughter, blessed with an "air" for music; "but what if it don't? what's got to be done with it?"

Again Gracie essayed to explain, and this time more successfully. The mother of her interesting pupil left the room, after declaring that if the thing was goin' to be such an expense, she was sorry it was there. Nevertheless, just before the young music teacher concluded, she came in with some loose change. Gracie was shocked as she offered it, not because she did not feel the kindness that prompted the offer. She did; though at the same moment she glanced over her attire, to see whether its shabbiness had not exposed her poverty.

"He thinks," said the woman, without noticing the mute movement, and referring to her husband, "that p'r'aps the whole bill would come hard to pay at the end of the quarter, 'cause we ain't sartain what might happen, and we're honest if we be poor. He counted up what the lessons would come to, at ten dollars the whole, and said it was somewhere nigh forty-two cents; so here's fifty; and if we can, we'll pay you every lesson; that'll make sure that *you* won't lose, you know."

"Oh! thank you," said Gracie, with a grateful feeling in her heart, not so much called forth by money as the earnest manner in which the humble woman assured her that she should not lose by her. And that spark of noble nature that led the poor parents to sacrifice so much for the sake of im-

parting knowledge to their children, though in coarse and toil-scarred bosoms, made them seem kin to the great spirits of earth.

Returning home, the young teacher dwelt with painful interest on this, her first trial in the vocation of teaching. A girl with a light step and a face so pretty, that Gracie gazed till she passed by, turned the current of her thought; and she was just involuntarily wishing that she had a sister as old, to aid her in the care, and share in the pleasures of home, when a musical voice said, softly, "you dropped your handkerchief, Miss, here it is."

"Thank you, thank you!" said Gracie, recollecting that the fifty cents, in thin, battered nine-pences, was tied in the corner, and taking the handkerchief, she again thanked the girl, gazing into the very face that had just gone by, and that she had thought so pretty.

As she reached the old black house, in which now was located what she called home, the strange accompaniments of her music-lesson came vividly before her. "Oh, dear!" she murmured, "is it to be always so? And must I force knowledge into such thick skulls? must I stand hour after hour, and listen to mutilations and strange chords that are put down in no music-book? And among such people, too! It does seem as if I shouldn't mind it, if only there was something pleasant to look at; some pictures, or handsome furniture, or a rosy cheeked child—but——"

She had neared the old stair-case, and a sound smote her ear that checked her repining. It was her mother's cough. She paused a moment with clasped hands, and her cheek grew pale. Making a mental resolve, that she would allow no sad tale to pain that ear, she slowly mounted the stairs, passed through the little dark closet with a shudder, and found mother Mott busily sewing, while her mother, with flushed cheeks, was laying the dishes for supper.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

GRACIE FINDS AN OLD FRIEND.

THE young girl had no sooner entered the chamber, than she bounded forward with a scream of delight. For there, between the bed and the window stood her dear old piano; the self-same one, her father's gift and her familiar friend.

"What does it mean?" she cried, turning breathlessly first to her mother, and then to mother Mott, "what *does* it mean?"

"It means that we are not quite forgotten," said the widow Amber. "After you left us, mother Mott and I were sewing away for dear life, when one of Allan's girls came flying up here with news, that a piano had come. Of course I thought it was all a mistake, and sent her down to say so. But in less than a moment, up she flies again, to say 'oh, no,' for old sexton Ingerson was at the door, and he had brought it himself, and the men were going to bring it up.—I was completely taken by surprise, and before I could stir hand or foot to go, it was half-way up stairs. And now who do you think sent it? It seems it was put in an auction-room to sell for any sum it would command."

Gracie named Professor Rose, Doctor Andover, and Doctor Gilbert Waldron, in turn; but her mother shook her head to each; then she said, "It appears that Mr. Ingerson was sent, with his little one-horse cart, to carry something from the auction room, and that he was met at the door by the *veiled lady*, who asked him if the instrument then standing in a conspicuous situation, was not the one that had belonged to Miss Gracie Amber. He told her it was, upon

which she put a small purse in his hand, and bade him bid for it, as high as two hundred dollars if need be, that being the contents of the purse. She said if it was less, he might bring the balance of the money to her, after paying himself for transporting it here. He only gave one hundred and twenty, so I suppose by this time, the veiled lady has received the rest of the money."

"Wasn't she kind, mother, *wasn't* she kind?" reiterated Gracie, delightedly running over the keys—"there, I feel contented now," she added, as she arose with a beaming face, "I feel as if I could subsist on music forever after; as if it would be meat, drink and clothing to me."

Mrs. Amber smiled a little as she said, "I'm afraid it will have to be drink, to-night, for there's neither tea, milk nor sugar in the house. I was so afraid the cold might come on suddenly, that I spent almost the last cent I had for a cord of wood; for you know we can live on very little, mother Mott, but we must have fire especially as my blood is growing thin and old."

During this remark, Gracie had been busily untying the knotted corner of her handkerchief, in which act she was obliged to proceed with great caution, for the fabric, though snowy white, was thin and rotten, and Gracie had grown miserly careful of her small possessions. Turning suddenly, she threw upon one of the tea-plates her newly acquired store. They made not a little jingling, nor an unmusical one to the ears of the widow.

"My first earnings," said Gracie, with mock pomposity. "half a dollar. Haven't I made a good day's work?"

"Now we can have some tea!" exclaimed her mother, who since the failure of her health, had acquired an invalid's fondness for that beverage. "Will they always pay you so?—well, it is very strange, though quite convenient. Now how shall we get the things? Benny and the girls have all

gone out to spend the afternoon with a nice little family of children over the way."

"I can go," said Gracie, with some hesitation. In truth, she liked not the bold glances of the several petty store-keepers, who retailed their goods at the different corners contiguous, nor the coarseness of the crowds usually assembled at that time, to sip from sixpenny glasses, their ale, brandy, or gin.

"Here, I'm an old woman," mother Mott remarked, bustling from her seat, "get me my bonnet, Gracie, nobody'll notice me, and it isn't just the thing for a young girl like you to be out much round such shops as these."

Mother Mott went and returned again in a few moments, to find Gracie absorbed in her music. The face of the young girl was radiant, almost heavenly in its joy. To her belonged that pure expression, that ethereal transparency of complexion through which we can detect the light or the shadow of any emotion. Rapidly turning over the leaves of her hitherto neglected music-books, she sipped, now here, now there, at the sweets of harmony, alternating with many an expression of subdued delight; showering praises upon the veiled lady, and anon wondering why Hart and herself should be objects of such unceasing interest to the mysterious being, unless, as she had often mentally reflected, unless, after all, the latter should prove to be Hart's own mother. But this supposition she only threw into a wilder gush of melody, and then looked round to laugh, that mother Mott had suspended her work and was gazing with a face peaceful and elevated, seemingly forgetting everything in the extatic feeling called forth by the soul-music of her favorite.

"It seems to me you get things very cheap," said Mrs. Amber, taking the change from the white table cloth, previous to pouring out the tea—"two pounds of sugar there must be—a pint of milk, a quarter of tea—those beautiful rolls, and that bit of nice cake—and a quarter left!"

Mother Mott merely said, "that she would give up to nobody in the matter of shopping, that if things were to be had cheap, she could generally manage to get the cheapest," moving her chair to the table as she spoke, and drawing attention to the rolls; she did not add (because it was her rule never to let the left hand know what the right bestowed,) that she had only laid out a quarter of the widow's money, making up the rest, which amounted to almost that sum, from her own pocket.

During the supper, Mrs. Amber suddenly remembered that she had had a visitor during Gracie's absence.

"A sweet, pretty thing, too," remarked mother Mott, "she made me think of you—not that I say," she added, looking a little roguish at Gracie's blush—"not that I say you are very pretty and all that, you know."

"I know," answered Gracie, demurely, "but what about this visitor—who is she?"

"Well, it was a young girl—I should have thought you might have met her at the door, almost; she went away as you came in, that is just before—"

Gracie remembered—it must have been the very one who picked up her handkerchief, and she described her appearance.

"Yes, it was her," Mrs. Amber assented—"she was an acquaintance of Sally Malinda's, a good girl as Mrs. Beauvine had testified—but living in a very unhappy way with a married sister."

"Do tell me what she came for," queried Gracie, with some little anxiety.

"To try and get board with Allan's folks. It seems she has learned a trade, a very good trade of vest making, and just as she is beginning to earn some money, her sister interferes, and says if she will not work for her and give her all she makes besides, she shall not stay with her. She thinks

—this young girl—she can by and by make from three to four dollars a week; meanwhile, if we can accommodate her, she will let us have all she earns, till she can pay us regularly a fair boarding price."

"Oh, mother! take her!" said Gracie, "it will be such a help to us; it will at least furnish the table."

"I was thinking of that," said Mrs. Amber, thoughtfully, sipping her tea, "and then came the reflection that I run a great risk in taking a stranger into my family of little ones—one, too, who has had no culture from childhood, for she is an orphan, poor thing! whose education, mental, moral and physical, has been utterly neglected and—"

"But you can do her good, mother," Gracie interrupted, too eager to wait—"oh! do let us take her, she has such a sweet face. I don't think, if we are watchful, she can possibly do the children any harm, and it's the very one I have heard of as having a wonderful natural talent for music, and a voice as sweet as any bird's. Her name is Ella Van Ness, isn't that the one?"

Her mother replied that it was.

"Then do let her come, mother; you've no idea how it would cheer you to have two great girls in the house."

"I've noticed lately," said mother Mott, gazing hard at Gracie, "that somebody's cheeks are getting pale; or is it the effect of the afternoon's work that makes them whiter than usual?"

She certainly could not complain as she finished speaking, for the girl blushed deeply, endeavoring to hide the confusion into which the question had thrown her. For truth to say, the absence of letters from Hart weighed heavily on her spirits. She had invented all manner of excuses to herself in palliation of his silence; she had forgiven him the petty peccadillos intimated by Letta Holden, and wondered why their repetition had in the least disturbed her tranquillity. But as

weeks passed and no letters came, not even a word from him through his foster sister, a sickness of soul succeeded, that at times made her weary of life; a bitter feeling of uncertainty, of distrust, of outraged love, that still grew stronger as doubts were heaped upon it. For she tenderly and thoroughly loved the young collegian; she had loved him from the time she had played the "Disowned Daughter," in the old meeting-house, and until now she had known with certainty that her trusting passion was returned with all the fervor, delicacy and purity that characterized her own. But, as Letta had said, he was now in the midst of a circle, widely differing in the conventional usages of polite society, the varied tastes and talents of its members, and the throngs of beautiful and brilliant women galaxied around it, from the circumscribed society in which he had hitherto moved. He was amidst young men, many of whom sneered at outbreking crimes, calling them only "trifling irregularities," and with whom, he who could drink the most wine, stake the largest sum, and desecrate most lightly the altar of virtue, was the best fellow. What wonder that she grew grieved and moody as she thought of all this?

However, she smiled as she met mother Mott's steady glance, only saying, "that it had been a trying afternoon to her," and then as she recalled the odd musical group, she could not forbear a hearty laugh, and a description rendered particularly fanciful for the purpose of attracting her mother's attention.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A NEW CHAPTER OF LIFE.

A FINE new shop had replaced the old clothing store in front of Harkness' sailor-boarding-house. A new sign, painted in blue and red, with a very white eagle underneath, superseded the old billow-tossed vessel, that for years had told the mariner how sailors—not ships—were "taken in." Poor Jack, with his hearty voice and careless swagger, his jovial, never-changing nature, had, how often! unsuspectingly set foot on the well sanded dining-room of the stately boarding-house hostess, his pockets dropsical with yellow cash, and bidden defiance to storms, now that he was safe in harbor. But poor Jack, emphatically poor, after a month's sojourn among the "landsharks," had quite as often departed from the hospitable *looking* front door, with slinking step and dog-eared manner, without a cent in his purse or a good wish for his future. In vain he repeatedly declared in the strong, vernacular of salt water, that never again would he set foot on that sill to be robbed, and cheated and turned off without one penny of his advance; no sooner was his six, or nine, or ten months' cruise, as it might be, fairly ended, than he caught the bewitching smile of the madam; and a taste of sweet liquor at the old bar, made him forget all the past, so that before he knew it, green chest and greener mariner were safely lodged in a bit of a chamber, seven by nine, and he was ready to go through the old round of being robbed, soul and body, over again.

But, as I said, a fine new shop had replaced the other, at the windows of which shirts of glaring calico, and trowsers of marine blue, were kept in countenance by the most shining

of black tarpaulins, and unglossy specimens of thick soled shoes—with knives in sheath and out, with belts, and buckles, and pipes, and bogus jewelry, all permeated with a not remarkably agreeable smell of dry tar and fresh paint. Although the long sickness of Harkness had somewhat told on their money drawer, still Mildred, the tall, stately woman, who stood behind the new counter, smiling on her customers, and keeping one of her stern, but beautiful eyes upon her servants, through a back window that communicated with the house, used her talents, persuasive, economical, and diplomatic so shrewdly, that she was getting rich; and, as at present, she had in her employ a sharp, little tailor, a man of small brains but a large amount of impudence, she managed to keep on hand an assortment of fancy clothes, as well as pea jackets and tailless coats.

Towards this store Gracie was going one day with Ella, who had been received in the widow's family as a boarder. It was at the hour of twilight, when mechanics were hurrying homeward, with paint pots in their hands, and coats slung over the shoulder, or weighed down with picks, boards and various implements of manual labor. Mrs. Amber had, since morning, been suffering with a severe headache, driving her almost mad with pain; thus Gracie had been unable to be out earlier. But she had promised to call that day on Mr. Harkness, and receive a roll of shirts, while Ella Van Ness expected from the same source a bundle of vests. As they passed along, Gracie shrank from the rude gatherings in doorways, although more than one son of the sea sent the two girls admiring glances—but they were deeply respectful, giving, by neither word nor sign, intimation that young and beautiful girls were alone and unprotected in a lawless thoroughfare; and that, therefore, there was a good chance to frighten or insult them a little. Can as much be said of far less dangerous streets of the present day, where not "Jack

Tars," but gentlemen, as they call themselves, most do congregate?

They arrived at the shop to find it shut. An air, oppressively still, reigned around the premises. A sound of loud sobbing came from the windows, and "departed" seemed written on the very walls of the house.

"Do miss!" said a spruce looking fellow dressed in the extreme of fashion, and the pinched features of Dick Holden, which, in their new disguise, Gracie could scarcely recognize, were slowly revealed with some assistance from memory. Dick sported a cane, and his collar was inconveniently high. He swelled in bulk and stature, and his whole appearance was that of a young oyster trying to burst its shell. He affected to be fastidiously familiar with Gracie, and excessively polite to Ella Van Ness, who had reigned first in his affections since the night of Sally Malinda's party, and flourished his thin legs, and an impertinent cane with rowdy gusto.

"So, poor Harkness is dead!" he exclaimed, walking with them as they turned away, and strutting painfully; "Bob had notice to toll the bells to-morrow; I don't do that now—I've given up all that kind of *common* employment. Mr. Halburton, ahem! employs me now. I'm in one of his saloons," he continued, though not encouraged by the girls to talk; "we have all the fellows from Cambridge; you oughter see our Hart handle the cards. Cri-key! ain't he a hand at it?"

Gracie felt a sudden disgust toward her informer, but in a moment it was drowned in the anguish of so terrible a confirmation of her worst fears. To change the subject as soon as possible, she asked a question or two relative to Mr. Harkness, his death, and when the funeral was to be. They had not progressed far before they met Gracie's mortal enemy, Miss Maligna, carrying a small bundle of books, which she dropped, as she went, into the hands of the seamen. Gracie's face burned with indignation as she observed the taunting

creature gather up her dress, that it might not touch her own when she went by. Her breath came short with anger, and her eyes flashed with suppressed feeling. It must be confessed she did feel a sentiment of shame to be met in the company of Dick Holden at that time of day, as if in promenade, and she said to herself, "now there will be some new scandal." But soon, conscious of her own integrity and high, pure motives, she drew her figure up, and smiled pityingly on the thought.

Dick's attention was called off, and he parted from the girls with a bow that might be dubbed a novelty, since nothing like it in the annals of the dancing master had even been seen before.

At home Gracie found her mother violently ill. The two little girls were crying over her, and Mrs. Beauvine, the coffin-maker's wife, stood helplessly by with her big baby, holding a little bottle of smelling salts, which once or twice, unluckily, in her extreme solicitude to do something, and her extreme ignorance of knowing how, she applied to the infantile nostrils of her child, causing a violent combination of sneezing and screaming in that usually placid piece of human mechanism.

Gracie hurried fearfully to her mother's side. The latter was exhausted now, and laid corpse-like upon the bed. Whispering a few words to Ella, Gracie left the room, and hurried to her usual resort when trouble threatened—the house of the good-hearted Doctor Andover. He was not at home, having been sent for to go over to Professor Rose, the servant girl said, where he must still be. The young girl preferred hurrying directly there, to waiting in the old-fashioned, cool reception-room, and accordingly hastened thither. She had hardly entered the residence of her music teacher, before she was startled by loud shrieks that struck terror to her heart, they were so shrill and full of agony. A middle aged woman

occupied a room on the lower floor. She appeared busy in making some decoction, and when Gracie asked for the doctor, she said that he had requested that no one must come to the room while he was there, adding, the Professor was with him, and then murmured partly to herself, "Professor—I'd Professor him."

Gracie, while anxious about her mother's condition, could not be seated, but walked to and fro.

"I 'spose you know what's the trouble; I suppose you know of course that she isn't the Professor's wife, more's the pity."

Gracie's steps were arrested; she stood rooted to the floor in her astonishment, repeating the words—

"Not his wife?"

"Laws, no," returned the other; "so you didn't know—well—that accounts—people *did* think strange that you should come here so much in such a case—well, well, but *didn't* you know it?"

"Of course I did not!" exclaimed Gracie, in a voice tremulous with emotion: "I never dreamed of such a thing."

"Why, ten years ago," rejoined the gossip, "this woman was a nice young girl; they *say* moving among the nobility of England. She was engaged to be married, too, to a very nice young man, an officer of some kind. Well, this Professor Rose met her at a ball; she was very handsome—she is yet, you know; and he laid a wager that he would dance with her a certain number of times, and git the young man jealous, which he did, captiwating the girl like. In a day or two, him and the young officer fit a duel, and the young officer was killed out and out. *Then*, what does the girl do, but run off with this Professor Rose, who, they say, gambles all his salary away, and leaves her to suffer. Wasn't they married? no, indeed! I had the whole story from her own mouth, when she was taking tea with me the other day.

You see, me being a poor woman and married, isn't likely to be hurt if I do speak with her, and console the poor thing; but I thought it a pity you should come here so often, and I *have* heard unpleasant remarks about it."

Gracie, overcome with conflicting feelings, sank into the nearest seat, and burst into tears.

"La!" said her garrulous informer, "I oughtn't to tell you to make you feel bad, but you're a young girl and a likely, and people ought to know that people with such a face as yours, is as innocent as the day is long. Now, don't you mind it," she continued, as Gracie struggled with her tears, "don't you mind it; right is right, and God is Right's master; don't you mind it."

"Dr. Andover should have told me," murmured Gracie, rising from her seat—"he is my friend—he knew that I was at one time dependent on the kindness of Professor Rose, for the means of practising music."

"La! Doctor Andover—well, now he's the kindest hearted man in the world, but so sort o' car'less. I don't believe he ever knew it for certain, though I should thought he'd heard people's say so's. But he isn't *her* doctor; he's been only called to-day because her hystries is worse than usual—there's the door opening, he's a coming."

"Why, Miss Gracie!" exclaimed the doctor, smiling his surprise over his spectacles—"you here?"

"Yes, doctor; mother is quite sick."

"And you want me—hey?"

"If you can go directly, doctor, I would take it as a great favor," said Gracie, nervously pulling her veil to and fro across her eyes.

"Yes, yes, certainly," puffed the fat, little man, and Gracie and the doctor passed out.

"They needn't tell me that there's anything wrong about *her*," muttered the woman, spicing a bowl of gruel that the

instincts of her benevolent nature had led her to prepare for the sick and sadly erring; "that tailor-woman may say what she pleases, the mother of *that* girl ought to be proud of her."

"So, Miss Gracie, you've got your piano back?" the fatherly physician queried in his kind manner, drawing her hand in his arm.

"Yes," Gracie replied faintly—the news she had so recently heard, had taken from her all heart to extol the kindness of her veiled benefactress.

"Well, that's *good*! Ingerson told me about it down to Harkness' house to-day. I'm glad of it, for of course you won't come here any more; I had rather you wouldn't come here any more, my child."

"I had rather not, myself," returned his charge, "but had we not better hurry, sir? my mother is so much exhausted."

"We will soon restore her," replied the doctor, cheerfully, hastening his walk. "I should have been to see her before, but it's unusually sickly, and I'm up all night as well as day. I won't forget your case, though, my child; I'll find you some scholars soon, now that the warm days are over. I really meant to speak to one of my patients, quite a rich woman, last week, but forgot it till to-day, when I find she has just engaged a good female teacher."

Gracie sighed. She had heard that the doctor, with all his disinterestedness, his kindness of heart, and his gentle disposition, was yet addicted to the habit (is it not vice?) of procrastination.

"But as to Professor Rose, my dear," he added, walking still more briskly, "he is an exceedingly clever organist, but I fear a very questionable sort of character. I had some suspicions of mine confirmed to-day, and don't you go there any more."

"I had already made up my mind not to," replied Gracie, large tears dropping silently down her cheeks underneath her veil, her lips quivering, her bosom inwardly heaving. Poor child! She felt as she walked along the narrow streets, winding around their noisy corners, as if all love of life had departed. Turn whichever way she might, some dark reproach that she was wholly innocent of incurring, threatened her. Her most guileless actions were turned into bitter accusers in the eyes of censorious and envious slander, and young as she was, she said to herself that she had seen enough of the depravity of earth. Her very heart ached, as the apprehension of a great loss flitted through her mind—the loss of her mother; and the tears that she still fought against fell heavily; though she brushed them with her veil till her cheeks were wet all over, and their saltiness crusted her lips.

But the sight of the widow, seated in a large chair by a bright fire, Ella Van Ness standing, gently stroking her head to soothe the pain, and dear mother Mott, pouring a cup of sparkling tea that filled the room with its fragrance, somewhat restored her spirits.

"Don't say a word; I ought to have come before!" the doctor exclaimed, as Mrs. Amber apologized; "well, really, you are very nicely fixed here, very nicely fixed; and the old piano, too—well done, well done; we'll get Miss Gracie up a fine class—a fine class; and by and by Miss Gracie will earn enough to buy her mother a romantic little cottage in the country, with woodbines and grapevines, and trees and flowers, and all the poetic things that young ladies and invalid's love, and we'll call it Amber Cottage; and I'll come out and take tea there. What say you, Miss Gracie? come, hold up your head and look bright, as you used to; how many verses have you written to-day? I must prohibit verse-making; it excites the pulse; let me feel your pulse, Miss Gracie."

She held out her hand with a smile that seemed restored for the time, to its old accustomed heartiness.

"Rather too rapid," he muttered, looking in a professional way, with his eyes screwed up, in mother Mott's laughing face; "I prescribe twenty drops of cheerfulness, which medicine mother Mott always carries bottled up in her pocket; as much sunshine as you can let in; a few songs hummed without words, and an utter disregard for all the old, babbling tailoresses in creation; do you hear?"

Gracie answered that she did.

"And all the threatening Paul Halburton's, and all—[here the doctor's eyes twinkled]—all the tender *hearts* that would console you—and fling a 'who cares' to the world generally. I'll tell you,"—and he spoke seriously, "it won't do to have too fine a comprehension in this world; take the old globe as it is, and throw sentiment and soul to the dogs; cover your heart all up, and never take it in your hand; be oblivious to the fact that you have feeling, sympathy; steel yourself against the cry of the poor, and mingle in the laugh of the oppressor—in fine, encourage the animal and keep down the angel in your nature, that's about the only way I know of to get along *perfectly* comfortable."

"Why, doctor!" ejaculated mother Mott, looking at him in astonishment.

He laughed heartily.

"Take my advice for what it's worth," he said, again, "I don't practice it, I can't practice it. I've been cheated and gulled all my life, misrepresented and misunderstood, laughed at, deceived—but I find that my heart will assert its softness—fool that it is; that I'm melted wax under the tear of the unfortunate; that I can't keep faith with a rascal, and that I want to pull the ears of every ass that I meet, who thinks he is a most wise, far-seeing, superior individual, because he has made a few thousands by lying, stealing, abusing, cheat-

ing, and oppressing the widow and the fatherless. Well, good night; the sermon was an afterthought. Don't scruple to call me at any time, Mrs. Amber. I think there was a bill against our folks on your husband's books, so please consider that I'm working out the obligation; now don't feel any reluctance to command me, will you?"

The widow looked gratefully up; Gracie thanked him heartily.

"Poor child!" murmured the doctor, as he left; "it's easy to see—" and he whistled instead of finishing the sentence—only saying, a moment after, "there's no medicine will reach that case."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PAUL AND THE VEILED LADY.

THE veiled lady sat alone in her chamber. She had just returned from her daily walk, just returned from her conference with Ingerson, the sexton, at the door of the auction room. It seemed certain that a smile of sweet satisfaction hovered over her lips, though the envious veil concealed it. Her cheek rested on her white hand, the crumpled veil falling over its whiteness, and she murmured very softly, "How blessed it is to do good!"

A vigorous knock at the front entrance startled her. Stepping lightly to the window, she saw, beneath, the little red cart of the sexton, overtopped by Gracie's redeemed piano; and in another moment her black servant came up stairs, proffered her a purse, through the meshes of which glittered gold, a receipted bill, and at a word from her mistress left the

room. Five minutes had not elapsed, before the servant again stood before the veiled lady, in her hand a delicate note, the superscription of which was minutely elegant. As the latter received it, she evidently trembled, though she strove to command herself. Again the servant hastily retreated, in a way that showed she had learned to interpret the wish of one so apparently formed to command.

"He threatens no longer," murmured the veiled lady, standing in an attitude of deep abstraction. "Well, if he *will* behold me, I have a mind that he shall." She summoned her servant.

"Did the man himself bring this?"

The girl nodded her head.

"I thought so," replied the other, in a voice of strange, stormy music; "and he is there yet? just so I thought, also; tell him he can come up; or, stay—I will write a message," and dipping her pen in red ink, she wrote hastily, and sent it down stairs by the negress.

"Ha!" thought Paul, shrugging his shoulders, as, with a kind of mysterious dread he read the single line, "written in blood, perhaps," and his own blood began to curdle as he placed his foot on the stairs. Long before he had reached the room to which the servant was leading him, his heart had sunk like lead in his bosom. A thrill, that troubled him only on the recurrence of a dreaded and dreadful anniversary, chilled every vein in his body, and his brain felt as though bound in ice.

With tread as soft, nearly, as the footfall of Death, summoning courage with every step, yet at every step finding it sinking with almost mathematical motion, Paul Halburton entered the gloomy hall, and seeing about him evidences of the profoundest melancholy, recoiled unconsciously. The silence, the gloom, the strangely—to him—close and stifling atmosphere; the four walls, the ceiling and the floor, between

which the space, so dark and still, seemed terrible; the room beyond, with its sombre adornings; the singular being whose privacy no foot of man before his had invaded, affected him with a subtle and horrible fear. A dream-like consciousness his being seemed; to himself he appeared to have walked out of himself, upon some ghostly mission; and he held his breath painfully as he stood upon the threshold; an awe seized him; he walked forward unsteadily; there was no one to be seen. Looking about him with the abstracted air of a visionist, the man gradually became assured. The servant had left, and still he was alone. He adjusted with the greatest nicety his jetty curls, stroked his fine beard, saying to himself, "faith, it may be the veiled lady will herself surrender," and cautiously seating himself, waited with impatience that had in it a mixture of relief, the appearance of his strange tormentor. Moments passed that seemed hours to him. One by one he took in view the objects of that singular room; the long black curtain against the partition; the books; the covered inscription; until the silence grew like a weight, and he arose from his chair and went towards a picture. Peering closely, for it was craped, he grew most earnestly anxious to see the painted canvas which dimly presented its outlines. First one side, then the other he moved with a nervous step—covered the breadth with the close pressure of his face—pulled the covering up and down as far as it would move, with his uneasy fingers, then stood irresolute; bit his lip, his glance fastened to the floor, turned abruptly to the opposite portrait, also craped, and went through the same fantastic motions.

"Paul!"

A quick, sharp, half suppressed exclamation escaped him, as he confronted the being who had so often roused his ire—he whom he feared, suspected, hated. Majestically tall she seemed, as, taking advantage of her visitor's disturbed tranquillity, she lifted herself to her utmost height; while the long,

black veil, falling in full folds nearly to her feet, made her appear as something supernatural. For a full moment Paul Halburton stood, thrown off his guard—perplexed, completely taken by surprise; but presently recovering, he said, attempting a ghostly smile, "you have kindly given me the permission I have so long coveted; admittance to your presence—I—I—"

The self-possessed man of the world faltered; he had not the courage even to speak before that mute, unearthly looking figure. Had he but known that all this lofty serenity was but assumed—that under that passionless seeming breast beat a heart as wildly as his own—that, by an iron will only, the impulse to shriek was curbed—that a strange, fiery, volcanic tumult was raging, and pouring under that immovable composure, he had been less perturbed.

"Speak on!" said the woman, in tones hardly louder than a whisper, but which, in the ears of guilt, sounded like the cannonade of vengeance.

"Who, then, are you, that troubles me?" he proceeded hastily, as though fear might overtake speech; "why do you presume to pass judgment upon me? men respect me; men *fear* me—"

"They have cause!" sounded that sepulchral voice again—and with a manner of such menace, though not a movement prefaced or followed it, that Paul, aghast and absolutely white, shrank back from her. Stepping aside, and scarcely appearing to stir as she did so, she threw from its resting-place the sort of frill or curtain from before the monument once spoken of, and with an air of command said, "Go, read; let your heart tell you for whom that is erected, while the object yet lives."

With fiery eyes, and as rapidly as one in despair reads the tidings of his entire failure, Paul scanned the inscription, biting his bloodless lips meantime; then, violently striking

his forehead, he exclaimed with constrained courtesy—"Come, madam, if you please, no more of this mystery. That you pretended to be a seer or prophetess, I did not know; if," he continued, with ill-timed sarcasm, "if you intend to set up the profession of fortune-teller, and wish a certificate from me, I can testify that you are a woman of ability, capable of reading, it may be the page of man's varied existence; you might soon make yourself famous."

It was fearful to see the agitation into which the veiled lady was thrown by this sneering speech, and how resentment and wounded feeling changed her voice, as she exclaimed with passionate gesture and heaving breast—"Paul—*Paul de Barry!*"

At this the very life seemed to leave the self-sufficient aristocrat. A ghastly whiteness, worse than the hue of the dead, overspread his face; he stood swaying like a reed, grown feeble in a moment, while with scarcely parted, ashy lips, he murmured, almost inaudibly, "in the name of the fiend, *who, what* are you? No—you mistake the man, it is not *that* name—but the other;"—he raised his hand now shaking, and his costly kerchief, to wipe off large drops of anguish that stood upon his brow—"you mistake the name;" and he essayed a feeble smile.

"What will you say now?" asked the veiled lady, with an effort that would have disclosed the blue veins swelling out on her forehead, but for the protecting covering; and quickly she lifted the crape from the portrait of the handsome, but sinister boy-face, hanging against the wall.

"My God—mercy!" cried the man, cowering in abject terror.

"And this!" continued the figure, moving opposite, and unfastening another curtain of crape, giving to view the sweet, fair features on the time-cracked canvas.

Only a groan, and the word "mother," was the next re-

sponse, and the wretched man seemed hovering between an inclination and an inability to fly. But slowly he recovered his equanimity, very slowly, crushed down the dread that seemed to threaten his reason; little by little his assurance returned; and a resolution to brave all, every thing, restored him partially to his former haughty self.

"Since you have seen me thus affected," he said, braving her hidden glances, "it would be foolish in me to deny that you know something of the past. And now let me ask, what is your object in thus striving to overwhelm me? By some mysterious art, you have fathomed the secrets of my soul. Who you may be, that have thus possessed yourself of relics that were once in possession of—of my family—I cannot imagine; but of course you haunt me for a purpose. Name that purpose; and the terms, whatever they are, shall be acceded to. I am rich! for heaven's sake, woman, take half my fortune, and leave the place."

"I tell you I will not again be insulted with your proffer of hush-money!" said the veiled lady, towering as she spoke. "You speak truth," she continued, "when you say I have possessed myself of relics, the very sight of which takes color from your cheek; makes your heart quail; and I know more than I will reveal *now*—(there was a fearful emphasis on the word *now*,) stop in your dreadful course, man of sin—stop! I warn you as one that cares for your soul. Guilt-stained as you are, why will you go on adding crime to crime? Cease to tread upon the unfortunate, to persecute the innocent, or I will myself commit you into the hands of justice."

Fired by her speech, accompanied as it was with earnest gesture, Paul Halburton sprang to his feet. When he spoke his voice was low, but terrible with concentrated fear and anger. "Woman," he cried, "lift that veil; I despise your threats, I laugh at your advice—I spurn you with the mark of deformity that brands your brow; outcast or murderess,

whatever you are, do you think to expiate your own sins by accusing me? Know that I have power here—men fear me—they are my tools; I swear by heaven I will make this city too hot for you; witch—devil, whatever you are, unveil!”

She turned resolutely towards him, even before he had ceased to speak, and slowly lifted the crape from her face. As he gazed, Paul Halburton staggered backward, with hands outstretched, as one would wave a phantom to forbear and come no nearer. His lips grew blue, and moved convulsively for many seconds, and at last he gasped—“she was found dead—and identified by her clothing—but the child—never!”

“It is false!” said the fearful woman, slowly dropping her veil; “she was not found, neither the child. A poor girl, crazed, a stranger, one who had experienced *her* bounty, confided to *her* her sad, sad trials, been clothed by her, and who at last became the victim of her own rashness, *she* it was who was found dead and mutilated in the river—while I, who stand before you, escaped with the child. The clothing I had given her, led to the supposition that the body was my own. Oh, heavenly Father!” she cried, suddenly clasping her hands, “what a fate is mine! Doomed to eternal solitude,” she continued, her voice broken by sobs and tears—“cursed, while innocent, with the world’s opprobrium—a life time that should have been beautified and perfected by love made almost useless—betrayed by those who I longed to save—but why do I rave thus?” she added, her manner losing instantly its frenzied air, her voice falling, her arms relaxing; “go, bad man—go from my presence; you would see—you *have* seen me; oh, Paul! for the sake of those days when you loved me—for the sake of that time when your head in innocency rested upon my bosom, for the sake of that time when I felt the twining of your arms, that I deemed pure, about my neck, for the sake of that babe I so

sacredly cherished, don’t commit any more sin, Paul, don’t. Do not *force* me to condemn you publicly, before God and man; a woman’s heart will bear a great deal, Paul, but when it ceases to forbear, it turns to iron.”

For some moments there was a dead silence after this passionate appeal. Paul stood blanched, irresolute, terrified, maddened. A wild gleam in his eye, a nervous twitching of the muscles around his mouth, a fixed defiance, that fear was striving to subdue, mastered his expression and distorted his face, utterly changed it to that of a fiend.

“And am I to be haunted thus?” he forced himself to utter in a hoarse, harsh whisper.

“According to your own option shall you be treated,” said the veiled lady more calmly. “Expiate your past offences by your future generous and virtuous conduct, and I am silent. Banish those hells where men’s souls are lost at the gaming table, and I am silent. Cease to persecute the poor and innocent, and I am silent. Walk humbly before your God; show by your conduct that there is a radical change in your character, and I am silent.”

“Cease—cease!” cried Paul, with the voice and manner of his general haughty command; and with rapid footsteps he began walking the floor, locking and unlocking his fingers. One part of this strange interview had struck him with peculiar force—one little sentence given emotions to his unhallowed heart, to which it had long been a stranger—it was this: “She was not found, *neither the child*.” The child! *his* child—the child of his youthful, wedded life!

“One word,” he said, standing before his accuser, “is the child with you?”

“No!” she replied, briefly.

“Were you aware?” he asked, in a husky voice, “that if he lives there is a fortune, a princely fortune, in reserve for him?”

"Yes—oh, man of money—still the old passion that made you what you are!" exclaimed the veiled lady, in tones constrained and chilling—"your child—your child shall never be rich; no, better the beggar's fate—the hapless beggar, wandering from wharf to wharf, and picking up the refuse of the street—you are pale!"

"The beggar—you said—what, woman, have you done with my child? Where is he? In what nook or corner of the world? The beggar! Look—a child, a feeble one in body and mind, I have seen lurking about your doors; a half-starved, sickly wretch, whom they call Jupe, clutching mouldy crusts—a boy who shunned his kind; and yet—yet it is strange how I have yearned towards him. I asked him once what he remembered of his life; he told me something of a ship in which he came over the water. Ha! woman, no wonder you start and tremble—that poor unfortunate, then, is a De Barry: accursed of earth and heaven," his strong frame shook with emotion—still the veiled lady kept silent—"if *that* is your revenge!" he cried, in low, broken tones; "dearly shall you pay for it; for look you, I will take the boy to my home; he shall fare sumptuously—he shall be dressed in fine linen; he shall have the best medical advice; his life shall be prolonged if human means can avail, till he is at least of age; he *shall* be rich in spite of your cruel scheme; he shall be rich, princely rich."

"All the gold, the luxury, the medicine in the world, will not keep life in that poor wreck," said the veiled lady, with a faint voice, and very visibly agitated.

"Ha! you *do* acknowledge then—you *do* acknowledge!" cried Paul, white with suppressed anger, his eyes glaring.

She deigned no reply, but rising, parted the curtains near the partition, and in an instant had disappeared from his sight. Her black servant stood at the door to intimate that he must go, and, clutching his hat and gloves—his hair awry,

his appearance altogether fallen away, left the house in a tumult of passion.

CHAPTER XL.

PAUL ADVERTISES FOR JUPE.

LETTA HOLDEN had just returned from Cambridge, one cool but sunshiny morning. Heated, flushed, eager in her manner, she hurried restlessly to her mother's chamber.

"Well," said that specimen of elevated womanhood, looking up from the shirt she was busily stitching.

"Here's the last letter," the girl responded, laughing, for she had grown reckless in pursuit of her object, looking forward to its completion with a vengeful kind of delight. "As to Hart, I expect he's half crazy with suspense and jealousy; poor fellow, he *shan't* have her—he *shan't* have her, if he never has me. Young Lovejoy, that Mr. Halburton spoke of, wants to get acquainted with Gracie Amber, and I'm to bring it about this evening. Hart is coming to the party, next Wednesday, and I must work hard to get Gracie here, too. I expect she won't want to come, she pretends to be so terrible particular, and even now, living in that old rookery, as she is, she thinks herself above us, I'll warrant. A girl that trains as she does, ought not to be so very circumspect. Don't you think that one of Miss Maligna's work-girls told me that Miss Maligna herself sees Gracie Amber almost every evening, at dusk, promenading the street with some fellow or other, and laughing and talking like a common woman! Miss Maligna saw that with her own eyes, so there's no hear-say about it, you see. And she has even seen her in old Hark-

ness' sailor-boarding-house, of evenings; just think of that! and everybody knows what sort of a character Mildred Harkness used to have; and besides she goes regularly to the house of Professor Rose—you heard Dick tell of *him* last night. She won't get many scholars with that reputation; Miss Maligna says she knows of two or three, certainly splendid chances, that she has lost, and she pretending to be so mock good all the time. Such hypocrisy is horrible."

"I always told you so, Letta—I always was afeared of her with them airs."

And thus was Gracie Amber, the innocent, the high-minded, motherless girl, a victim of the slanderer—the stabber in the dark—the venomous serpent whose trail leaves poison, whose slime corrupts even corruption. Better to live with a madman, break bread with a murderer, keep faith with a liar, than cross the path of a slanderer. And when the poison distils through the dewy lips of woman, it is doubly poisonous. It is a smile, it is a shrug—nay, sometimes it is a tear, through which the red on her cheek glistens mockingly. Oh! God, *can* woman, then, *descend* to slander? Can crimson lips drop toads, and newts, and spiders, and vipers? Can woman's heart gloat over the withered spirit she has brought to the dust?

It is said that strong drink is mankind's most cruel foe. Not so; it is *heavenly* compared with slander. There is no vitriol that will eat and destroy like slander. The slanderer should live in swamps, surrounded by congenial society—the slimy snake—the loathsome alligator—the deadly night-shade—the rankest weeds—the most putrid exhalations; the slanderer should live forever in the shade of the upas—there is no danger of death to him; there is poison enough in his nature to plant a forest of upas. But there is danger that his blasting breath might blight the tree.

"I always told you so," repeated Mrs. Holden, "but are you certain that *she* don't git none of Hart's letters?"

"I guess she's done going to the post-office," laughed Letta, lightly; "the girl that's taken her's out in Cambridge, has been cute about it; she's a genius in her way—but, mother, suppose she should ever tell."

"La! there's no danger," said her mother, biting off her thread; "you know Hart's the most *onsuspicious* boy there is in nature. Did you hint to him to be keerful of Mr. Halburton in your 'tother letter?"

"Yes, but there ain't no need; if there is anybody he hates, it is him; do you really believe, mother, that Hart ever did anything very wrong?"

Mrs. Holden shook her head as she answered, "your father says he did onc't—he knows better nor I do. I never *expected* him, but he may be one of them kind o'sly, smooth faces, as can seem to be anything they please. La!" she continued, starting, "you don't know what there's in to-day's paper. Dick's got it in the other room—Dick, Dick!" she cried, lifting her voice, "bring that paper here to Letta."

"*Let'er* come and git it herself," coarsely responded Dick, hastily smuggling a black bottle into his trunk, and throwing the paper on the floor, while he giggled at his own poor wit.

"You've got to be so big now, that mother and I have to wait upon you like slaves," said Letta, crossly, coming into the room, and catching at the paper.

"Waitaw," said Dick, in reply, throwing her a wink, as he leaned sideways over his chair, "waitaw, caw this paper into the adjoining woom."

Letta flirted out, slamming the door, but presently forgot her indignation in the wonder awakened by the following advertisement:

"FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD!"

"To whoever will find the boy called Jupe, and deliver him into my care within three months. Said Jupe has been for years a vagabond, subsisting upon charity, hanging about wharves, and passing his time between the streets and the house of correction. He is apparently between fourteen and fifteen years old, but must be some two years older; he is much stunted and weakened by sickness. Has rather a forbidden look, but intelligent features. Escaped some two months ago from the hospital in ——— street, at which place the doctors gave it as their opinion, that with proper attention, he might recover, therefore it is probable he is still alive. The above reward, together with the amount of all expenses that may be incurred, both in traveling and fitting the boy with new or clean clothing, will be paid by me on delivery of the boy at my residence, any day or night, within the stipulated time.

Signed, PAUL HALBURTON, etc. etc."

Letta looked up in astonishment. "Oh! I wish I could find him!" she exclaimed.

"You!" ejaculated her mother.

"Yes, five hundred dollars! how many beautiful clothes I could buy with five hundred dollars! It would quite fit up a little house," she added, blushing, for her thoughts were on Hart—of Hart's frequent letters—his coming to her for consolation, and being solaced by her pity. And pity, she reasoned, is "kin to love," so every day she studied what would make her look handsome or look brilliant. How many cosmetics she made, burning her fingers over secret fires in her room! How many books written on the tender subject of love she read, that she might surprise Hart with the apt quotations with which she stored her mind! How assiduously

she devoted herself to her hair, that it might in time hang in angular corkscrew curls, as if it curled naturally! How she compressed her hands and figure! how she stuffed and padded—how she plucked the hair from her forehead, vainly imagining that it would give breadth and beauty of expression where neither belonged! How she studied the fashions, and made herself the servant of lace and buckram! How constantly she banged away at the piano! and how skillfully she altered verses that she might appear to have written them—for Gracie could write! And how anxiously she consulted the mirror, day by day, to mark her progress, stimulated by her mother's flattery. To gain Hart's affections had now become the ruling passion of her life, and no artifice was too much beneath her, no apparent necessity of deception deterred her; her ambition, her all, was staked upon the success of her manoeuvring. She thought she understood the motives of Paul Halburton in choosing to suspect Hart, nor did she believe his revenge would be exerted to destroy one whom she felt in her heart was pure. She knew that some underplot was being carried on, in which Paul, her father, and Hart were strangely mixed up, but she thought it was only to avenge a slight personal pique, and it would be, before a great while, amicably settled. And thus the five hundred dollars made a very pleasant background to her aspiring motives. "And who knows," she whispered to herself, "but with Dick's aid, I can find him, or perhaps father has had a hand in his disappearance—he always seemed to hate him. I wonder why?"

But there were others interested in the pursuit of the luckless Jupe, besides Letta Holden. Dick himself had determined to be the "hero of that scrape," for, as he said, "five hundred dollars would go a confounded long way in wine and segars," and he laid awake nights enumerating to Bob what he would buy him, if he succeeded in a certain

spec, said "spec" being the success of finding poor Jupe and receiving the money therefor.

And Allan, the coffin-maker, read it through his crazy spectacles, and then communicated it to his wife and daughter, the latter of whom instantly caught the idea that Letta Holden had so complacently indulged—"oh! if I could only get it—five hundred dollars! then she and the grocer's clerk could be married, and set up shop, and live in some order and decency," she thought to herself.

"Well, now," said Allan, taking his spectacles off with careful hand, I should say—

'Ry tol de rol---look out for the mice,
For the cat has given a party so nice---
With cheeses and cakeses and nuts you see,
And invited the rats and their children to tea.'

You see," he continued, "there was one big dish on the table, the old song goes on to say, and after a very fine feast, they were all anxious to know what the cat had kept back. So she told them there was a lot of delicious jelly in that dish, but it had been sent from the cook's, and she hadn't strength to open it. If they would be so kind as to get all atop o' the dish, and at a signal from her, pull at the cover, they should each be rewarded with a sip. Well, the silly things, they believed her, and all got atop to give a great pull, when the cover flew up, a spring caught 'em, and there they was, a nice dish for the cunning old cat."

"What's that to do with it?" asked Sally Malinda.

"Why, nothing particler," answered her father, with a humorous look; "I ain't expected to find stories and brains to understand 'em at the same time. But look here—seems to me I ought to git that reward—I lost by the feller; he took a pair of my best overalls the last night he staid in my shop. I didn't expect he'd steal from me after I'd 'a promised the little rascal a coffin"

"Didn't you hear that woman that comes here so often, a talking about Jupe; one day, Sally Malinda?" asked Mrs. Beauvine, stopping the everlasting motion of her rocking-chair, long enough to put the question.

"Yes, mother Mott—that was, you know her father, she said she met him in the country when she went to see a niece, I think over a month ago, but I didn't pay much attention. She's up stairs now, mother Mott is."

"I'll go and jest speak to her about it; seems to me I ought to get that reward, if anybody," and Allan hurried up stairs into Mrs. Amber's room, holding the newspaper still in his hand.

Gracie and Ella sat sewing, the former on wristbands, the latter on some coarse vesting; and both were humming together a little duet as the old coffin-maker entered. A bright fire blazed cheerily, the two little girls were playing with their dolls, Mrs. Amber, still pale and unable to work, was bolstered in a large arm-chair, and mother Mott, kind, benignant creature, superintended the getting up of the simple dinner for the family. The piano was carefully covered, and on it were arranged the old music books that years ago Tom Amber had bought at auction for a trifle. Allan's eyes roved with satisfaction about so neat and clean a place as this room always was, and then, in a few words, he made known his errand.

Mother Mott stated what she remembered about it, which, indeed, was considerable—how she had seen the boy skulking along a country road in August; that his lips and his hands were stained with berries; that he had cowered at sight of her, and sprung past, flying along with desperate haste; that he had on a pair of blue overalls that reached almost to his neck, and something with long sleeves underneath, that had been white; and, furthermore, that he was on the road to Old Cambridge. These facts Allan, in his clumsy fashion, noted

down, and, nodding his head, with an expressive "thankee," left the room.

The Ambers were just leaving the dinner table, when a timid knock at the door announced another visitor, and Letta Holden entered, showily attired, and after the customary salutation, directed her attention exclusively to Gracie.

"Yes, do go, Gracie," urged Mrs. Amber, as Letta was trying to prevail upon the former to go shopping with her: "you haven't been out, except on business, so long; it will do you good to walk, with no care on your mind; I don't like to see you so pale."

After some further urging, the young girl consented; blushed, as she donned her plain habiliments, and contrasted them for a moment with Letta's flashing silk, and bright new shawl, but she whispered to herself that she was just as good in her homely old shawl, and worn black silk frock, as though she were robed in the richest satin, set off with the costliest cashmere. Letta was very communicative as the two tripped along towards the quarter containing the fashionable shops. The sun shone with enlivening warmth, and many a beautiful face, reflecting only cheerfulness, passed them by, bestowing no thought or glance on Gracie, while to her the very sight of beauty and sunshine made her heart bound from its sadness, and feel young and joyous once more. The shop windows were radiant with fresh fall goods—and oh! dear me, thought Gracie, how happy every body looks! But ah, could some omniscient spirit at her side, unseen by the world, have communed with poor Gracie, how would she have assured her that only God could read the curse beneath the smile, or the blessing under the sorrowing, care-worn look. "See," she would say, "there, moving like a queen, the sun flashing out prismatic hues from the surface of her satin robes, is one whom the world calls happy. A smile curves her haughty lip, her eyes, brilliant with the flashes of

a fine intellect, bend graciously to the salute of many acquaintances as she passes them. But, poor creature! what is happiness to her? Her beauty was bought by an old man's gold. Possessing the mind she does, she easily sees beneath the flimsy veil of society, and among her hundreds, nay, thousands of followers, she finds only here and there a friend. Rigidly virtuous, she feels, how keenly! the dart flung at her from the fiery shaft of envy; from the depths of dark hearts, who *imagine* what *they* would do if in *her* place. Obligated to perform the same round of useless formalities, she feels that she is frittering away a life that should be noble—consecrating on the shrine of senseless fashion the energy that should be given to God. She has long since tired of folly—there is nothing new to her in the whole round of magnificent pleasures. In her wardrobe, hangs one dress that cost a thousand dollars; she would wear, with equal indifference, a cambric gown that was bought for two. In her dressing case, blaze jewels of surpassing splendor; happier was she, and she will tell you so, in the one necklace of red cranberries, strung in the meadow, when, as a child, she roamed the fields with a light, careless heart." So much for Mrs. Charles Grandwest, the leader of fashion, the brilliant wit and beauty, the admired, the envied of the *ton*.

Hitherto comes next the talented preacher, the courteous gentleman, the self-denying man of God, Doctor Waldron, his face pale, but calm, his bearing graceful, his gaze a trifle abstracted, yet wearing so sweet a benevolence! *He*, surely, must be happy, standing in a place of trust and high position, a favorite with his own people, and a popular man with the masses; courted by beauty, wealth, intellect—ministering to the most finished minds, his congregation rich, himself not necessitated to preach, his own habitation elegant, though simple as becomes his vocation, a glorious library, the collection of years of travel in foreign countries—a large experience

—beloved everywhere. Ah! but look; in the core of his heart, he cherished a passion, which budded and bloomed like a rose. But a canker worm grew in its root—the bud sicklied—the rose fell ere it put on the beauty of maturity. He loved—with a fervor such as few men know—a fatal breath blasted his passion—infamy, disgrace, worse than death, and, then indeed, death shut his love's life up, as it were, in an eternal cloud. Yet, thank God, though the rift and the seam of a volcanic fire have made his nature unequal, years ago, the peace of God that passeth all understanding, shineth over it like an abiding sunlight. He has a consolation that Mrs. Charles Grandwest never knew—still in his breast there is one void—what shall fill it, ever, till he steps down into the shallow stream with some angel by his side, and puts off mortality for immortality?

And so Gracie went on, admiring sometimes a tiny child with cheeks like summer apples, and hair like autumn flax, while the white of winter snow, flaked over and under the blue eyes, and the joyous motions of the spring time of life, sent a bound through all her veins. "Such a one would 'our baby' have been," she sighed, and passed along, responding to Letta Holden's admiring exclamations, at the sight of a new fashion or a becoming bonnet.

She was pausing at the window of a music store, that looked out from a handsome garden, on Court street, where now a flower dare hardly show its sickly hue, when she was startled by feeling somebody pluck at her dress. It was Letta, who with flushed cheeks, said—

"I called you twice, but you seemed lost looking at that picture. I wish to introduce you to a friend of our Hart's."

The conscious blood flew up over Gracie's face, making it look very beautiful, in contrast with the neat black cottage hat, and Letta went through the introduction very well for her. Lovejoy, the young collegian, immediately installed

himself by Gracie's side, talking of Hart. It was evident that his glance was an admiring one—and Gracie felt, for a moment, that it was almost too familiar. Yet his winning, agreeable ways, soft voice, pleasing address, gradually led her to forget that he was entirely a stranger; besides, he talked of Hart.

"Hart," he said, "was a fine fellow; an *acquaintance* of her's, he presumed; a fine, free and easy, social fellow, fond of society, a tremendous hard student, and a great favorite with the ladies. He didn't know, egad, but he would cut out all the other students in the way of favors from the fair sex; and by the way, Hart seemed to appreciate ladies' society about as much as any other young man he knew."

Gracie choked, secretly—"he has forgotten poor me," she said to herself, and then bravely listened. The young fop continued to converse on different subjects, until Gracie, almost alarmed, perceived, for the first time, that they were in the open country, though still on the thoroughfare known as Washington street. Her new acquaintance left them to pursue his way to Cambridge, and Gracie asked, turning to Letta—

"Why did you walk so far?"

"Oh! only that you two might get acquainted," the artful girl said—"do you know he has seen you before, and admired you very much, and actually asked for an introduction? and any one could see how very well pleased he is at making your acquaintance."

This flattery Gracie received uneasily, turning back with Letta, who now began to be busy with the dry goods exposed for sale at the shop windows.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE PRESENT.

STOPPING at last before a large establishment, the two girls entered. With one of the clerks Letta seemed on a shopping acquaintance, for he bowed with familiar manner, and appeared instantly to comprehend what goods would suit his customer's tastes and purse. Every gaudy color imaginable he spread out before her, being probably guided by a previous experience; and he seemed inclined to glance furtively at Gracie, at the same time answering any questions, or inclining to any remark she made, with a deference that told the difference of estimate he put upon the two.

"Don't you think this a very elegant shade?" Letta asked, turning to Gracie, and displaying, at the same moment, a crimson and blue changeable silk and woollen fabric, that was at that time very much worn for evening dresses.

"To those who fancy high colors," Gracie said, "it might be very beautiful; but the light fawn, that sweet and modest thing, with tiny spots, suited her best; it was the prettiest pattern she had seen."

The clerk inwardly commended her taste, as he held up the two articles, skillfully contrasting them.

"Oh! that's dead looking, quite," Letta rejoined; "besides, it's cheap goods, a whole shilling cheaper than this."

"That would make but slight difference to me," Gracie returned, with a sad, little smile, for she knew that, cheap as it was, it would be a long, long while before she could afford such an one for herself. A sudden thought seemed to strike Letta—

"Cut me off a dozen yards from the fawn color," she said, "and I will decide about the other."

Then, fumbling over the whole case, she compared and admired, and finally chose a bright scarlet with purple spots. These articles, with a dashing ribbon sash, and one of plain white, completed her purchase, and the two girls left the store, the clerk following, and gazing admiringly after Gracie as he stood in the door.

"Now," said Letta, as they retraced their way homeward, "I bought that fawn for you—don't say a word, for I've set my heart on your accepting it; you see Dick gives me money enough, he can afford to, now, and I know you have to work hard for what you get."

"But I have clothes enough," faltered Gracie, "by and by I shall—"

"Now, you know it's no use to talk that way—why, how proud you are! Gracie Amber, if you can't just receive a little favor from me, I think it's a shame. My father used to help your father sometimes, and your father did the same thing by mine; and for the sake of the time when we used to be such close friends, I should think you might take a little gift like that."

"I'm sure I'll take it, and thank you very kindly for it," said Gracie, her independence somewhat softened by the apt allusion to her father; "and it isn't *my* fault, Letta, that we're not quite as good friends as when you used to come in the old back parlor of the old house, and hear me play."

Gracie's voice faltered, and Letta was touched at the plaintive tone; she made no response, however, feeling, in her inmost soul, that nothing had induced her to present such a gift to the orphan, but the idea that it would make it somewhat obligatory upon the latter to attend her party; so she received Gracie's thanks with conscious blushes. Taking a handkerchief from her pocket, a letter fell therefrom, the su-

perscription facing the ground. Gracie noticed it, and stooping, picked it up, surprised at the eager clutch, it could be called nothing else, with which Letta caught it from her hands, and her demeanor of blushing, stammering confusion, as she thrust it back into her pocket. Little the poor girl knew that her own name, in Hart's handwriting, was there; innocent of deception in all its forms, she never suspected it in others. She had yet to learn that worldly wisdom that places a sentinel at the door of the heart to warn us even of our friends.

Mother Mott was delighted with the present, so was Mrs. Amber, though wondering at so unusual a freak of generosity; and Ella declared it the most beautiful thing she had ever seen, while the children crowded about in childish delight, to admire the pretty new dress. The widow smiled as she noted the bright cheek and sparkling eye of her daughter. She had, herself, felt unusually well, and during Gracie's absence had finished a small bundle of sewing, so that the latter was just in the right time to take it home. Ella was giving the finishing stitches to her own work, and offered, as soon as dinner should be done, to accompany her.

Nobody was in the shop save Rink, the fiddler, who, too old to follow the sea, and too poor to pay his board, acted in the double capacity of porter and errand boy, occasionally, as he called it, "lending a hand" to the servants. He was seated in "mood abstracted," his arms folded, his legs crossed, the shrunken flesh admitting many a deep fold in the snowy duck trowsers it was his pride to wear. His venerable and silvery beard hung, undiminished in length, over his blue sailor's shirt, and his hair, nicely smoothed and combed back, was fastened in a cue behind. Rising from his leaning posture as the young girls entered, he saluted them with an awkward bow, and speaking to Gracie, with whom he was not unfamiliar, as little Angy's Sabbath-school teacher, said that

the madam would be in shortly; she was now busy with a gentleman talking about little "breath o' heaven," as he always called Angy.

"And it's a blasted shame, ma'am," he continued, hitching up his waistband, "to think o' selling that pretty craft to an old long shore pirate, as wants her to go dancing on the slack-rope, and standin' atop o' flyin' horses. She's as innocent a thing, sir," he continued with energy, evidently losing sight of his audience's sex, "as the angels the Good Book tells of; and to go sellin' of her, sir, to a pack of bloody land pirates—it's a blasted shame, sir!"

The seams had deepened in the old salt's face, as he arose, and with a trembling hand opened the lid of his "tobacco" box, and the constant, defiant nodding of his old head and long grey beard, signified that his whole soul was up in arms against the project, whatever it might be.

"Is little Angy going to be sent away?" asked Gracie, her voice full of sympathy, for she knew how devotedly the old man loved the child.

"Aye, aye, my young miss," returned the sailor; "she's bin the light of these old eyes ever since she was born; and now they are goin' to take her off—them land pirates, cuss their hulks! I've read in the Good Book, ma'am, when I was a child, for I had a pious good old English mother, God bless her! how that some dratted land lubber, I've forgot who, went and sold his blessed Master for money, and that's jest what Madam Harkness is a doing with that child, sir! She don't care about her soul, she don't, when an old worthless sea-dog like me would go to the length o' land and sea to save her; and you wouldn't think I cared the valley of a rag about anybody's soul."

The old man winked hard, and drew his red and yellow speckled hand across his watery eyes for a moment. Then, turning to the girls, he held out his arm as if he would speak

—let it fall—lifted it again—pursed up his lips twice, but they trembled violently—his hand fell again to his side; he turned hastily away, but not before they had caught sight of a tear running swiftly from each eye down the hollows of his cheek.

At that moment Madam Harkness came in with her usual lofty step, followed by a small, stocky-looking man, whose little blue eyes were constantly in motion, and in whose person a repulsive hair-lip, soiled linen and untidy gloves, were not counterbalanced by a certain sharp shrewdness that characterized his face.

Nodding to Gracie, Mrs. Harkness walked behind the counter, and lifting the cover of a heavy ledger, filled with piratical accounts, she drew therefrom a paper, requesting him to sign it.

"Rink is included in the bargain," Gracie heard her say in a low voice.

"Yes, to be sure! you say he plays tolerably at sight," was the reply of the circus manager.

"Excellent!" returned Mildred Harkness, with a nod of her handsome head; "you must always let them go together; she is very fond of old Rink, and I think it will make her less averse to going."

"Madam," said the circus manager, looking at her steadily, "you resemble very much a family I used to know, when I was quite a young man."

"What family was that?" asked the stately Mildred, folding the paper carefully.

"Why! old parson Hatch, that was—he's dead now; he was a fine old white-headed preacher, and had a large family of daughters—I—bless me, ma'am!" he ejaculated in surprise, for at the mention of that name the woman's face flushed scarlet, then changed to ghastly white, and she clutched at the edges of the counter, to save herself from

falling. Both Gracie and Ella involuntarily sprang forward, but in a moment the shop-woman rallied, composed herself by a mighty effort, smiled faintly, murmured that she had not been well that day, and was subject to turns of giddiness, drank some water, and began nervously unloosing the bundles of returned work, while the man begged pardon, and walked off with a mysterious look, promising to call for little Angy that day week.

"I've heard of that," said Ella thoughtfully, as the girls, having received the pay for their work, were returning home.

"Heard what?" responded Gracie.

"That Mrs. Mildred Harkness was the daughter of a clergyman; that she was splendidly educated, but that she became an abandoned woman before she was twenty-five, and that she has rich and respectable sisters living in some other city."

"You don't mean to say," gasped Gracie, "that Mrs. Harkness was not always good—I mean, I mean always had a fair character?"

"Why, I thought everybody knew that!" exclaimed Ella, who had been thrown more in the way of general information (and that not always of the best) than the less sophisticated Gracie.

"I am doomed," whispered Gracie, with white lips; "I thought she was such a fine woman, having so sweet and beautiful a child, and I have been there once or twice to tea, on Angy's account. What will people say?"

"What do you care what people say?" responded Ella, with warmth; "nobody can speak a word against the woman since her marriage."

"Oh! but Miss Maligna!" murmured Gracie, almost with tears, "she has seen me there, and she will take advantage of it."

"She was there herself, it seems."

"Yes, but her duty called her there, to distribute her tracts; besides, I noticed she never spoke to Mrs. Harkness, except to say yes or no; and she looked at me, oh! with such a look!"

"It appears to me that if she was the right kind of a friend, she might come to you and warn you when there seemed to be danger."

"No, unless I went to her and begged forgiveness on my knees for what sins I never committed, and then prayed to be guided entirely by her opinion in every action of my life, deferred to her in the matter of my dress and acquaintances, joined her society, and resolutely turned my face against everybody but just those she calls Christians," said Gracie, with sudden bitterness, "she would still backbite and deride me. She calls our good minister, Doctor Waldron, a whited sepulchre, because he does not believe exactly as she does; even dear mother Mott is a fanatic in her eyes. I was her favorite when a very little child; she took me to church with her, and carried me round among her friends. Once she gave me a sugar bible that cost perhaps twenty-five cents; I was childish and exchanged it for some other toy; she never forgave me that. Once I overturned, accidentally, a favorite geranium of her's, and ruined it; that was offence number two. Then I wrote a bit of poetry, simple enough, which she declared was in a certain book; and when the book was produced, and nothing found answering the description of my unfortunate effort, that was offence number three—not the composition of the poem, but by proving that she was mistaken. And I injudiciously, but innocently, betrayed her false curls; but my cardinal sin was receiving little unmeaning attentions from a mere boy acquaintance, and playing theatre, which, perhaps, was wrong, in the old meeting-house, and performing on the organ, when she averred, I ought to be on my knees, scrubbing, or at the wash-tub, like other girls of my age."

"Shall I tell you what I think is the cause of her persecution?" asked Ella, archly. "Well, then, I believe it was just because you could compose verses, play the organ, and command attention; and she could do nothing, except to make coats and talk scandal. I know my sisters have often been very angry with me on account of my one talent—I could sing. And every time I was praised it set them on nettles. But I didn't care; I'm not so sensitive as you are; I only sang the louder. Perhaps all this injustice will in time inspire you to some great deed. I don't read much, but I *have* read of such things."

Gracie laughed faintly, as she said, "I'm afraid I shall never aspire to much more than giving lessons to little Moll Gilbert and making shirts for ninepence apiece."

"There's no danger but what your talent will show itself some time or other," responded Ella, "but only think of that beautiful little Angy Harkness dancing the slack-rope! She's too good and pure for a circus rider—it makes me shiver to think of it."

CHAPTER XLII.

GRACIE'S EXPERIENCE.

ELLA VAN NESS was, as Mrs. Beauvine said, "a good-natured thing," always singing, always laughing, always looking on the bright side, and counting stars in the clouds; but she also displayed some of the little characteristics that too often belong to rather ignorant, good-natured people, and that were sources of great annoyance to the refined and really

ladylike widow, with whom she had made a home. She was social and winning in the highest degree; so affectionate and helpless that one felt there was a necessity for loving her if for no other reason than to return her impulsive tenderness. But she was a heedless creature, careless of appearances, exhibiting a peculiar obtuseness in reference to Gracie's property, which she appropriated to herself quite as a matter of course; slovenly, with no care for the hidden garment, if the outward was clean—showy, often expending all her little earnings above her board on jewelry, and dashing ribbons; always presenting the girls or little Benny and the older members of the family with toys or trinkets. She had often to bring her work back and correct some mistake that she might just as well have avoided in the first place. Mrs. Amber frequently remonstrated, and Gracie was annoyed, but she would say, "poor thing, she has had such poor bringing up," and "we must try to improve her, mother."

But her voice, ah! that was glorious, enchanting! Unformed yet, for she had never received a note of instruction, but as musical, as thrilling, as clear, shrill, soft, and sweet as the tones of all the birds that make morning vocal with their forest songs. Many a time, after some musical performance of a pleasant evening, the children would laugh, and drawing in their heads from the open window, say that lots of folks had stopped to listen. And, in truth, the premises became quite famous in time, and people began to ask after the family that lived in old Allan's haunted house, who were they—what! Tom Amber's widow? clever Tom, whom everybody loved, but "who became too nice to keep bar, poor fellow and lost all his custom. Well, 'twas queer how folks got reduced anyhow—but what supported 'em? Ah! ha!" said one, mysteriously, after lending his ear to a neighbor, "humph! humph! so, so; Halburton, eh? Well, he's a deuced lucky fellow, that's all I have to say. But if I was

him," and "old house like that" eked out with sundry bobblings, and sly looks and coarse jokes finished the sentence.

Ella was extremely superstitious, and often waked up to whisper her terror at a dream, or crouch closer to Gracie when the old house shuddered in the storm. Several times she had thought Gracie awake and silently weeping, and, moving her hand along, had found tears upon the pillow, and wondered what cause so gentle and gifted a creature had for tears. She knew not, none *did* know the aspirations of that soul; how it longed to soar beyond that narrow sphere and find some haven, such as it built in visions. She knew not how deeply the light word or fancied suspicion wounded that good and gentle heart, nor how it galled her to have her actions and motives misconstrued. She dreamed not that a holy love, though earthly, had been born in that young bosom, waxing stronger with the years, yet chilled by coldness, and thrust into a space too circumscribed by neglect, so that she could only nurse it in secret, nor feel the glad sunshine of another's love cherishing and blessing that. She dreamed not that the long and poisoned roots of envy, stretching from the base heart that had encouraged their growth, crept over her, and were infusing their deadly venom into her very life—slowly paling the cheek and taking lustre from the eye—that its juice had been dropped into the heart that beat only for her, making it writhe, yet fear that the whisper with which it was accompanied was all too true. And on one of Ella's sudden awakenings, her strength left her, and a mortal fear paralyzed all power to move or cry out, for there in the clear, white light of the moon, knelt a figure altogether unearthly, its hair glistening, and falling over fair, rounded shoulders, its radiant dress hanging in loose folds and sweeping the floor—its head bowed upon its hands—its attitude so calm and still, until it was shaken by a slight sob, and a whispered voice entreated, "Oh, Father! give me *Thy* peace, since I am

left thus alone to struggle with grief and poverty, help me to bear my lot with patience; teach me to forgive those who persecute me, according as thy holy scriptures say, and as I have learned the way to Thee, oh! aid me to walk therein."

The blood crept back, with a thrill, from Ella's congealed veins, for she knew now that the angel, or rather ghost, as she thought it in the moonlight, was Gracie, her fatherless companion, praying "at midnight hour." She spoke not, as the young girl, with a new and sweet peace in her heart, again retired, and gently fell asleep with one arm about her neck—but ever after she felt an awe at recollection of that night, and looked up to Gracie as to a superior being, more willingly guided than heretofore by her judgment, and more easily governed by her will.

This prayer was the fruit of mother Mott's Christian converse. She had never talked religion *at* Gracie, that most odious way of imparting Christian counsel, but she had spoken in strains of exalted cheerfulness, of her own bitter trials from her youth up, and then in sweet and simple language had explained how they were softened and hallowed to her; how, in truth, they were made blessings so choice, that she was strengthened and purified by them. And then she led her so gently to the source of her consolation! telling of the numberless times she had experienced God's providence, when in hunger and want, when in sickness and almost in death. She pictured God as the loving and merciful—the tender and pitiful, who chastened not for his own pleasure's sake, but that he might win Heaven more saints, and lay up for the world-weary more celestial pleasures. She painted the heroism of forbearance; if in an humble way, with none to see the conflict and sing its coronation, the greater the triumph in the eyes of the holy God. She led her up so insensibly and surely into the temple of intercourse between man and his

Maker, that almost before she knew it, Gracie's young head was bowed upon its altar, and her tears were accepted by Heaven as sweet sacrifice.

"Is it so?" asked Gracie, one day; "must every one suffer?"

"My dear," said mother Mott, with her placid, beaming smile, "every one of God's children must wear the crown of thorns."

And her words were true—for even you, reader, wear the crown of thorns. Start not—it is so. It may not have left its blue and jagged mark upon your temples, and yet it has been there. Some wear it from the cradle to the grave—these are the favored of Heaven—others weave bright garlands about their brows, but if they travel the earth-stained way, the appointed time for man's pilgrimage, they must change it for the crown of thorns. Nor in vain does poor human nature wear this painful crown. Looking up to Heaven, the Divine One could triumph, though the sweat of anguish trickled from beneath His crown of thorns. Shall we not live so, that when we reach the portals of His mansion, He with His own loving hand, may substitute upon our stained foreheads the crown of life eternal?

"To go, or not to go—that is the question?" repeated Gracie, looking up one day from the new dress she was busy upon.

"To Letta's party, you mean—why, it would look rather ungrateful, after her kindness, not to go," said her mother, quietly.

"So I'm afraid," responded Gracie, "but really I don't feel much like party-going."

"You're getting too notional, daughter," said her mother, looking anxiously at Gracie's thoughtful forehead.

"It isn't that," was the rejoinder, "but parties always did seem such silly things to me."

"Oh! how can you think so?" exclaimed the more volatile Ella.

"I can't abide kissing," returned Gracie, "and there is so much of it at such parties!" then suddenly recalling her last, most vivid recollection of her experience in that way, she burst into a fit of laughter; for the image of Paul Halburton, the fastidious and elegant gentleman, spotted like a leopard, rose before her with all its ludicrous details. Ella looked on amazed, but Mrs. Amber, interpreting the scene, joined in the laugh, until after awhile the former began laughing also, though protesting with all her might she didn't know what it was for.

The dress was made, and Gracie nicely established inside of it. To be sure, could she rise upon your vision in the costume of that time, possibly we should both smile at the idea that she was either tastefully or becomingly attired. The body was cut low; that is, it was so called, though not a tythe of the shoulders was visible, the edge coming round at the distance of half a hand from the throat, and towards the bosom, in a sort of semi-circle. The belt, or pretty white sash, that had been Letta's gift, encircled the waist much nearer the arm-pits than the hips, and the skirt being only moderately full, hung somewhat straight, or would but for the roundness and symmetry of a more than commonly beautiful form. Three little ruffles encircled the hem of this skirt, three smaller ruffles each sleeve, and another of white cambric, artistically quilled, was gathered in the top of her waist. Her arms were left bare, white and well shaped they were, her feet were encased in pretty little slippers, on which were fastened rosettes—a becoming fashion for any age—her hair brushed into fine ringlets, hung unconfined by comb or ribbon over her speaking, blushing face; and Ella, at the last, triumphantly displayed a rose, which she had purchased with her remaining stock of money, and fastened it in the bright brown curls.

All the Beauvine family, from the limp baby to Allan, came up to see Gracie dressed for the party. Old Allan said she looked sweet as a new blown flower, and Sally Malinda, standing at a respectful distance, absolutely devoured her with her eyes, for to Sally, Gracie was almost a divinity.

"Now if I was a youngster as I used to be," said Allan, quaintly, "I'd take ye under the shadder of my wing."

"You can keep your wings folded," responded Gracie, laughingly, "for little Benny is my beau; he would feel dreadfully disappointed if I went with anybody else."

CHAPTER XLIII.

LETTA HOLDEN'S PARTY.

IN unusually high spirits, Gracie entered the dwelling of the Holdens. The light blazed out with a cheerful welcome, and she tripped in the entry unnoticed, going cautiously through the long passage, hoping to surprise Letta. Suddenly her step faltered and she shrank back as if smitten by an unseen hand—for there sat Hart, half hidden by the door, the upper part of which was composed of small plates of glass—his face, which she could plainly see, turned towards Letta, who sat close by his side.

Handsome than ever he looked in that full light, his brow wider and higher, his eyes more lustrous, but at that moment he was saying in a sorrowful voice, "I never could have believed that of Gracie Amber."

Nearly suffocated with the unexpected pleasure of beholding him, and extreme apprehension at the import of his lan-

guage, Gracie turned to go out into the cold air again, but just then there came a rap at the door, and impelled forward by fear that she should be caught as a listener, she rushed towards the stairs, and gained a chamber, where she sat down for a moment to calm the violent beating of her heart.

"La! Gracie Amber, is that you?" exclaimed Mrs. Holden, coming forward in all the glory of a deep green satin, her coarse fat arms bare, and her manner comically vulgar: "you're come airly, havn't you? Guess you heered Hart had come home," with her low, quizzical manner.

"Indeed I did not!" exclaimed Gracie, suppressing her rising resentment; "I assure you I was quite astonished when I saw—" she stopped a moment, there was a painful feeling in her throat.

"Oh! you saw him then," resumed this woman of wooden impulses: "well, don't you think he's growing up into a handsome gentleman? He's been sick enough, but he don't look like it now, does he? Folks say it will be a nice kink for Letta, but I tell 'em its time enough to think of that when she buys her wedding dress."

Gracie busied herself in throwing off, and putting away carefully, her well worn shawl. She had a moment before resolved to go home; but calling pride to her aid, she determined not to allow Hart's indifference, if he should be indifferent, or Mrs. Holden's coarseness to have the least effect upon her feelings or her conduct. So with a strong effort suppressing that strange choking that all have suffered at some sad period of life, she prepared to go down with a cheerful face.

"La! what a handsome dress you've got, Gracie!" was Mrs. Holden's next wonder. "New, too, ain't it? where'd you git it? what did't cost?—a present! laws me! I wish I could git such pretty things given to me!"

Gracie's cheek burned hotly, but she went on with her

preparations very calmly, and at last succeeded in fitting a pair of well worn silk gloves that had been her mother's.

"Ain't there a gal staying at your house?" Mrs. Holden queried, scrutinizing Gracie closely all the time.

"Yes, there is a young girl boarding with us," Gracie made answer.

"Well, 'cause Letta, my daughter, didn't see fit to 'vite her, Dick's taken a miff and gone off to his place of business. What kind of a gal is she? a low, common kind of thing, ain't she?"

Gracie involuntarily smiled, and it was upon her lips to ask Mrs. Holden what her definition of low and common was, but she repressed the question, and merely replied, that she was on the contrary a pretty and well-bred girl.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Holden, who seemed bent on detaining her young guest—"well, I didn't know; Dick seems to have taken a vilent shine to her, and Dick is old enough now to wait upon a young woman—but whoever he waits on I wishes to be respectable; you understand me, Gracie Amber."

Oh! yes, Gracie understood her perfectly.

"Look here, can't you fix my hair into a *toilet*?" asked Mrs. Holden, holding her head comically on one side, and puckering up her lips as if she felt conscious she had said something remarkably smart.

"Into a what?" asked Gracie, with difficulty restraining a laugh.

"Why, into a *toilet*, as fashionable ladies says; it's unbecoming as I've got it now, and I'm a dreadful hand at fixing up. There, if you'd just stick this blue rose next of that yaller one—so—and then jest didify my hair on each side of the cap somehow, I'd be very much obligated to you;" and Gracie, too obliging to decline, patiently took off her gloves and set about the task.

"You'll be glad to see Hart, won't you?" tormentingly

continued Mrs. Holden, secretly pleased to hear by the hum of voices below that the company was gathering.

"As an old friend," said Gracie, calmly, "I certainly shall."

"There was a good deal of talk about you and Hart, some time ago," said the would-be lady, significantly.

"Indeed!" said Gracie.

Her cool replies evidently spurred up the "'plece man's" wife, and her voice grew sharp.

"I wouldn't make much of him afore folks to-night, Gracie, if I was you; I feel 's if I oughter caution you, bein' as you havn't any father, and I don't think—"

"Mrs. Holden, if you please, I can attend to my own business!" said Gracie, with hot cheek and flashing eyes; "if I had been the forward girl your speech implies, I should instantly have gone in the parlor where he sat. Neither you nor Letta need to fear any rivalry from me; I never did and I never shall thrust myself upon Hart Holden, or any other young man; or solicit attentions that are not voluntarily given!"

So curt a speech had its intended effect. Before its fire and propriety, Mrs. Holden was struck mute. She lifted herself from her chair, fidgetting a little with her fingers, and looking covert glances of surprise at Gracie, who was quietly drawing on her gloves again.

This little mental excitement was, in some respects, the best thing that could have happened. It led the timid young girl to rely more upon herself; it gave her an air that the most finished lady might covet; it drove all sentimental regret away, for the time; and leaning on her pride so newly roused, she walked with the air of a young queen down the stairs. There, strange to say, stood her new acquaintance, Lovejoy, the collegian, as if just entered, though, by the way, he had been standing there for the last ten minutes, waiting for this very opportunity. With a gallant bow, he proffered his arm;

Gracie, confused, startled and somewhat pleased at the opportunity of showing that she was not in the least dependent upon Hart, accepted it, and together they entered the room. The young girl never in her life looked so absolutely beautiful as at that moment; her face was radiant with blushes, her eyes swimming in liquid light. A murmur ran round the room; Gracie did not notice—but Letta did—Hart's movement of pained surprise, nor Lovejoy's glance of triumph; neither did she see, for she would not for a time glance that way, that over the fine face of the former passed an agonizing look of grief—that he pressed his lips firmly together, and their edges were blue; that he sat restless, and his glances were wild and wandering. But after a little time, when all were engaged in conversation, and different games were being proposed, she did turn her eyes in the direction of that face. Hart was then talking earnestly to Letta, and the latter listening with blushing cheeks and downcast eyes. Then she said to herself, "I'll be just as merry as I can, to-night," swallowing with the resolution a few tears, little thinking that Letta, with burning jealousy in her heart, was listening to the half coherent language of one she now loved almost madly, or that his language referred entirely to herself.

Lovejoy was indefatigable in his attentions, and decidedly the handsomest, most graceful fellow in the room.

He never for a moment absented himself from Gracie's side, and although she could not confess it was pleasing to be shown such marked attention by a stranger, yet the natural vanity of which all young girls have a share, and the stinging inuendoes she had that evening heard, induced her to accept it. Once she passed by Hart. He paused abruptly, came back and offered his hand. But the manner in which he took her's frightened Gracie. His grasp was quick, but death could not be colder or more clammy than his fingers, and he

did not press, but wrung her hand. Oh! for the moment how she longed to draw him away, and ask what had estranged him so; but his brow was dark as she looked up. Helpless and hopeless seemed the love in her own heart then, and his words flashed like fire on her brain—"I never could have believed that of Gracie Amber!" *That*—what? what did he think she had done? What had false friends said she had done? Why did he throw her hand from him with gestures so impatient, while his eyes blazed in her own? For the second time in her life she experienced the deathly sickness that precedes a swoon; the lights glittered and danced, the forms about her grew unsteady; she shuddered with an icy chill, and gladly availing herself of Lovejoy, the collegian's arm, sank down in the seat to which he led her. There, after a while, she revived—but the party had no longer any charm for her. Her heart felt heavy; and truly, she said to herself, it seemed a huge weight of lead instead of a human heart. Presently she was urged to play; this was what Letta had been dreading, but glad to escape from one who had grown revolting to her, Gracie mechanically moved to the piano. The instrument had been put in good tune, and its tones were very soft and sweet; so instead of shedding the tears that had welled up, up even to her eyes, the unhappy girl struck a few wild chords, the prelude to a little Swiss minor air. Every voice was hushed as it rang out so mournfully sweet; and, at its close, Gracie looking up, met the dark eyes of Hart fixed upon her with a look of *such* reproof—such bitter, agonizing, sorrowful reproof, that again she nearly fainted, and turned from the instrument to beg that Letta would accompany her up stairs—that she felt sick and must return home.

"If you will go into the room a moment," whispered Letta, "I will get your things." Hart followed close upon Letta—caught both of Gracie's hands in his, gazed at her for a mo-

ment, then passionately cried, "Oh! Gracie, I forgive you for making me forever miserable—but I warn you—I warn you against Paul Halburton's nephew—he is a libertine—no woman's honor is safe with him; farewell, my poor Gracie—always remember that I forgive you!" and he sprang in a frenzied way from the room.

Gracie, through the blurring tears, saw Letta, who stood where Hart had just stood.

"What have you told him?" Gracie articulated with difficulty, her lips stiffened and white.

Letta was frightened at her appearance—and stammered, "nothing; I have told him nothing."

"What have you *told* him?" cried Gracie, with a despairing gesture, catching at Letta, who was retreating fearfully: "but never mind," she added, with a sickly smile, making her face only more ghastly, "God will avenge my cause—remember if you *have* injured me, God will punish you. Remember—remember!"

Lovejoy would have waited upon her to her home—but she repelled him in a manner it was impossible to mistake, and chagrined and mortified, he yet remained behind, long enough to give his room-mate the impression that he had returned with her.

As it happens often—and men rightly call it providence—Allan Beauvine was passing, when Gracie, faint, irresolute, stood in the door-way, preparatory to returning. He had been searching for Dick in the different saloons where Paul Halburton was proclaimed the master spirit. He had seen, sitting haggard and sleepless at the various tables, the devotees of this ruling passion, the parent of so many foul deeds, from the murder of innocents, with slow and cruel hand, to the quick, sharp stroke of self-destruction. He had beheld at one dark hell, Professor Rose, with the cards held against his spectacles. He had seen the gay, the haggard, the

young, the old, all stooping, all shut up soul and body, and chained in the excitement of the game! Among the latter, the poor old wreck, "Bob Homer," as those who had been intimate with him in his palmy, mercantile days, called him, the father of Kate, to whose hand Lovejoy, the collegian, aspired. For, alas! the old passion was renewed with seven times its force; the one spirit had come back into the swept and garnished house, and brought seven-fold wickedness, and no effort of his daughter could save him now. Paul Halburton had dragged him slowly down, as he had said he would, and though he was not there this night, seldom an evening passed in which he was not the antagonist of the grey but sturdy old gambler.

Allan had also met Dick, who swaggered and played himself on a small scale, whenever he had opportunity, and who told him in a loud voice, aside, that Hart Holden was getting to be a regular "hack" at the rooms, adding, with the peculiar wink of his little grey eye, "you know what a sanctissimus fellow Hart always was, but collidge has taken the starch out of him, it has." But as to any information he received about Jupe, he might as well have staid at home.

Now while we leave poor Gracie, the victim of slander, and the subtle machinations of those who envied and reviled her, we will in another chapter review Hart Holden's intimacy with the sapient Lovejoy, and its results.

CHAPTER XLIV.

IN WHICH HART HOLDEN DISPLAYS HIS FIRMNESS OF PURPOSE.

THE young collegian's first impression with regard to Fred Lovejoy had been favorable. He beheld in him a frank, joy-

ous, happy-hearted fellow, rather lazily disposed where intellectual effort was needed, but otherwise, brisk, merry, full of fun, and boisterous nature, yet polished, handsome, agreeable in his address, and very winning in manner. Hence Hart was quite elated when he learned that Lovejoy wished to occupy the same room with him, and entered into a more intimate acquaintanceship with all the eager zest of youth. As the weeks went by, the more aristocratic circles widened around young Holden, leaving him in the centre alone and unsupported. Various rumors in circulation tended to disparage him on the score of his birth, or rather his dubious relationship with the policeman's family. Some whispered that he had no legal parentage—others that he was Jem's own son, and all looked coldly on him save Fred Lovejoy, who being himself under the ban of suspicion from the first, although he was still treated with seeming consideration on account of his rich uncle, decided all the more willingly to stand by him. And the question of his birth was not all the reason why the select and aristocratic youths chose to look coldly upon young Holden. He was not leaden-headed, as too many of the Cambridge young gentlemen proved to be; and he arose so rapidly to the front ranks in his studies, and to the superior regards of the "grave and reverend seniors" at its head, that his success stimulated his less fortunate, though more fastidious peers, into an active dislike.

The young man, after the first keen sting inflicted by this knowledge had lost its poison, smiled at the high pretensions of these sneerers, and set his foot on the neck of their contempt. Their coldness only stimulated him to renewed exertions, and for a time made him cling more fondly to his class-mate. He treated them with lofty contempt, which he could well afford to do, being the tallest, both bodily and mentally, in their ranks. Solaced by the love of Gracie Amber, regarded with more than common regard by several of the really best families in the clas-

sic old town, and the cliques of the professors, where learning and genius shone in the beauty of choice setting, from rare stores of learning, he whistled at the toadies, whose only excellency was that they call themselves, sons of "my Lord Tomnoddy." Why Gracie's letters became so rare after a few short weeks, he could scarcely divine. He wrote to his foster sister, urging her to see the girl he loved above every other—and it may be imagined what sort of visits Letta paid to Gracie, especially as both the latter's correspondence and Hart's were safely concealed in her own private box, with the exception of one or two that had been returned to him unopened, and as all the rumors which Miss Maligna, aided by Paul Halburton, had put in circulation, were freely reported to him. Meanwhile Lovejoy, acting upon the hints of his psuedo uncle, instituted himself tempter in chief to the unsuspecting student; introduced him first to the gaming-table, and then, by easy degrees, into other haunts of dissipation. But he failed in his object. Hart could not be coaxed into handling the cards, even for amusement; he had an innate horror of a gambler; he detested cards. The theatre and the circus were next tried; the former dazzled and delighted him, but when he found the passion for play-seeing and play-reading growing with the food that strengthened it, he, with a rare self-command, attained to but by the truly great, resolved to limit such questionable indulgence. It unfitted him for study, he said—it dazzled his mental sight, so that gorgeous fragments floated before his inner eyes all day, to the detriment of the sober study, to which in his determination to excel he lent the whole of his powerful intellect. So he said on the night when Fred, through great urging, had prevailed upon him to attend the performance of a celebrated star—"it shall be the last time—at any rate till I have means and leisure, that these pleasures may not infringe upon my more important duties." And when inclination whispered,

"your friend pays for all, it costs you nothing," he silenced the tempter with a firm "it shall be the last time." And while he was gazing with mingled pleasure and pain upon the beautiful pageantry, the gorgeous delineation of tropical scenery, the bewildering loveliness of the syrens who trod the boards, and beheld the mists of silvery clouds that floated about fair figures, the golden show and glittering pomp, he murmured—and while Fred was feeling warily for his approbation—

"After all, how strange the final judgment will seem to us!"

"Why?" asked Fred, with a sneer, but covertly watching his face.

"Because," said Hart, as the curtain fell, "we are so apt to think in the midst of this splendor, when great men and great women stand forth in the blaze of wealth, fame and flashing lights, that the honor and the applause meted to them are lasting things; yet many a poor, unknown, patient soul, like mother Mott, for instance, whom I spoke to you about, will in that day stand modestly forth, and be applauded as truly great, rich and honored, while, perhaps, we shall look in vain for these painted gods."

"Go to the —, you block of wood!" thought Fred, scowling with angry eyes at the finely lighted face of the enthusiastic speaker, and from that night, finding it impossible to drag his friend down to his own grovelling desires, or emulate his pure high-mindedness, he hated him with a very lively and potent hatred. But an open enemy it was not in his power to be. Nature, who made him a skulker, a double-faced friend, a two-tongued deceiver, forbade that. To his room-mate's face, he was the same easy, trusting, careless fellow; behind his back he carried a secret, ever bare stiletto, the point dipped in poison, and with that he stabbed his reputation as often as he could. And yet there were mutual points of resemblance between these young men; they were

of an exact height—their voices were similar—both were graceful, both erect and straight as arrows—but the mind—the heart—the intellect, there all resemblance ceased.

To Lovejoy, young Holden had incautiously unfolded some of the drama of his love—and therefore when the latter went to him with a plausible story, and so warily warned him that Gracie was fickle, Hart allowed him to mingle in his sympathy, little thinking how false it was. And as time went on and no letters came from Gracie, and only sad news from his foster sister, who he thought wrote to him in anguish of spirit, as if compelled for his sake to state unpleasant truths, he began to strive to throw the image he had worshiped from his soul's altar, and devote himself with a desperate energy entirely to his studies. One solace he had, the society of the beautiful, noble-hearted Kate Homer, the gamester's daughter. Alas! it was a solace purchased with her own peace. Many of the students aspired to a union with her; among them Fred Lovejoy, who was by far her most earnest lover. In proportion as Kate encouraged Hart to an innocent brotherly communion, Fred's hate grew strong towards his rival. Hart admired Kate, as did all who met her, and were drawn by the magic of her smiles and her gentle converse into the circle that her presence charmed; he venerated her genius, wondered at her beauty—nothing more, while from the first she loved him with a maidenly love—in secret and in silence.

It was at her house that Fred, instigated by a fiendish malice, whispered in his ear what he said was the current report. It only confirmed what Letta Holden had vaguely hinted at in a letter, that day received, but it fell with stunning force upon the young man's brain; it paralyzed him, thought and action; and when some one in the company spoke to him a moment afterward, he did not respond, but gazed stupidly in his face. A fever followed, severe and prolonged. Seven weeks did he linger; seven weeks Kate

Homer was his nurse, for she would not allow him to be removed, and during that time, in his moments of delirium, from his own lips she had heard the story of his love, and what seemed to be that love's cruel return. It was then she learned of Lovejoy's duplicity; and though she had before encouraged him, as the friend of Hart Holden, to an intimacy purely fraternal, henceforth she treated him with marked coldness. The young man felt her changed demeanor, and his hatred grew fierce towards Hart; he could no longer conceal it, but avoided his presence and sneered at his superiority. He had learned, also, what Hart had failed to discover, that there were tenderer glances, softer accents, more timid, blushing acknowledgments on her part, and finally the constraint that would not betray tenderness, and yet could not mark coldness, in the presence of young Holden, and pen cannot trace the oaths he took, the strong blaspheming with which he coupled the name of his former friend—the rigid brow as he strode from place to place—the hot words of passion with which he ever and anon regaled the air, in imagination breathing out his passion for Kate Homer. Foiled in his endeavors to make a toy of Gracie, he yet found opportunities to injure her in the esteem of her lover.

The day after Letta Holden's party, he was sitting in the room which he still occupied with Hart. It was late; the sun faintly streaked the atmosphere as he sank down imbedded in clouds, the promise of to-morrow's rain. Lovejoy occupied a seat near the old-fashioned fire-place. He had just been burning a bundle of long forgotten papers, and their blaze diffused something of cheerful warmth and a not disagreeable odor through the room. Hart sat near the window, his head upon his hand, his eyes fixed upon a grave volume of Esculapius, but he seemed looking with a steady, iron-like glance through the book, into some dreamy scene beyond. The students seldom spoke together, but on this occasion,

Fred was meditating a malicious speech, as was evident from the many viperish glances he cast toward the dreamer.

At last he spoke—

"It seems to me," he said, "that those Ambers live in a strange, out-of-the-way sort of a place."

"How do you know?" asked Hart.

"I happened to find out," returned Lovejoy, dryly.

"Hart's cheek burned hotly. "I wish you would be silent on that subject," he said, with sudden energy.

"If a pretty girl likes a fellow, it's none of his fault," Lovejoy rejoined, with a demure air; "you can't tie down her preferences to one."

"Fred Lovejoy, beware, if I find you playing me false in this thing!" said Hart, flinging his book aside, "for if ever I do learn that in any way, shape or manner, you have aided in bringing about this estrangement between Gracie Amber and myself, I don't know but I shall shoot you."

"That's cool!" ejaculated Fred.

"The more I look into it," said Hart, still speaking excitedly, while Fred carelessly balanced the tongs on the palm of his hand, "the more I blame myself for not immediately seeing her in person; I have been a fool."

"Wise men are fools sometimes!" ejaculated Fred, "and fooled by women, too!"

"I have been fooled by no woman," retorted the other.

"No, but you came near it, and you're liable to go through the same experience again."

"What mean you?"

"Tragical!" exclaimed Lovejoy, holding up his hands in feigned admiration, as Hart stepped back with head elevated and faced his room-mate—"why, I'll tell you," he continued, hurriedly, "Kate Homer will play you another Amber trick, if you don't look out."

"Kate Homer!" ejaculated the angry young man, with quick gestures; "what have I to do with Kate Homer?"

"Be fooled by her as you have been by this Amber girl."

The cool insolence of the reply almost infuriated Hart; he sprang forward with clenched teeth, white lips, and hands contracted, while his chest expanded, and the veins on his forehead swelled with the violence of his emotions—but after a few deep and hard drawn breaths, he, by an effort that overawed his passion, restrained himself, and though the eye still flashed, and the cheek paled, he bethought him of the littleness, the contemptible meanness of the young libertine before him, and his equable manner returned. But his voice was almost hoarse as he replied, with a kindling eye—"Kate Homer has a nature as far beyond that of her would-be traducer, as heaven is above earth. That is enough to say of her. As to Miss Amber, whom you coarsely call 'that Amber girl,' I have merely to add that if any *donkey* presumes after this to mention her name slightly in my presence, he shall be kicked either out of the door or the window, it don't matter much which to me."

Lovejoy was a coward. As he looked, or strove to look resolutely in the face of young Holden, his face grew livid with hate and fear, but he either deemed it unsafe to reply, or dared not trust his vile thoughts.

He spoke after a pause—"you are mightily crotchety—and make as much bluster as the old fellows in the ceiling up there."

He raised his head as he spoke—the loosened rafters shook with the sportive frolics of the rats; there must have been an army of them.

"For my own part," he continued, in a voice that gave the lie to the strange expression of his face—"those creatures disturb my slumbers of nights."

"And my studies," echoed Hart, in a low voice.

"They will mine, when I choose to give my nose to the tender mercies of the frost, and hug an old blanket into mid-

night to nurse a sickly flame, and wear my eyes over a worm-eaten edition like that—but, seriously, they are a nuisance. Last night I think there were several in the room.”

“I know there were,” responded Hart, not seeing the chill and dreadful look that changed the face of his roommate.

“Well, that is cheerful,” replied the other: “I go for destroying the vermin—what will do it?”

“Arsenic,” said Hart, “you know as well as I.”

“Yes, but is that most effectual?” asked Fred, his changing countenance growing repulsively hideous.

“It’s the best thing in the world,” replied Hart, holding his book up closer to the dim pane.

Fred lifted his shoulders; the movement was something more than a shrug. All that night, while Hart slept he watched, listening as he tossed, full of burning jealousy, to the rats as they gambolled among the rafters, and thinking strangely enough of arsenic.

CHAPTER XLV.

JUPE’S WHEREABOUTS.

“PROFESSOR DACKER,” as many derisively called him, had for some years lived alone by himself in the midst of a little tract of woodland, some seven miles beyond Boston. It was then considered out in the country, and there were few roads in that region, the cattle being for the time surveyors and land holders, and their devious foot-paths, the only guide for

the more civilized animals, who chanced beyond the limits of the city. Dacker’s house was a hut. It consisted of two rooms, ingeniously intended to be very convenient, but, failing in their purpose, they presented a fantastic conglomeration of odd corners, queer nooks, out-of-the-way cupboards and triangular ends that nobody could see the least reason for. Dacker was his own architect, (or, as he sometimes said, he architected his own fortunes,) and his own carpenter. He built the “house” on a new ventilating plan of his contrivance, which would have answered admirably, only it admitted rain as well as air, and the mixture was hardly agreeable. Models of things that had no likeness to anything on the earth or above it, ornamented every accessible place. Books and pamphlets, and papers and almanacs, and quires of soiled paper, and bunches of dried apples and onions, and strings of squashes, and pans of beans, were scattered bountifully about, without regard to fitness or order. Dacker had given up his theory about light. In the summer season, Dacker cultivated vegetables, fruits, and flowers, and though he spoiled the greater part of them in experimenting, he yet lived tolerably on the product of his garden. One day during the harvest, while the little philosopher, experimenter and dabbler in sundries of the sciences, was busy in his little cornfield, a strange vision flitted before his eyes, passed on, and seemed to vanish into the earth, in the corner of his garden. Dacker stood confounded, believing himself the victim of some spectral illusion, when suddenly there broke upon his ear a faint moan. His heart was tender, and instantly surmising that the apparition was something human in distress, he left his work and hurried to explore his garden, twice plunging waist deep into neglected hollows, and receiving at each step a prick of the mischievous briars, that invaded his premises with unwelcome abundance. At last he gained the place, where prone on the ground was a pitiable object, white

and formless, about whose shrunk bones laid the folds of over-large garments.

"It is you, Jupe, ain't it!" he exclaimed, at last, in a voice of whispering wonder, after he had run his hand down the lean body, and half lifted the motionless head. "What are you 'way out here for—ha?"

"Been a walkin' and a walkin'," faintly answered the boy, shivering with a rattling sound.

"Walking where—from how far?" queried Dacker, "didn't I see you in the hospital, the last?"

Another moan and another shiver followed.

"Well, Jupe, ain't you able to get up or nothin'? can't you walk into the house?"

"Do'no," the boy groaned, striving to moisten his parched lips with a shrivelled tongue.

"Hungry, Jupe?"

"Say—gi' me—a—cold bite—and see 'f I ain't," he said, speaking in exhausted tones.

"Well, you wait, and I'll bring you some of the Dacker restorative, number three, and after you've swallowed that, I'll warrant you to walk ninety miles, lift a horse, or digest one of Abram Taylor's sermons, brimstone and all. Don't you stir, now," he continued, viewing his lean victim with a covetous air, as if one whom hunger had tied hand and foot cared much to fly from food and shelter; and away he went, after pulling out of his pocket a greasy kind of a book, which he kept for what he called his diary, and in which he pencilled a memoranda as he passed on to the house.

Soon he returned with a mixture, holding it carefully covered with one hand, and proceeded towards poor Jupe, from whose meagre body all strength seemed to have fled. Unfortunate Jupe! the liquid was hot, hotter, hottest; it brought every teaspoonful of blood in his body to his cadaverous face—it turned him purple—choked, strangled, and convulsed

him, while the happy doctor looked on and encouraged him, apparently as much pleased with his struggles, as a child would be in the possession of a rare toy; while he continually repeated, "it's good—it's fine—it like to choke me to death, but it didn't; it did me good; it'll do you good; it's seven kind of hot stuff, with their seven heats all mixed together, and they make a blaze of it; but it always cures; it would galvanate a corpse; there, don't you feel better?"

Jupe had been "galvanated" into a sitting posture, and with his feet jerked up almost under his chin, made such faces of ludicrous vexation as would establish the reputation of a humorous artist, could he but catch the various phases that passed like clouds over that strange countenance.

"G'long," he sputtered, tears gathering in his eyes, "g'long with your darned medicines; they didn't never do me no good—wish I hadn't come."

"Well, you're stronger, anyhow," persisted Dacker—"I can see it in your countenance. Now git up and lean upon me; go into the house, and git something to eat—the kettle's boiling."

Jupe hesitated for a moment, then arose, for the mixture had imparted a transitory strength, and leaned on Dacker's arm. Looking about him with an air of fear and distress, he hobbled along, and was soon comfortably seated in the midst of the litter, mechanical and literary, that disfigured Dacker's model house—"perfectly convenient for a family of ten," he boasted, though it contained but two rooms. Then the little man arrayed a table, on which stood a nondescript dish, in the latter of which he placed two or three handfuls of Indian meal, mixed it with water, and soon it was baking on a flat stone before the fire. Then he brought out a piece of dried meat, made tea in an earthen pot, and dispensing with the common luxuries of table-cover and knives, supper was soon ready.

"You see I might have a fresh bit often," he said, while they were eating; "but it ain't in my nature to kill the little birds, pretty things, though I have contrived several inventions to trap 'em, so as to study their natures; did you ever read my 'chemical laws of the feathered tribes?'" he asked, all unconscious of the fact, for the moment, that his uncultivated auditor had never advanced so far as *α* in the alphabet, and he went on with unconscious importance, giving Jupe his views upon the chemical laws, discussing the structure of various of the feathered tribe with elaborate and grave manner, and ended with a pompous repetition of one particular argument, which he said struck him with as much force as if he had not been the author of it.

Jupe gaped and listened, and listened and gaped, and finally went to sleep, which circumstance the oblivious Dacker never perceived till he snored; then he sat looking at the unconscious object, with wonder that so learned a discourse was listened to with so slight reverence. But Jupe found a bed and a home with the good-hearted man; he swallowed his medicines when they were not too fiery, listened to his curious documents with a wisdom as apparently sapient as if he had been some dignified professor, allowing him to experiment to his heart's content upon his solemn promise, that he would never send him to any hospital; worked for him with patient assiduity, and as the cold weather came on, and the keen air strengthened him, and the regularity of his diet, work and exercise, told favorably upon his own body and feeble mind, he could, for the first time in his life, experience a sense of comfort entirely new to him; he was very nearly happy.

One day, when Jupe had lived thus some five months, and the two had come to feel like congenial spirits, Jupe sat, with a flat stone in his lap, cracking nuts. The room was in more than its usual confusion, for Dacker was busy with some new invention which was to make him immortal, and with strips

of leather, cotton cloth, and an oil-pot by his side, worked away with an energy worthy of a better cause.

"Hard work, but it'll tell," muttered the little man, bending nearly double over some obstinate detail—"Jupe, hand me that old bit of paper—I want to place it under this rest; the oil is not quite dry, and gits on my clothes."

Jupe did as he was desired; some taking caption in the stained and rumpled half sheet, attracted the eyes of the experimenter; he looked and read on; farther down the column his glance ran still, as if impatient at itself for delaying, until at last it rested on the reward offered by Paul Halburton only a few weeks previous. At first he doubted the evidence of his eye-sight, and after a hasty glance at Jupe, who looked not unpicturesque, with his long hair hanging over his shoulders, his pale face reddened by the fire light, he coned carefully again, word for word, the mysterious advertisement. His leather glided from his lap, his tools fell softly to the floor—a light broke over the speculative face—he bit his lip in the eagerness of his delight, and then clasping his hands softly, surveyed poor Jupe with greedy eagerness.

"When did this paper come? have you read it? But then you can't read, poor fellow! it must be a great trial to you. I'd teach you myself if—" and then he chuckled as Jupe vacantly fixed his grey eyes on his face; "you can't read, more's the joy—I mean pity. Well, well, who knows, Jupe, but you're to live like a prince yet, my good fellow."

"Hey?" Jupe ejaculated, turning to his occupation.

"I say, who knows but what you was a stole child, taken by kidnaps, towel put over your mouth, blisters, plasters, all that sort of thing; now, what would you say, Jupe, if it should turn out that you're a rich man's son, anyhow?"

"Ask him not to put me in the hospital!"—muttered Jupe.

"Oh! crikey!" cried Dacker, unable to restrain his joy as the pleasures of possession opened up before him, "and

nobody's got the jewel but me!" he reiterated, springing from his seat and upsetting a small family of new inventions. "I'm the keeper of the precious lost valuable—it's in this casket of two rooms, this out-o'-the-way place in the rank woods. Expenses! won't I charge! clothes, yes, and medicine"—he added, snapping his fingers. "His doctor's bill, that would a bin fifty dollars, his, his—board and lodging, reckon that fifty—ain't it a lucky hit that Jupe——"

"Say, was that me you was a talkin' about?"

"La, Jupe, you're so still I'd almost forgotten you!" replied Dacker, softening his enthusiasm and sitting down to his employment. But he could not work for thinking of his unexpected good fortune, and for wondering how he should get Jupe to the city.

At length an idea struck him. He had been to town on the preceding day for the first time in a month, and he had noticed posted on the walls large bills, on which was set forth with uncouth letters, a foot long, the fact that *the* arrival of arrivals had transpired, "Agan's great circus troop," including every variety of talent that could be found in the world, and its first exhibition was to take place on the Wednesday following, when a new feature was to be introduced in the person of Miss Angy Harkness, who would personate an angel, and fly, with real wings, for full five moments around the area of the pit.

"Great, good, glorious!" Dacker responded to the recollection, slapping his knee, and then turning to poor Jupe, who had been restless from sympathy; he looked at him in an undecided way before he ventured to ask—

"Wouldn't you like to go to the circus, Jupe?"

The boy's big eyes dilated as, pausing in his employment, he said, "Wouldn't I! there ain't nary thing I likes as I likes that."

"Well, Jupe, we'll go to-morrow, you and I," responded

Dacker, chuckling at his easy conquest; "you shall see the circus, and as I've got a little money by me, we'll git a carriage and have a ride."

"I won't go in a carriage!" Jupe said stoutly.

"Oh, you won't! well, then, we'll foot it; you're a good deal stronger than you was, Jupe—it's good living and good sleeping, and Dacker's restoratives, that's been the up-building of you; ain't you thankful that I've took you in hand?"

"P'raps I do!" said Jupe.

"And if ever it should turn out that you was the son of a rich man, and 'd got lost sometime when you was a little feller, you'll do something for me, eh?"

Jupe stared with blank astonishment, but answered nothing.

CHAPTER XLVI

ANOTHER SERIOUS LOSS.

IN the morning Dacker was more than usually active, bustling about before breakfast, examining old, rusty pieces of iron, and huge blocks of wood, and speculating over a small model of a queer looking piece of ordnance that he called a gun, but that resembled an old-fashioned pump about as much. Jupe at last dressed himself, and came out with unwonted alacrity. Breakfast over, Dacker took his staff, tied an extra handkerchief about his neck, bundled Jupe in an old woollen coat, locked his house, and the two set off towards Boston. The frost tinkled as they broke its slender crust; the trees, crimson-boughed and scarlet-leaved, with here and there an edging of gold, were hung with sprays of diamond

drops; and the cool, dark aisles of the forest, with their arched roofs, stood in solemn grandeur, while with silent footsteps the messengers of the light glided to and fro, gilding column after column, and sprinkled a thousand sun-rays over the path. Jupe was somewhat apprehensive of daylight, and as they came in sight of the city he drew back, declaring that he felt as he used to when he had an aching "here an' there," and he didn't want to go. Dacker's ingenuity was taxed to its utmost in the management of his troublesome companion; now urging, now coaxing, now threatening in a good-natured way, he prevailed upon him at last to enter the noisy thoroughfares. Then he bent his steps in the direction of a friend's house, where it was pitiful to see how apprehensive the poor boy continued. Finding it impossible to leave him alone without exciting his suspicion, Dacker was obliged either to remain with him, or to take him wherever he went; the latter he preferred doing, as it was not in his nature to keep quiet. So Jupe drew his long legs after him, pausing at times to gaze in the shop-windows, or shuffling by suspicious looking individuals, whose identity he confounded with Jem Holden, until at last he stopped suddenly as Dacker exclaimed, "look here, Jupe, here's some clothes that'll jest fit you, boy—I've half a mind to buy 'em for you."

"What for?" stupidly queried Jupe.

"Because I've a mind to," replied Dacker; "go in, and we'll see how they fit."

Mechanically the boy followed, and when he came out it was difficult to recognize the half-starved, miserable, wharf-lodged vagrant, in the very decent and even respectable being into which his clothes had transformed him. Jupe was agape; he knew not what to think, say or do; he surveyed his new acquisition from top to toe, especially lingering over the bright buttons, nor did he notice the prolonged gaze, of which he was the subject, from a pale, delicate-faced girl,

who, as he stepped from the store, was in the act of entering. Neither had Dacker seen Gracie Amber, who had been toiling since early in the morning from shop to shop, in search of work for her mother and herself. Her heart throbbed when she recognized Jupe, though for a moment she could not believe it was him, so altered was he in every particular, so trim and cleanly his whole appearance. How she wished she might receive the reward offered by Paul Halburton for his recovery. But then the fact that it was offered by her enemy, and Jupe's present guardianship seemed to preclude the possibility of such a thing; and sadly she applied to the iron-faced man—and turned away again at his rough reply, "Got as many hands as we want, Miss!"

Meanwhile Jupe was closely watched, having no idea of the sudden importance into which he had grown. "He wasn't worth a darn," was the invariable estimate he put upon himself; perhaps his new clothes had somewhat changed his opinion, for he seemed very proud of them, and strutted after a fashion of his own.

Evening came, and Jupe sat under the great canvas tent, nervously delighted, his mouth hanging open, his eyes perpetually moving from side to side, his fingers clasp and intertwining, and his head keeping time to the noisy music. As the light flashed higher, and the smoky breaths of a thousand people hung wavering in the foul air; as their huzzahs burst forth at sight of their favorites on gayly caparisoned steeds, Jupe sprang to his feet and shouted himself hoarse. When he was pulled down again by Dacker, a crimson circle brightened either cheek; his eyes were lighted with a feverish lustre, but suddenly they fell, and he caught Dacker painfully by the arm, holding it tightly as he whispered almost aloud, "Say, Jem Holden's here, take me out of here." It was true, the policeman stood with an angry eye fixed full on poor Jupe, scarcely a yard from where he sat. And on a seat just

above him were Mrs. Holden and Letta, both eyeing him with hungry glances. To complete his misery, Dick Holden stood opposite, making malicious faces, while a low, triumphant cunning sat on his narrow brow, and his expression seemed to say as plainly as words could speak, "I've nabbed you now." Dacker felt by no means easy as he turned from the fat little woman's glowing cheeks and scarlet ribbons to Letta's anxious, over-dressed face, and Dick's triumphant sneer. Of course they knew of the offered reward, and all his fear was that they would find some means to make Jupe's whereabouts known. In fact, Jem was meditating a descent upon Jupe, who was not half soothed by Dacker's assurances of protection, and Dick was urging him on by winks and smothered ejaculations, when a cry of admiration, long and enthusiastic, rent the air at the appearance of a lovely child, no other than little Angy Harkness. Jupe held his breath and forgot his apprehensions, as the child performed her part. There was no answering smile on the angelic face; her innocent cheeks were bedaubed with red, and her hands had already lost their plumpness and roundness. Wearily she moved on, plying laboriously the gauzy wings that were affixed to her shoulders, her thin robes floating and scarcely concealing her form, her aspect almost one of terror, as she kept her gaze fixed steadily upward during her frightful journey.

So breathlessly intent were the spectators till the close, that nobody noticed that the slight vapory curtain, that, as I before said, might have been caused by the breath, grew more dense, until a strong smell of smoke pervaded the great inclosure, and a chorus of voices cried lustily, "fire, fire, the tent's on fire!" Dire confusion straitway followed. The women shrieked, the men rushed for the opening, and those who were on the highest seats ripped great rents with their knives, and in many cases let themselves down. Fainting

and furious declamation became the order of the hour. Children were crushed under foot—the horses became unmanageable and fled through the darkness, trampling down human beings in their way, while the frightful shrieks and execrations, the piercing cries for help, and the frantic appeals to God, made a pandemonium most horrible to contemplate. In the midst of the crowd Jupe was hurled he knew not whither, now dragged, now knocked down, now thumped, until clinging to the trunk of a tree some yards from the melancholy scene, he became in a measure extricated, and could breathe freely. He could not see in the darkness, save when some one with a lantern passed hastily by; but there were voices coming towards him, and at the sound he instinctively crouched and held close by the tree.

"Well, *we're* all safe, anyhow," cried a shrill voice—"Now where do you suppose that vagabone went to?"

"I tried to keep an eye on him," exclaimed a gruffer voice, which Jupe recognized as the policeman's, "and meant to grab him at the close—but never mind, I'll haul him up tomorrow, and then we'll put him in safe quarters, where I warrant he won't care about leaving."

Jupe shook all over at this; he felt weak and sick; the excitement had been too much for him, and had brought on the old terror, with its accompanying pain. He could scarcely stand—and where he should go now for shelter he knew not. Suddenly it flashed upon his obtuse perceptions that Dacker had acted strangely all the day before—that he had watched him closely, not even allowing him to leave the room a moment, and, stupid as he was, he felt there must be a purpose in such conduct.

"What's the use?" he muttered to himself, shivering and crying in the darkness, "what's the use o' my bein' anyware. I'd s'lives be dead, I would; everybody's agin me; nary body 'll let me alone; wish I wasn't born with that name—"

it all comes along o' bein' called Jupe;" and then waiting till the footsteps and the voices were gone, the poor boy moved forward himself. The fire had been quickly extinguished, but the tent was in ruins.

Many persons had been wounded, some seriously; and, as for Dacker, he rushed about furiously, crying "Where's my boy—oh! Lord, five hundred dollars lost—my boy, five hundred dollars—oh! dear, oh! dear." Some people, compassionating him, plied him with questions as to the size of the "poor little darling," and pitied the distracted father, who, to add to his anguish, had probably suffered by pickpockets—but Dacker went home disconsolate; no traces of Jupe were to be found, after all his outlay—after all his expensive services. All that night he slept not for the agony of his loss.

CHAPTER XLVII.

GRACIE DESPONDENT.

THE veiled lady had disappeared. Where she had gone, and for what purpose, nobody knew. She had left the house in the same order in which she had placed it, having paid the rent for a year in advance, in order to hold the premises till her return. After Paul Halburton's visit she had been very ill—so ill as to require the services of Doctor Andover; so near death as to crave the attendance of a physician of souls, and accordingly Doctor Gilbert Waldron was called in. The medical man kept a profound silence with regard to his observations of the patient and her surroundings; and the good minister ascended to his pulpit on the following Sabbath so pale and solemn, and yet grand in his solemnity, that people

looked up to him with awe, and listened to his unusually impressive sermons with a new and strange interest. Paul Halburton no longer graced the old church with his elegant presence. He had grown restless and moody of late; an unhappy frown lingered above his brow, yet never was he more prosperous. He had in course of erection a splendid villa on the outskirts of the city, and a block of magnificent stores (for that period) going steadily on to completion in the heart of Boston. Report said he was on the eve of marriage with Miss Kate Homer, of Cambridge. The Ambers, meanwhile, had not flourished. Hard times had fallen upon the community; work was difficult to be obtained, and compensation very scanty when it came. Mrs. Amber lost her strength daily—a slow consumption seemed hastening her to the tomb. Mother Mott had been long ill with some rheumatic affection, and could not often render her valuable services. Ella Van Ness was out of work, but her voice and her merry, cheerful spirits were invaluable. She only wept by herself when she saw the little children compelled to stay at home, day after day, because they had not clothes fit to be seen. She wept by herself as she saw the poor, patient widow, bearing her illness so patiently for Gracie's sake; and she wept when she looked upon the paling cheeks of one who seemed almost a foster-sister, dear Gracie, who smiled with tears in her eyes, and said brave words with quivering lips; but she never wept to be seen.

"That sweet rose! I am so glad you ever brought it here, my dear," Mrs. Amber often said, as Ella watered carefully a thriving bush, and picked away the dead leaves. And what so acceptable to the failing eye as the soft colors of the rose! what so grateful to the vanishing sense as its delicate perfume! It is like a pure thought in the heart, gladdening everything it looks upon. It is like a little spring in the wilderness, refreshing the eye. It is like a babe in the house,

that everybody wants to love and kiss. It draws sunshine from without and joy from within.

Put a rose in the window. It is womanly to love roses. "Little children and flowers," said a poet, "make a paradise of earth." So they do, and it is fitting that they should go together. Roses for the hair! away with your jewels; your cold, hard, glittering things, that have no precious life in them. But the rose leaf palpitates; it blushes; it bears a velvet cheek; it trembles and thrills at the tremors of the breeze; it changes from beauty to beauty. Look at it, and say to yourself, "what matchless skill that can thus plan the fibres of a leaf, and cover them with a robe with which the costliest scarlet cannot vie! What power to throw somewhere in the inmost heart of this charming creation, a perfume so delicious that the senses are enthralled. What love to place it where the poorest may feel the influence of its presence; may pluck it with unrebuked hand, and make it bloom in the thick atmosphere of the city, in the humblest dwelling, that it may bless the lowly as they toil.

Ella was fond of the beautiful, and under the guidance of Mrs. Amber, bid fair to become neat and tidy. She repaid the kindness of her friends with devoted love; and while work could be obtained, labored assiduously with her needle, giving every cent toward the maintenance of the little family; but now there was a dearth of employment, what could she do but sing? She had thought seriously of applying to certain theatrical managers, who are always glad of talent if they can get it "dirt cheap," but the widow and Gracie seriously dissuaded her from that plan; "let us wait a little," said the widow, "God will do something for us."

"Oh! mother, if I had your faith," murmured Gracie, one day, with a sigh. "But all the noon I have been searching for work, meeting with nothing but repulses, and I come home to find you with only a loaf of bread in the closet—nothing

to nourish you, and the children hungry. If *she* were not away," she added, alluding to the veiled lady, "I would make bold to go to her, and tell her our wants. I know she would help us."

At that moment the snow began to fall.

"Oh! how pretty!"

"Oh! how nice and soft!"

"Now for a grand time snow-balling!"

Such were the exclamations of the children, as they stood at the window, watching the pure falling flakes of the first snow-storm. Ella was fashioning over an old garment of her own for the eldest, but she paused and ran laughing to the window, the veriest child among them. Gracie and her mother could not but gaze with mournful thoughts of approaching winter.

"The wood is almost gone, mother," said the former, softly, moving closer to her mother's side.

"I know it," the widow replied, "but Allan would never see us want for food—he might lend us some, you know, and we could perhaps repay him by and by."

"Oh! I wish I could get something to do!" exclaimed Gracie, bitterly. "If I could only keep school—only teach music—only write—only do something that would keep us from starvation!" she added, with sorrowful earnestness.

"We shall not starve, Gracie," Mrs. Amber said mildly, smoothing the dark locks on the forehead of her child; "God will not let us starve."

"Why then is all so dark? Why have I no friends? Why are those I love made my enemies? Why?" she bowed her head, and her frame shook with convulsive sobs.

Mrs. Amber said nothing until the paroxysm was past, then she beckoned to the children and the tearful Ella, to turn their attention from the weeping girl, and bending over her, soothed her with sweet expressions and many loving

promises from the word of God, until, at last, composure regained, Gracie arose, bathed her eyes, and drew the table out for the evening meal. This over, she would have put aside the meagre bread and the portion of a plain dish remaining, without satisfying her hunger; but her mother forbade her. "Let none of it be left," she commanded. "I have faith to believe that He who feeds the young ravens when they cry, will provide us with food to-morrow; eat it all," and the hungry children did eat all, even to the very crumbs.

"Why, how very cold it is!" cried Ella, cowering over the bright flame; "since the sun went down, the fire don't seem to give the least warmth."

"Put your shawl on," said Gracie, "and sing your merriest; that will keep up your spirits; and I shall forget the cold."

"Oh! don't you wish fairy stories were true?" asked Ella, half laughing, as she threw her old shawl over her shivering shoulders.

"Yes," responded Gracie, "and some little sprite would appear, standing on the hearth—a little, yellow old man, with a long white beard, and a wand in his hand—then, if he should ask us to wish, what would you wish first?"

"Why, you know there must be a great many millions of grains in that great heap of ashes there; I'd wish that it might be turned into sparkling gold—every grain a dollar. And how funny it would be to see him nod his little old head, and—'presto'—the shining gold would come showering at our feet. What would you wish?"

"That mother might get well," whispered Gracie, the tears starting to her eyes, as she gazed to the bed where her mother had fallen into an uneasy slumber.

"Oh! so would I, if I had just thought a moment," responded the impulsive Ella, "but where's the use of wishing?" she added, sighing deeply, "how often I have wished

that I was educated, or had talent as some people have. Now, if I could only write poetry as beautifully as you can, I should be so happy; please read me what you wrote last night."

Gracie, with modest eagerness, took the little poem from her desk, and crouching down to the fire again, read the following:—

WROUGHT INTO GOLD.

I saw a smile---to a poor man 'twas given;
And he was old;
The sun broke forth; I saw the smile in heaven
Wrought into gold.
Gold of such lustre never was vouchsafed to us;
It made the very light of day more luminous.

I saw a toiling woman, sinking down,
Foot-sore and cold;
A soft hand covered her; the humble gown
Wrought into gold,
Grew straight imperishable; and it will be shown
To smiling angels gathered round the judgment throne.

I saw a grieving babe, and motherless;
It found a fold
With a poor widow; how her sweet caress
Wrought into gold,
Made her face glisten, and her eyes grow bright with feeling;
The inner light God gives his chosen saints revealing.

Wrought into gold; we that pass down life's hours
So carelessly,
Might make the dusty way a path of flowers,
If we would try;
Then every gentle deed we've done, or kind word given,
Wrought into gold, would make us wondrous rich in heaven.

"Oh! if I could write like that!" cried Ella, her eyes sparkling appreciation, "or if I could only make music so expressive as you seem to, without an effort—"

"But your voice, your voice," broke in Gracie, "your voice will bring you a fortune yet."

Ella shook her head. "I begin to believe in fate," she murmured, mournfully. "Now look at me: at my birth my mother died, and there was I, a poor crying baby, with nobody to care for me or give me nourishment. Papa was an absent sort of man, and never looked at me, I suppose, after her death; and so I grew untended—some way, I suppose, for I grew. I've heard one of my sisters say, though, that I was never without black and blue spots from my head to my heels."

"Poor child!" exclaimed Gracie, laughing.

"Then, when I was two years old, father married an ugly woman. I don't say that because she was a stepmother, but because she really was an ugly, cross, wicked woman. My sisters say that father married her, mostly, because she had money; I don't know. Why, Gracie Amber, I'm almost perished right over this fire; ain't you cold?"

"Somewhat," said Gracie, after she had adjusted the wood, so that the fire burnt clearer; "but go on."

"Well, the first thing she did was to break my arm."

"Oh!" cried Gracie, with a shudder.

"Yes, the very first week my misfortunes begun; she let me fall and broke this right arm, and soon after that, because I was weak and sickly, she began to neglect me, and treated me ill. A babe was born when I was four years old, and to that child I was a slave day and night—oh! how I did drudge! I can't look back to one happy moment in my childhood. She wouldn't let me go to school, and learn, as others of my age did, but when my father died, put me in the kitchen to wash and scrub, and do all the hardest of the work."

"How inhuman!" said Gracie.

"At last my sisters, who are none of the most tender-hearted, were ashamed of her cruelty, and took me away, but I fared just about as bad. Nobody, but your mother, ever

seemed to think me real flesh and blood—but a sort of machine, I expect, either wood or iron. Now only think of that, and then of your happy life; happier at any rate than mine," she added, on a sudden recollection.

"And yet," said Gracie, musingly, "it seems as if my childhood was not a very happy one, for poor father always mistrusted me, and seemed to think I should never as a woman do him credit—I hardly can tell why."

"I've heard said," said Ella, *naively*, "that geniuses were always stupid children."

"I was stupid enough, I expect," Gracie replied, amused at the simplicity of her companion; "but dear, kind father, he expected so much of me; and it has not been 'fair sailing,' as Allan calls it, with me, since then, dear Ella," she added, thinking of Hart Holden, and suppressing the tears.

JUPE FOUND.

"Hark!" exclaimed Mrs. Amber, starting upright in her bed, her eyes glassy and glaring.

"What is it, mother?" cried both Gracie and Ella, terrified at her look.

"Some one is in distress; some one is groaning, Gracie, I certainly heard it as plainly as I hear you."

"Where, mother?" ejaculated Gracie, while Ella turned pale, and cast a frightened glance around the room, now gloomy with shadows.

"I heard it, I seem to hear it now, can I be dreaming?" she murmured, pressing her hand to her forehead.

"I think you were dreaming, mother," Gracie replied, soothingly, "there has been no noise at all—I should have heard it."

"It must be so; are the children sleeping well? look, Gracie," persisted the widow.

They were all in a sweet slumber, their cheeks rosy and shining with health.

"Strange—isn't the room very cold, my child?"

"Yes, mother—Ella and I can scarcely keep warm."

"You haven't fire enough—I wish you had brought some wood up before dark."

"We can go to bed, mother, and keep comfortable."

"Yes, but I wish there was some wood here—in case of anything happening in the night; I wonder if Allan would go down into the cellar and get some."

"I'll see," responded her daughter, and taking the light, she left Ella with her mother, and proceeded down stairs to Allan's room. There seemed to be some great confusion there—Allan was berating Sally Malinda, she in her turn scolded one of the others, and the mother's weak treble piped above all. Gracie could not summon courage to face the uproar, so, as she had often done before, she "screwed her courage to the sticking point," and bravely unbolting the huge door, went steadily down cellar. The snow had drifted in at the trap door, and a cold wind nearly blew her light out, but she sheltered it till she got to an old horn lantern that Allan kept hanging there, and placing the small lamp within, she proceeded to the fast diminishing wood-pile. She had hardly reached it when, with a shriek, she rebounded; for some object laid against it that resembled a corpse. With scarce strength enough to mount the stairs, she proceeded to Allan's room, where, bursting in, her cheeks white and her eyes starting forward, she related what she had seen. Allan had that moment stepped out, but Sally Malinda was there, and Jack Flint; the latter looking sheepish, the former sullen. At Gracie's story, however, they both summoned courage to face the danger, if danger there was, and the stinging cold that there certainly was.

"It's Jupe!" cried Sally aghast, holding the lantern near, "and you found him first—oh, my!"

"Let us see whether he's dead or alive!" said the grocer's clerk, shaking the boy; he did not stir.

"By Jupiter, he's as cold as ice," ejaculated young Flint; "but he isn't dead, 'cause I hear him breathe; I shouldn't wonder if he was in what they call a lathergy."

"What's that?" queried Sally, while Gracie touched the cold hand.

"Why, a sleep that frozen people fall into, and never wake up; it's considered dangerous."

"We *must* rouse him!" cried Gracie, shaking the poor creature, and calling him loudly; then springing past them, she flew up stairs for a bottle of powerful salts that her mother used at times, and before a question could be asked, she was back again, applying it to the nostrils of the nearly senseless object. It revived him; but a few moments later and he had been past all hope—for his sleep was the sleep of death. With the greatest difficulty they dragged him up stairs, where Sally Malinda would have carried him into Allan's part of the house, but Mrs. Beauvine wrung her hands and shrieked at the white figure, and entreated them all to put it out doors; she wouldn't have nothing to do with it. "Put it out doors and call a watchman!" she cried, or she should faint right off. So Gracie begged them to lead him up stairs, she going before, to apprise her mother and Ella. Accordingly up they mounted, and soon the unfortunate laid before a blazing fire, and Gracie chafed his hands and brought him in a little while to consciousness.

"Wish they'd a let me die!" he muttered, looking sullenly in their faces.

But he lived, and early in the morning Allan was consulted about what was best to be done.

"It's a treat to think *you've* found him!" cried the honest fellow, rubbing his hands; "serves the rascal jest right; you're the one that ought to have the money."

"But is it just to give the poor creature up?" queried Gracie. "What do you suppose he wants with him?"

"I'll tell you," said Allan, winking furtively, and pushing Gracie's arm with his skinny fore-finger; the varmin's his boy, his'en—his *son*! didn't you scent the thing?"

Gracie started with astonishment.

"And I'll tell you his conscience plagues him, bad; and he wants to make restitution; that's the joke of the matter, that the sinner has found a piece of conscience in his bosom, about as big as a walnut, and it's working him."

"But we can't get Jupe to go any where with us," said Gracie, after the first few moments of astonishment.

At that moment the door opened, and two persons appeared, one of them Rink, with his venerable beard, the other, the shadow of little Angy; a pale child, whose face had grown old in a month. The latter sprang forward with a glad cry into Gracie's outstretched arms; while Rink, bracing his back against the door, looked about with a sort of defiant sadness, and then significantly pointed to Angy as he muttered, "there she *is*!" His appearance was much altered, his beard having whitened, his cheeks grown hollow and his eyes glassy.

"Why, Angy, my dear little Angy!" cried Gracie, closely embracing her favorite, "have you been sick?"

"I'm sick all the time!" sobbed the child, clinging to her teacher's neck; "they make me work so hard."

A mournful emphasis particularized her last sentence. Gracie kissed the pale cheek and stroked the curls from her delicate temples. The interview took place in Allan's room; Gracie had gone down there that Jupe might not be disturbed. Mrs. Beauvine sat holding the big baby by his scant skirt, as he stood tottling at her knee, and Sally Malinda was washing the dishes; but all crowded around little Angy.

Gracie took off her little blue bonnet and the thick cloak which enveloped her form, and seating her on her knee, turned an inquiring look towards Rink.

"Why, you see, miss, they're killing the little thing by inches," he said, while a flush crossed his face; "she's too delicite to *practize* and *practize* without any stop for hours to a time. There they make her walk on a cord, with ropes tied to her waist, and onê man a holding her one way and another holding her another, and albeit she's frightened and dizzy, they don't have no mercy on her."

"And Rink, oh! Rink's going away, too, to leave me all alone!" sobbed Angy afresh.

"Yes, miss," said the old salt, his lip quivering a little, "I'm took with spitting blood, unfort'nly, and expect I've got to go to the hospital to end my poor old life."

The scene had become mournfully exciting. Rink stood turning his hat, a tear or two trickling down his sallow cheeks into his long white beard; Angy was sobbing, with her face hidden on Gracie's shoulder—Allan said "shew!" repeatedly, as he turned his face away, and Gracie gazed mournfully on.

At last she asked—"Where's Mrs. Harkness?"

"Married to that tailor of her's, and gone to New York!" exclaimed Rink, thrusting his hat before him with an indignant gesture; "and Harkness been dead on'y a three month; that's what I call desprit heartless," he continued with a broken voice—"never to call even to see her own child—that's what ails *her*," he added, pointing to Angy, who had grown more quiet.

"Angy, Jupe is up stairs, would'nt you like to see Jupe?" Gracie asked softly, after the child's grief had subsided.

"Oh! yes," said the little girl, lifting her face—"poor Jupe! I saw him the other night; did he get hurt or burnt any?"

"You see, the old canvas took fire," returned Rink to Gracie's questioning look; "*she* was scorched a little on the arm—and I got struck in the breast—I've been worse ever since," he added with a little cough, applying his handkerchief to his mouth.

"Mayn't I see Jupe?" asked Angy.

"Stop!" said Allan, as they were leaving the room, "manage that thing with her; he'll do any thing she tells him. The sooner he goes the better—he's as slippery as an eel. You git ready—I'll have a carriage here—I'll go with you up to Halburton's—you needn't say a word, you know—I'll do all the talking—he will count the money out to you; by jingo, 't'll be good as a play; won't it, though?" and he rubbed his hands gleefully.

"But—ought I to have it *all*?" Gracie asked hesitatingly.

"Every cent of it, my girl, it's your right; and, ha, ha—look at him paying you back every cent he's ever took from you; if it isn't the *greatest* joke—if it isn't the *greatest* farce—if it isn't the most providentiallest thing that ever did happen—wonder if he thought of such a thing when he writ it—ha, ha!"

"But you have been so kind to me," Gracie said impulsively, as they were crossing the entry—"at least let me pay the rent for our part of the house."

"Poh! poh! for that old rack; why, it don't cost me any thing—not a cent—take pay for *that*! looks like it—no; you need the money, every cent—your sick mother wants many a little comfort. Bless my soul—pay rent for that old rackrum?—dare say you've almost froze, for all its on'y the beginnin' of cold weather."

Gracie remembered that they had suffered not only from cold, but hunger—and the words of her mother recurring forcibly, "I have faith to believe that he who feeds the young ravens when they cry, will provide us with food to-morrow," her heart swelled with thankfulness.

Mrs. Amber was sitting up in bed, drinking the tea prepared for her by Ella, when the party ascended to her room. She looked astonished, as well she might, at sight of the various face; Jupe, concealed in a corner of the fire-place,

raised his head a little, but when he saw Angy coming towards him, he rubbed his eyes, as if awakened from a dream, and a pleasant surprise broke over his clouded face. Angy was to him a veritable angel; all pleasant words spoken to him, all his happiest moments—brief enough in his joyless life—were connected with her; and when she told him that they would not take him to the hospital, he believed her. So they prevailed on him to go with Gracie and the old coffin-maker and little Angy, in the coach waiting for them at the door.

It was a common looking vehicle. So Rink said, as he put his old shaggy head inside to reconnoitre. Nothing was good enough for little Angy in his estimation, and he pointed to the dingy cushions and discolored hangings. But there was no time to be lost in calling another, so he bade them God speed, and sat down on the step to wait for his "breath o' heaven's" return. Jupe kept close hold of Angy's hand, looking fearfully enough at every object else, and when they stopped at the princely house of Paul Halburton, his courage fell, and he shrank back, but Angy coaxed him with her winning smile, and the porter at the door seemed aware that it was all right, and ushered them in with much ceremony, then went to call his master.

The surprise of Paul Halburton I shall not attempt to paint, as Gracie quietly drew her veil aside, speaking no word, not even raising her eyes, while Allan, with a triumph that was more prominent from his very effort to conceal it, exclaimed, "*She's* the one—*she* found him, *she'll* take the money of course." The rich man's color changed rapidly, and he bit his lips; a look of extreme mortification, mingled with sudden passion, followed, but he suppressed all appearance of any extraordinary emotion, and, pulling the bell-rope, he said calmly to the servant who answered it, "take this young gentleman to his room."

"Say, I ain't agoing!" cried Jupe, drawing back against the rich furniture, while the man looked on with visage half laughing, half fearful.

"You will come in another room," Paul said, as he signed to the servant to leave, at the same time motioning to Allan Beauvine. There he sullenly counted out the money, drew up a receipt which Gracie signed, and with a glance of hate towards the innocent girl, which she did not see, placed the sum in Allan's hand.

Jupe was detained an unwilling captive; though the promise that Angy should come on the morrow pacified him, and Gracie, realizing with difficulty that she possessed so large a sum of money, rode back again almost in a dream, though she distinctly heard the old coffin-maker tell, in his curious way, how the grocer's clerk had actually demanded the hand of Sally Malinda, and he had asked him if he was fool enough to set up for a husband on five dollars a week—though, added Allan, "I didn't git the half of that, steddly, when I was married. I made 'em think," he added, "that I wasn't going to be a party to any such foolish business, but p'r'aps you'll be asked to the wedding, somewhere about Christmas times."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE RECONCILIATION.

BEAUTIFUL Gracie! her face was all triumph—a Christian's triumph it was that sat so gracefully upon her gentle brow. Had Miss Maligna been permitted to look just then within the humble home of the Ambers, her bad heart had glowed with envy, to watch the bright eyes and the glittering gold.

She had, to all human appearances, done her work, for, in the eyes of many, Gracie was spotted by the slanderer's poison. Those who had once been proud of her genius, and pleased with her acquaintance, now passed her coldly by, with not even a glance of recognition. The whispered defamation was spoken in her presence, and the light laugh sounded. She had, until within a few weeks, still maintained her place in the choir of the old church, but the increasing coldness with which many of the thoughtless girls treated her, led to her withdrawal, although she felt she still retained the confidence of the good Dr. Waldron. It happened, rather singularly, that she left the singing seats the Sunday after Paul Halburton gave up his pew, thereby innocently causing another "run of scandal." Professor Rose, black at heart himself, and angry that she had ceased to visit the woman he called his wife, withheld the key of the organ, and thus she had been cut off from many of her choicest privileges. She was not able to obtain pupils, for the tongue of the busy-body had done its work. Oh! how many hours had the poor, persecuted girl spent in tears—weeping as if her heart would break—the victim of foul-mouthed slander. But for her firm trust in the Christian's God—but for the consolation of the Scriptures, and the unvarying faith with which Mrs. Amber ceaselessly strove to imbue her, herself sinking gradually under her combined trials, Gracie would have gone down to the grave sorrowful; for that hardest trial of all, the desertion of Hart Holden, had well nigh struck a fatal blow. But though cast down, she was not destroyed—by degrees her soul grew braver to bear, and she learned to look with a trustful smile upon these apparently dark providences; her feet trod the paths of her Father's will patiently, and she learned bravely to endure.

And now the time of rejoicing had come—the most wily and unprincipled of her enemies had, with his own hands, re-

funded the money he had unjustly demanded, when they were in the depths of distress and poverty. How ever much harm he had done, this recompense justice had forced him to acknowledge by his deed.

What visions passed through her mind as Gracie sat in reverie by her pile of gold! First, her mother was to be comfortably provided with clothes for the coming winter. And the little children, what stores of woolen they should have! what piles of nice little stockings! what strong warm shoes! and then they could go to school without fear of being mocked at for their poverty. Ella was remembered, and mother Mott, dear mother Mott, some presents for her, and some bridal gifts for happy Sally Malinda, who had told her privately that she thought when she got a home of her own, things wouldn't go by the sixes and sevens. The wood—that was an important feature, there should be plenty laid in for all winter, and flour—and—oh! how rich she felt! By spring she thought there might be some new opening for her talents to bring in compensation sufficient to enable her to rent more comfortable rooms.

Mrs. Amber was very grateful, and thanked God with a full heart that He had enabled her to have perfect faith in his promises.

It was not long before Gracie sat in mother Mott's pleasant room, and had told her the whole story. The face of the good Christian was an illumined page as she listened, and her exclamation full of fervency. "Oh! how very, very glad I am—you can't tell how glad—my soul rejoices in your prosperity. And I am much better," she continued, with the saintly old smile; "I shall soon come down to see your mother and help her a little. We had our meeting here last night!" she exclaimed, "and it seemed like a little heaven below; the blessing has not yet departed."

"Are you quite content to live here all alone?" Gracie

asked, seating herself by the little window, and drawing aside the tiny muslin curtain to gaze out upon the passers by.

"I am never alone," said mother Mott, her eye kindling as she raised it heavenward.

"I ought to know that," Gracie murmured, looking her admiration of the handsome old face, "but I had a vague idea that it was impossible to enjoy ones-self without other human society."

"I am one," returned mother Mott, "who consider it a sin not to enjoy myself, no matter in what circumstances providence has placed me. I would enjoy life, moment by moment; I would not let an hour pass in which I could not receive some pleasing impression. There is a beam of sunlight lying like a thread of gold on the carpet at your feet. Now I enjoy its splendor. I think of the wonderful miracle that sun performs in its ceaseless round, warming the heart of vegetation, shrouded as it were, that shall spring into life, giving joy in its turn to others."

"But many Christians appear as if religion was gloomy," said Gracie.

"That is their own fault, religion should make them merry. Religion is neither sorrowful of face nor niggard of smiles."

"She invites the eyes to beauty, and crowns the earth with flowers," said a deep voice that startled the young girl; and Abram Taylor stood before them, hat in hand, his broad, benevolent brow speaking of the greatness and goodness of his simple heart. "She encourages the affections, and love is written on her forehead," he continued, smiling impressively. "She invites the eye to beauty, and crowns the earth with flowers," he repeated again. "She points to humble toil, and humble homes, and a well spring of life bubbles up there—she says love, trees and flowers, and every living thing that I have made, and every mute, inanimate thing, proclaims

my glory. You spoke of enjoying life, sister Mott—yes, I believe you do; and you, young friend, enjoy life in your youth; not in the mad revel, the artificial drama—the heated and noisome ball-room, where folly emulates vice—even the devotees of these will tell you how vapid are such pleasures. But enjoy it in the confidence of a pure and loving spirit. Give pleasure to some one around you; live out of self, be kind in manner, earnest in nature, prodigal of encouragement, pure in heart.”

Yes, Abram Taylor, mother Mott, and Gracie Amber—there is the true secret of enjoyment, after all; to feel that good angels can look into these hearts of ours, and though they may be earthly in their impulses, yet that they can see no *cherished impurity* there; no canker of hate, envy, and their kindred evils. One who feels his heart open to the gaze of Deity, no nooks concealed, no crevices covered, can truly say, “I enjoy myself.”

The good minister remained but a few moments, and when he had gone, mother Mott turned to Gracie, smiling as she said, “guess, if you can, who was here yesterday.”

Gracie thought of several persons, but she was not prepared for the startling announcement that followed—“it was young Mr. Hart Holden, my dear.”

“Oh! mother Mott!” cried Gracie, turning quite pale as she caught her hand, and her lips refused to say more.

“I must get you my smelling salts! you look ill and faint!” exclaimed mother Mott, with alarm in her manner.

“No—nothing—only tell me!” cried Gracie, eagerly, and trembling from head to foot. It was so sudden—I wasn’t prepared—tell me what he came here for.”

“Well, my dear, be calmer, and you shall hear it all, every word. I was as much astonished as yourself to see him marching in here, so pale and—”

“Was he pale?” asked Gracie, with renewed interest, and then her cheeks flushed as she added, hastily; “but I don’t

know, indeed, why I should care so very much, he certainly has not acted in a manner calculated to advance him in my esteem.”

“But you may have been misrepresented to him; reasons that seemed powerful in his eyes, may have induced him to act without reflection; he, himself, acknowledges as much to me or did yesterday.”

Gracie sat with her eyes fastened upon some object in the street. A newly roused tenderness battled in her bosom with a feminine resentment that was not unamiable, and yet might have been perfectly justifiable in her present unsettled state of mind.

“He says you would not answer his letters,” repeated mother Mott, gently.

“And did he answer mine?” Gracie asked, with some petulance, hiding thus the tears that were ready to fall.

“He says he wrote you letter after letter, praying you to give him a reason why you would not correspond.”

Gracie turned about aghast, and with a steady astonishment viewed mother Mott.

“Meantime he was told that you had accepted your piano-forte back from Paul Halburton—and that you met him frequently at Mrs. Holden’s; that you were seen with him on the public thoroughfares, and in places of amusement—” mother Mott paused, for Gracie had burst into a violent fit of weeping.

“My child, my dear child!” she exclaimed, in accents of pity.

“Oh! what did you tell him? how unjust! how ungenerous for him to believe! I will never forgive him, never, never!”

“Never is a hard word, my dear,” mother Mott responded in her mildest voice: “what proof had he that all the setthings were not so, when from appearances he had every reason to

suppose there was truth in the various statements, carried to him, especially as you refused to correspond with him."

"But that is not so," Gracie said, earnestly, looking up through her tears, "oh! who has been plotting in this dark way against poor me!"

"I told him," mother Mott continued, "all I knew of the matter—I was angry, I am not sorry to say, for it was a just anger at the base insinuations others had thrown out with reference to Paul Halburton, and I answered them sternly, and in such a manner that he was abashed to think he had believed them for a moment. His cheeks flushed, and after a while he said, 'but there is another thing.' Now, Gracie, shall I tell you all he said?"

"Every word," Gracie murmured, brokenly, at the same time wiping her eyes.

"Are you acquainted with some one who is at college with him? a nephew of Paul Halburton?"

Gracie blushed scarlet, and her reflections for a moment were exceedingly painful as she replied that she was.

"And have you ever really walked with him, or been in company with him at different places?"

"Only once, walking with Letta Holden, we met him; she introduced him to me, and he accompanied us a long way up Washington street; I never saw him before. Then at Letta's party—oh! I did allow him to wait upon me into the room and pay me particular attention; but that was because I had been so stung with Mrs. Holden's cruel speeches, and hurt at Hart's coldness. Oh! what a web is woven about me!"

"It seems," said mother Mott, musingly, "Letta Holden is mixed up with the matter; what motive can she have?"

"Her mother has often told me that Hart would marry Letta," Gracie responded, "that he always loved her; and she had thrown out many hints about my forwardness, and his displeasure, and made me very unhappy."

"I knew you were coming to-day," said mother Mott, after a slight pause, a smile breaking over her face, "and so I told him to meet you. Hart Holden, come here," and as Gracie sprang, startled, almost alarmed from her seat, Hart, pale and intensely agitated, appeared from the room beyond, where he must have heard every syllable of Gracie's refutation.

"Can you, can you forgive me?" he reiterated, tremulously, advancing and impulsively snatching her unresisting hands.

Shrinking, blushing, the happy girl replied not, save by one fond, confiding glance, but he was answered. Rapidly and repeatedly were the several mysterious incidents, connected with the deep laid plot gone over, and explanations attempted. One thing was very certain; the most unscrupulous duplicity had been practiced by persons who must have known them well and long. Could Letta Holden, Hart's foster sister, she who had always seemed fraternally pure and good to him, have been guilty of so heinous an offence against purity and goodness?

The day was fast waning. Hart said he, himself, must accompany Gracie to her home—and he did so, followed at a distance by Letta Holden, who felt that now she could move heaven and earth to prevent the union of the lovers, if it were possible. She had watched Hart closely; had seen him the day before enter mother Mott's humble home, and to-day she beheld the result of that visit. Her love had turned to a hate so deep that every womanly attribute was lost; sunken in the black waves of envy and jealousy. The spirit that actuated the debased Paul animated her; alas! better had it been said of her from her guileless infancy, "she has no mother," for to that mother did she owe these hateful emotions that had changed her to the likeness of a fiend.

Hart was welcomed with "exceeding great joy," by the

invalid mother, and the rest of the family, and during his stay, there were uninterrupted peace and harmony.

"Is that he?" Ella cried, in a transport of joy, when he had gone; "why, Gracie, he's a beauty. What a perfect gentleman! How graceful! what is he studying for, Gracie?"

"To be a doctor," Gracie replied, waking out of a pleasant reverie into which she had fallen, and in a low voice she explained all to her mother.

CHAPTER XLIX.

ALLAN'S GOOD FORTUNE.

"It never rains but it pours!" exclaimed Allan Beauvine, one day, nearly after the preceding incident. "I've got good news for you. There's to be a great mass-meeting next week for some poor society, and old Squire Hinges or Deacon Hinges, rayther, is 'pointed committee on music. He said he didn't know who to git, and all at once it struck me that you would do as well as anybody, and make the ten dollars; fal de rol, what say to that, hey?" and he looked so roguishly good natured that Gracie could not forbear laughing as she answered—

"I play in a public place like that? I never could."

"Show! *Mis* Amber, please to ask her if it's any more public than playing on a great organ at Waldron's church," said Allan, turning to the widow; "it's as easy a way of making money, I guess, as sewing at shilling shirts, and more easier; at any rate, I told him you would, and he ain't a go-

ing to give himself any further trouble about it; so consider it settled."

"Oh! Mr. Beauvine!" ejaculated Gracie, her face growing hot.

"Oh! Miss Gracie," he responded, winking at Ella, "just as if you ain't pleased as can be at such an honor; and just as if you won't rectify the whole mass of 'em with your playing; and just as if she won't sing like a bird, only more so. Come, why don't you thank me; I don't take it kind of you after gitting you a chance like that to have you stand and look at me as if you'd eat me without pepper or salt."

"But, Allan, indeed you must be joking."

"I—I don't know how to joke. I did try it once, but it stuck in my throat and brought on a bronchius difficulty in the dry branches of the bronchius tube," said Allan gravely.

It was a long time before Gracie would consent; but at last, when her mother asserted that she could see no possible harm, neither indelicacy, in simply sitting at a piano and striking a few notes, or in singing some sweet air, the difficulties seemed to vanish, and she found herself dwelling upon the novel idea with a degree of pleasure.

Ella was nearly wild with the anticipation, first fluttering like a scared bird, then in a tremor of delight.

"What! I sing before the crowd!" she would exclaim, striking a few dulcet notes, "oh! no, I should never have the courage," and then, "won't it be splendid though to succeed? do you really think my voice excellent?"

"Super-excellent!" returned Gracie; "I never heard such an one. They paid five dollars a Sabbath to our head singer last year, but her voice is nothing so wonderful as yours."

"Why, you astonish me!" Ella would respond, flitting about, or pausing in her rapid movements.

"And you will astonish the world perhaps," said Gracie in reply.

"I, no—I don't think it! if I only give pleasure to those I love—why—"

"You will be satisfied, I suppose," suggested Gracie, filling up the pause.

"It would be pleasant to be very great," murmured Ella, fastening one of the soft, small red roses she had just cut from the bush, in her hair.

"And so disappoint those who think you are good for nothing!" said Gracie with a smile.

"That's it!" cried Ella with beaming eyes, "oh! I would try with all my might! I would throw my whole soul into my song—it would give me courage—inspire me, to see them present."

"Nothing more likely!" said Gracie.

"But shall I be heard? I remember reading of some speaker, who said when he first arose to address a hundred people, he felt his voice begin with a thunder-clap that stunned him; but pretty soon it seemed running all away from him, out at his finger-ends. How awkward if that should be my experience!"

"The only way to do is to draw your senses within, I suppose," Gracie remarked; "you must neither see, hear, nor feel the crowd—but turn all your attention to the one purpose you have in hand, and pour out your voice just the same as if there were none within hearing."

"If one could only do that!" Ella said.

"I'm going to try, at any rate!" Gracie continued; "I suppose I shall feel terribly frustrated at first, but I will do myself credit."

"So will I," said Ella, "if I can!"

"Wisely put in—but, in the next place, how shall we dress?" Gracie inquired, looking towards her mother.

"I shall wear my pink muslin, with short sleeves!" said Ella decidedly.

"That will make you too conspicuous!" Gracie exclaimed, "besides, it is now winter, and a summer dress would hardly look appropriate for the season."

Ella said that it would still be just the thing. Her taste was not yet refined, and the showy, gauzy thing, with its *outré* trimmings, seemed to her the most beautiful and attractive dress in her possession; and her wardrobe was by no means extensive. With Mrs. Amber's delicate taste, the neat, unpretending calico that then enwrapped the girl's slender figure, harmonized much more readily than the gauzy dress she called her best.

"I think Gracie had better buy you both a new, good, black silk," suggested her mother, from the chair in which she was sewing.

"I know it will cost considerable," replied Mrs. Amber to Gracie's protesting look, "but it will be true economy. Your's is nearly worn out, Gracie, and does not look respectable, and Ella has no really suitable dress in which to appear publicly. You have, my dear, good daughter, nobly provided for your mother, your sisters, and little brother, with scarcely a thought for yourself; so it is my wish that you should go out to-morrow and get the silk, a neat, plain straw bonnet for each of you, and enough merino to make you both a pretty and durable cloak."

"Oh! not for me—don't think of spending so much money on me," cried Ella, "I shall never repay you."

"You have repaid, more than repaid us by your kind attention to me, by your sympathy and affection," said Mrs. Amber, as the young girl bent her head to conceal her tears at so unexpected an offer; and Gracie said so too. It did seem, at first, a large sum to expend, but she was a generous girl, though poverty had made her prudent; and she followed her mother's instructions to the letter, purchasing rather less, to be sure, than fashion would require at the present day, but

enough for an ample pattern. The dress-maker was engaged, and all things in preparation for the much dreaded, much wished-for evening. Gracie spent hours at the piano, perfecting an admirable piece of music, which she had herself composed, calling it by the romantic name of "Dreamland." And many suggestions were made as to what song Ella should sing,—something remarkably high and sweet, for her upper tones were exquisite, something at the same time simple and expressive. Looking over old books, Gracie one day came across a beautiful melody, very old and quaint, but exceedingly effective. It was decided that, as the meeting was to be held for the poor, the "Orphan's Prayer" would be well-timed and appropriate, so that was selected and duly practiced. This, with an air from "Der Freischutz," and a grand march by Gracie, were considered enough for the trial night. Ella sang like an angel, everybody who heard her said; one could not but be melted into tears at the plaintive, soul-beseeching tones. Old Deacon Hinges came to hear, and expressed himself satisfied; she repeated it for Abram Taylor, on one of his pastoral visits; the good man sat listening with the tears running down his cheeks.

At last the hour approached; a clear, starlight, though cold evening, with frost on the ground, and a keen atmosphere. Allan, who had entered heartily into the project, was ready with a carriage; the girls, in their new dresses, looked charming, and received the Beauvine congratulations with more ease and dignity than it was fearful they would perform their respective parts. On the steps they encountered old Rink, who drew back respectfully, but on Gracie's acknowledgment came forward, saying—

"I wanted to let you know, Miss, that to-morrow I shall have to go to the hospital; I'm getting so bad, Miss; and might I make so bold as to ask if you will look after little 'breath o' heaven?' " his voice grew unsteady—"you see"—

he drew his hand across his eyes—his rough, yellow, but kindly hand—"they don't do just right by the little craft; keep her sailing in rough waters, sir."

"Where is Angy?" asked Gracie.

"Up to the G—— House, where the company stops; she ain't herself, either, to-night, and she's got to go flying round the rope agin, like a fish out o' water. I beg pardon, Miss, for keeping you, seeing's you're gitting ready to go, but I thought maybe I wouldn't git another chance."

"I'll go to see her to-morrow," Gracie promised, "and as often as I can, and we'll try if we can't get her from that place."

"God bless you, Miss—God bless you!" reiterated old Rink, grasping the hand extended to him; "and if I might ask you to come up *there* sometimes, to see the old hulk."

"I'll come and bring Angy," said Gracie, making a movement forward, for Allan was becoming impatient.

"I couldn't ask no more," muttered the old man fervently, as he pulled his tarpaulin off once again, and stepped back against the wall, where he stood till the carriage had driven away.

Through the windows the girls could see the great hall all alight, with clouds of human heads at every opening. Thronging along the streets, hurried men, women and children, all eager to attend the meeting, all attired in their best.

"I do declare," said Ella timidly, "I begin to feel afraid; what should I do if I lost my courage?"

"What! after that triumphant trial in the old meeting-house, with father Ingerson, mother Mott, and I for an audience?" exclaimed Gracie laughing, herself in trembling trepidation.

"Oh! but how light it is! and everybody will look us right in the face."

"Ella, you must not see them," said Gracie firmly; "what

are they after all but mere men and women? Think, too, if either your sisters, or your sisters' husbands should be there, how would you bear their taunts at your failure! I believe God will sustain us both; He has led us here for some wise purpose; and I shall think nothing about how I am going to do, but at the same time do the best I can, and trust to Him for the result."

"And I will be as brave as you," Ella resolved, though she said nothing.

Old Allan, with a word, opened a space in the crowd, and led the girls to a seat somewhat sheltered by the chairs of the speakers; but, as Ella had predicted, all eyes were turned towards them, and it was some time before they could throw off the timidity that assailed them, or compose their thoughts and bend them on their duties. Faster and faster the old edifice filled; bright eyes looked down from the galleries, under large, fan-shaped bonnets, and old men crossed their shrunken calves, close fitted with the ancient small-clothes, and rested their chins upon the tops of their canes. Little urchins sat respectfully among their elders, with eyes scarcely raised—wide difference in that respect between then and now—and a low, pleasant buzz, the congregated undertones of two thousand people, ran tremulously through the great hall.

Abram Taylor and Dr. Gilbert Waldron sat side by side on the platform, and quite near the young amateurs. Gracie could see them both. The former gazed about him with a calm, pleasant air, the latter with an absent look, that never once relaxed from its deep, unutterably sad expression, save when he was spoken to, after which he invariably relapsed into deep thought. Several other pastors, having charges in the city, also sat near, ranged in a semi-circle, and behind them a massive grand piano stood unopened. Upon this, facing the audience, Gracie was to perform.

Suddenly, her eyes wandering from face to face, she started,

grasping Ella's arm with an almost painful grip, for, full under the blaze of the great chandelier, she met the eyes of Hart Holden. He looked cheerful and happy, and smiled as he saw her. By his side, in vivid and not pleasing contrast, sat, or rather stood, leaning over towards Hart, Fred Lovejoy, the collegian, and Hart's room-mate. Young Holden still tolerated him for the purpose of overthrowing his base designs, and they had come together to-night, Lovejoy being totally unaware that Gracie and Hart were reconciled.

The young man's eye was cast furtively, now on Hart, and now on Gracie Amber, whom he could just see; but he looked sullen and revengeful; his glances seemed restless, and flashed at times with a gleam of almost savage hate—at least so Gracie, who could not but interpret his manner, imagined. So startled was she at the unexpected presence, that during the prayer offered by Abraham Taylor, she could scarcely compose her thoughts, and she was hardly conscious of the task assigned to her, till some one whispered—

"Will you play for us now, Miss Amber?"

What was Gracie's horror to see, as she moved forward, Paul Halburton lifting the cover, and arranging the music seat, a sardonic smile playing about his lips the while. Her color changed; she retreated a step, then went firmly forward, holding her music. He stood by the piano, and extended his hand, as if he would take the sheets and arrange them for her; but with a proud disdain that made her look queenly, she deigned not to notice the movement, but calmly unfolded the page and spread it out herself, holding her head slightly averted. The lips of the baffled libertine turned pale, and he stepped haughtily back, while Hart, with flashing eye, sat uneasily on his seat. Lovejoy had said, just before, "You see he is her gallant, as I told you."

"I see," Hart answered, with a sneer of contempt, "but she treats him much worse than I would treat my dog."

"A little coquettish, that is all," returned the other, his cheek flushing, "I flatter myself I could command more attention from her ladyship."

"Why don't you go up there and try?" asked Hart, dryly, "I would if I were you."

"I shall, directly," replied the fop, chafing at his companion's coolness. "Upon my faith, she performs well!"

"Rather!" echoed Hart, quietly folding his arms, and watching the changing countenance of his enemy, Paul.

Lovejoy turned a keen look upon his fellow collegian. There was something in Hart's manner he could not understand. He expected to see him rave with jealousy, or else writhe like a chained madman in his seat. Meanwhile, the audience was so quiet that the fine, sweet notes Gracie elicited, penetrated to every part of the vast hall. She herself sat pale, but collected; her bonnet removed, the dark locks hung glossily around her neck, and her large, earnest eyes were bent downward upon the keys. At the close, a loud burst of applause saluted the fair young performer. Hart sprang to his feet, elate with a triumph that electrified him. Paul Halburton, whose name, being known in connection with this benevolent meeting, led the outside world to believe that he was the soul of generosity, offered to escort the young girl to her seat. She did not repulse him in scorn, though her bosom swelled at the insult; but bending her head, and moving as if she had seen, but not noticed the offer, thus making the rejection marked, she walked steadily to her appointed place. She took her seat; her heart beat almost to suffocation; a mingled feeling of satisfied justice, and almost passionate resentment, flushed her face, and made her breath labor. Yes, jubilate! she had nobly vindicated herself before the world; a ringing noise sounded in her ears, and she marked not the many admiring glances fastened upon her, nor heard a syllable of the studied addresses upon

which Doctor Waldron had concentrated the finest powers of his mind, to such a pitch of excitement was she wrought. As for Paul, he looked like a baffled serpent, cheated of his Eve; he had been again foiled, but this time not in secret—and woe, woe to the spirited girl who had dared defy him!

Lovejoy made his way slowly to the platform, and now stood in full view of Gracie, his handsome, but sinister features, eager with expectant triumph. She *did* look towards him, but had her face been marble it had not been more rigid, as the large eyes fell coldly on his own. He was incredulous, astonished, and moved so near that he ventured to address her in a whisper. Not once by glance or sign did she betray that she heard him at all. Truly, it was a triumph-hour to her, when he shrank away with blazing cheeks and knit brows, after one other unsuccessful effort, and she saw Hart, radiant—every line of his handsome face bespeaking his extreme satisfaction—his beaming eyes looking love and almost worship at the girl he adored.

Ella grew faint with apprehension as the time for her performance drew near. And when at last she stood up, supported by one hand as she rested it heavily on the instrument, her cheeks ashy, her spirits sinking, there was no heart in her. Gracie feared for her, and whispered, "courage, courage," but Ella could summon none. The faint tones in which she commenced, sounded like thunder in her own ears, and shook her with every vibration. At the first verse, the audience laughed, Deacon Hinges cowered, and Allan, who had been snapping his fingers in unmitigated glee all alone to himself in his far corner, longed despairingly for a knot-hole through which he might vanish; while Paul Halburton laughed and shrugged his shoulders. All at once, a low whistle expressive of contempt sounded. The first verse had been sung sadly enough, with a weak, shaking voice. But that whistle struck against Ella's heart, and stung her to the quick. She straight-

ened herself, and indignation strengthened pride; she whispered a few words to Gracie, who sat mortified and silent, then looking for a second upwards, as if silently asking for aid, commenced again the same verse; and such a miracle of melodious sounds never before thrilled, electrified an assembly as in that brief moment. Feeling a new and strong confidence in her power, Ella burst forth upon the astounded thousands assembled there, with the second stanza, and it seemed as if every breath was suspended—as if every eye shone with a tear; and thus she went through, keeping up to the grand altitude she had obtained, to the end; never once losing self-command—never faltering, till the last note died away upon an audience too much enraptured to applaud; till every echo had dissolved in air. Then astounding vociferations filled the place, subsiding a little and again swelling forth. The blushing, trembling, delighted girl knew scarcely how to act, until the same kindly voice that had spoken once before, said, “You will have to give them another song; can you recollect one?” Ella thought she could not, but Gracie came to her aid, and again that wonderful voice rang forth in a merry, carolling air, that almost raised the people to their feet.

A group sat in the gallery unnoticed by Gracie, whose morose faces partook not of the general joy. Letta Holden had witnessed the signal triumph of her rival, with a malignity of feeling that could scarcely be portrayed; biting her thin lips till the blood almost ran, and striving to be calm, while in her bosom contending passions raged. She sought no consolation of her mother, she never did of late, but in sullen silence endeavored to bide her time till an opportunity to be revenged presented itself. It was allotted her to feel doubly the pangs she had so wantonly inflicted upon her innocent victim, when at the close, Hart went to the platform, and escorted Gracie and Ella from the hall. Paul Halburton

from beneath his eye-brows watched their departure, more astounded than he chose to reveal, and Lovejoy had received a glance from Hart in passing, which he swore should be accounted for.

Let us follow these personages for a few moments longer. Gracie and Ella returned home, triumphant and happy, while Hart, all unconscious of the brewing storm which shadowed forth a cloud the bigness of a man's hand, laid his head on his pillow, breathing devout aspirations of gratitude to his God.

Letta Holden quarrelled violently with Dick, because he accused her of “breaking off” his intimacy with the fair Ella, and then quarrelled with her mother, and finally wept herself passionately to sleep.

Lovejoy walked his room till morning, a prey to morbid jealousy and his own base imaginings; his brain on fire with wine, his vengeance stimulated by the base counsels of his confederate in wickedness, Paul Halburton; while the latter repaired to one of his own gambling hells, and encountering the old wreck, Homer, played till the night had waned to a new dawn. And oh! heaven—for what a stake! Houses and lands, the recent gifts of a widowed sister on her death-bed, were all gone—money, he had none—possessions none, save in the person of his almost heart-broken child, Kate Homer. What hellish flame lighted his dim, grey eye?—what infernal impulse urged him to the commission of a deed that devils would scorn to contemplate. But he dared; there, in the smoky light of the long grey saloon—with the desperation of a madman, he staked his all—an only child—a woman, beautiful, refined, and who would have laid down her young life for his salvation;—played once more—and lost. Then, indeed, he was beggared; the cup of his iniquity was filled to the brim, as Paul, lifting his haggard face, exclaimed—“The girl is mine by the chances of this trial; swear, old man, that she shall marry me!”

"I swear!" said a tremulous voice, and the eyes of the two met; it was for the last time in this world.

CHAPTER L.

THE DREAM.

PAUL HALBURTON wakes from a vivid and fearful dream. Not that its pictures were in any sense revolting, or his emotions while passing through its experience unusually intense—but it has left a weakness upon him that seems mysterious as he recalls the vision. Not all the beauty of his glowing chamber can dissipate the strange, unhallowed memory. The thick curtains, hanging motionless from ceiling to floor, keep out the intenser light of day, while the sun sheds a rich crimson through—a soft, faint, yet generous brightness, transforming the embossed counterpane into a bed of roses, and throwing over the matchless marble a veil like a fine, transparent gauze of delicate sea-shell pink. Leading out of this room is another of smaller proportions, furnished nearly as elaborately, and in which stands a bedstead, the exact counterpart of Paul's. Its curtains are thrust aside, and on its costly linen and lace reposes Jupe, his long, pale face fringed by a frilled cap border, and around his wrists, edging his night robes, full ruffles of the same fine texture. His sleep is sound, although the sun is four hours high, and a black boy of short stature steps softly around, arranging several articles of clothing on a couch near, that they may be in readiness when his young master wakes up. Strange extremes have met in the life of the wharf vagrant—at one time ragged, dirty and starving, seeking the shelter of a

broken oil barrel—now lying in almost princely state upon down, surrounded by silken hangings, enervating luxuries and obsequious attendants. The shoes by his bedside, softly glossy and furnished with small, glittering studs—the hose of finest, warmest texture—the rich broad-cloth of which his clothes are composed, the costly linen in which his limbs are wrapped—how do these appear with Jupe inside? His hair, how evenly trimmed and shining, lies silkily over his forehead, and his skin, cleansed from impurity, shines transparently, almost painfully.

But to return to Paul; early in the morning he came home flushed with success. "The deadly serpent has you in his toils, proud Kate Homer!" he soliloquized. "And that boy-fool thought I would put the prize in his possession," he added afterward with a burst of vindictive laughter. "No—she shall be *mine*! my wife! I'll take her pride down, though she is mistress of Halburton Hall! It is well Lovejoy's jealousy is misdirected—the thought that she loves this nameless boy—ridiculous! and yet—he has foiled me—and the widow's wench too. Oh! I could see her down," he cried, clenching his teeth and stamping his foot, "down in the deepest deep of shame and humiliation; aye! and I will yet, if that boy-fool keeps up his courage—I will yet!"

His eye fell on the reflection of its own basilisk fire; he paused, drew himself up, and gazed till the ready softness and plausibility of his usual exterior returned. "Not many men," he muttered, "can boast a form like that, or a brow, or an eye; well might I say—Gods! I thank thee that I was created, nobly endowed with grace and manly beauty, else, where had I been now?" He shrugged his shoulders, and passed from the room into that where Jupe was unconsciously sleeping. Some slight tenderness struggled into his face as he gazed upon the boy, still muttering—"Poor devil—he improves, but it will take much change to make the likeness

even faintly visible; he has not one De Barry feature, for they have ever been distinguished for statuesque symmetry; but no doubt they will develope in good time; misery and association with crime"—at that word he paused. What was crime to the poor slumberer before him? scarcely more than a name—while with —— it had been a reality, and was now a haunting spectre.

He retired—slept—and he is rising from that troubled slumber. His hand shakes as he quaffs his morning dram, and the glittering cut glass rattles against the elaborately gilded decanter, as he throws himself back for a moment to collect his thoughts. But that dream! it will not away. This it was. As he slept, it seemed that Jupe followed him uneasily, calling him by the endearing name of father; but whenever he turned towards him, the boy's face assumed the appearance of a watch set round with brilliants. This perplexed him; he strove ineffectually to detach it from his neck, and while he was thus employed, the hands flew round to the figure of twelve. Again, Kate Homer was his bride; in all her stately beauty she stood before him, her lovely face lighted with a strange rapture, when, suddenly, in place of the liquid eyes, the matchless oval of the cheeks and the luxuriant tresses, appeared the watch set round with brilliants, and, as he gazed, the figures turned to blood red, the hands changed to a gory hue, and both, after whirling repeatedly, paused at the figure of twelve, while the voice of Kate slowly, hollowly, repeated the hour like the strokes of a clock.

Every time this vision recurs, an icy cold succeeds, in spite of the warming influence of the wine. He dresses and endeavors to engage his attention—in vain. "The cursed watch," he mutters—"why did I keep it? I'll destroy it now—and forever; grind it to atoms—burn it, sink it!"

Saying this, he nears the drawer of his private secretary—

opens a concealed box—starts, stares—then stands like one in a maze.

"It must be here!" he ejaculates, "it *must* be here!" and with frantic gesture he plunges his hand within, scattering the contents—but no watch appears. Calling his servants, he orders every drawer to be taken out and thoroughly searched. Finding this effort likewise fruitless, all his boxes are marshalled—every nook inspected; and at last, when it is apparent that no article of the kind can be concealed, he sinks back, white and speechless, in his seat. Who should he suspect? his faithful servants? no, the thought is dismissed as soon as entertained; no one could know of the secret spring beside himself; none had ever seen the watch. What fatal agency has abstracted this powerful witness? What ghostly visitant deputed by retributive justice entered his chamber? He shudders with cold, as he recalls the night on which all the lamps went out. Was that the time? a superstitious thrill renders him powerless to move, think, or act; and when a servant enters with a message from a gentleman below, who wishes to see him—he feels as if he must fly from unseen yet lurking danger.

A friend meets him—the business is unimportant, yet during the short conference he announces the death of Professor Rose.

"Ah! our organist!" says Paul, a little startled, as the news breaks upon his worried, absent mood.

"Yes, it is said he gambled desperately, last night, and in desperation at his losses ended his life with a pistol shot.—A great loss to the society, Mr. Halburton; he was by all odds the best performer in the city. Several gentlemen, among them Dr. Waldron himself, are in favor of bestowing the situation on a young lady, if on trial she succeeds in giving satisfaction, which I am very certain she will do. I refer to Miss Amber, who performed so admirably at your monster charity meeting, last night."

"They are fools!" responded Paul, with fiery energy, "a girl who has nothing to recommend her but the one talent, a young, giddy, hair-brained girl like that, to enter upon a situation of such responsibility!"

"On the contrary—I have proofs of her exemplary character from the lips of Dr. Andover, who is the prime mover in the matter," returns his friend, astonished at his impetuosity; "he speaks of her in terms of the highest praise, as a gifted, intellectual, amiable and thoroughly noble girl, who has withstood the greatest temptations, and whose character for stability is noted."

Paul blushes—a guilty blush it is; the blood mounts to his temples; he bites his lip nervously, and stooping, lifts a bit of discolored, folded paper, from a crevice in the couch on which he sits, and which seems some time to have dropped there. He still listens while he essays to unfold it, breaking a tiny wafer in order to accomplish his object, but looking all the while as if his thoughts were far away, as in reality they are.

"The young lady who sang has also become quite an object of attraction:" says his visitor, "she will probably be engaged to fill the place of our head singer, who you know has been some weeks married—I beg your pardon! are you ill, Mr. Halburton? shall I call a servant? shall I ring?"

"No—no!" ejaculates Paul, with difficulty, lifting his glassy eyes, "I—I have such paroxysms at times; I am subject to attacks—of—indisposition. I would thank you—for a glass of wine."

In his trembling hand, on that bit of discolored paper is a message from the dead. She who wrote it long ago, was laid with grey hairs amid her sunny locks in a now forgotten grave. A tiny, round curl, almost white, is fastened to the fragment, whereon is written in a trembling hand—

"I send this to you as a memorial that you have wronged

me. It is a lock of my baby's hair—poor baby! must it grow up without a name? Yours, true to death,

MINNIE DALE."

It must have fallen on that cruel day—it all flashes on his mind, now, like a stroke of quick lightning, when that coward right hand of his, which should be withered, struck a frail woman—and he sent her home to die. To-day the mould was on her forehead and gathering over the sightless eyes. Was it a breath from her grave that made him shiver so? The mould was on her breast; or her dust and her bones had fallen together on the floor of her coffin—there was perhaps nothing of her in the grave—but oh! eternal justice! she—the living, wronged, yet loving spirit was somewhere, to testify against him. The thought or vague impression as it comes, lifts the hair from his head; his knees knock together, and after his visitor has gone wondering away, he sits gazing vacantly upon that mute testimonial. He sees poor Minnie in a happy home, the petted favorite, more friend than servant or seamstress of proud Kate Homer. He marks her gaze of admiration that deepens into worship the oftener she meets him. He recalls the first word he spoke to her, the first smile he gave her, the first dark thought that sprung from the depths of his black soul—and that never was repulsed. Oh! how hardened a villain he seems even to himself, as torturing memory goes back, and returns loaded, with self-execrations and reproaches. He sees her growing pale—and marks the vanishing of her innocent smile. He sees the gradual sinking of the soft eyes, and the averted gaze while the lip trembles. He hears her plaintive voice reproaching, imploring, everything but cursing him. He remembers how one bright Sabbath he met her in the old church, and that at his glance she seemed transformed to reproving marble, and though there was no uplifting of hands and moving of lips—yet she stood there an embodied prayer for justice.

Oh! these things will drive him mad, and yet there are so many fearful enormities to bear down and crush out the memory of that woeful act, the poor wretch cannot find relief in madness.

The door opens, and between him and the glowing fire stands Lovejoy, sullen, white, with a flash in his eye that augurs ill for his mood.

Paul is roused, just as remorse is beginning to soften the crust of his heart of adamant.

"You look unwell, young sir," he says, carelessly crushing the paper.

"Do I? it must be a reflection from your own face; I should say you had been seriously ill."

"Pshaw! nothing of the kind—things go a little wrong sometimes."

"Deucedly wrong, I should say," mutters Lovejoy: "do you mean to help me?" he asks, looking doggedly at Paul; "because if you do, I tell you once for all, you must put Hart Holden out of the way; I will not bear his insolence," he adds, growing pale around the lips.

"How is he insolent to you?"

"In numberless ways; I cannot speak with him now but he replies with a cold sneer; as to the young lady, Miss Kate, I told her yesterday that Hart had fallen from the carriage, which was true, only he had not the good fortune to be killed; and as I described his escape, she turned white and fainted"—he ground his teeth together and drew his breath hard between them.

"And that you take as an evidence of what?"

"That she loves him to distraction—curse him!" said the bold, bad young man.

"How can she help that?" queried Paul, feeling a savage satisfaction in tormenting one almost as unfortunate as himself.

"How help that?" the other demanded, spurning all self-control and almost yelling, "the infernal scoundrel has taught her! taught her to love him with the consummate art of a fiend. His smooth manner, his quiet voice—his thousand arts, oh! I have seen—I have seen"—and he ground his teeth again.

"All nonsense! she felt a woman's sympathy, and would have fainted at the same description concerning any other man or—boy"—he sneered; "if she had read it, she might have moistened her handkerchief," he continued sarcastically.

"I will have her, if I go to perdition for her!" exclaimed Lovejoy, his voice nearly drowned in the tears he forced back; "if I do not—I swear no one else shall!"

"Spunk—spunk!" cried Paul, tapping him on his shoulder, "it would be a blow, after all I have done, to see this cunning youth quietly leading our queenly friend to the altar, and they two there becoming man and wife."

"Madness! cease!" cried Fred, almost foaming at the mouth.

"She has a fortune that will help him vastly," continued Paul, smiling to himself. "Young doctors have skeleton chance of getting practice, unless they go off to some agueish place, where, in searching for patients, they lose their fine looks, and become by-words for their ugliness with every pretty girl, ha! Young Holden stands a noble chance—a chance that is rarely met with in these times."

"Do you jest with me?" asked Fred, smiling with a sickly, revolting expression, "who bade me hope, but you? what was to be the reward of my successful scheming, but the hand of Kate Homer?"

"Successful scheming, that's the word—but you have not been successful; you have failed in estranging the widow's daughter and this young scoundrel; you have failed in everything—dead failed; how can you expect a reward?"

"And you, too, deceive me!" muttered Fred, his lips trembling with concealed hate and passion.

"Wherein have I deceived you, sirrah?" demanded Paul sternly, speaking as he would to his menial.

"Beware!" cried the young man in smothered tones, "or you or I will do that deed of which we are as yet guiltless. I dreamed I killed you last night."

Paul grew ghastly, and turned himself suddenly about to hide the strange look that crossed his face; Fred folded his arms, and assumed a defiant posture.

"Perhaps it is not your fault," said Paul, after a long pause, "that this fellow stands up in spite of us. I still have power over Miss Kate if I please to exercise it; but I will not, until *he* is humbled. He, long ago, committed a theft—and though a sanctimonious rascal," here he paused and fixed his eye with meaning upon the student—"he is not yet too good to attempt to poison *you or somebody else*, for instance—supposing, you understand—if you should foil him in obtaining the hand of Kate Homer, whose money, believe me, is tempting to a penniless devil."

"I have thought of that," said Fred, returning the glance with a fiendish intelligence, "I have thought of that—the rats are terribly annoying at Harvard," he shrugged his shoulders.

"Never despair, my fine fellow," cried Paul, with a look of horrible exultation, "*Nil desperandum*; write it upon the tablets of your soul—if you have one"—he added between his teeth.

"And Kate Homer shall surely be my reward?"

"As surely as there is a—hell"—he spoke involuntarily, as if some power beyond himself had forced it from his lips.

"Give me your promise in black and white, *ink will tell the story* that never fails!" added Lovejoy, not seeing Paul's sudden start and searching glance. "I must have it all down in black and white!"

"Come to my study," said Paul, and the two ascended the stairs. There Jupe met them, attired in an expensive suit of velvet. His face was still haggard and old, and he looked oddly in the ruffles that edged his linen shirt.

It was plainly to be seen that good living was not favorable to the boy's healthy development; but uncouth as he was, Paul Halburton lavished a world of tenderness upon him. Nothing that Jupe could say or do was offensive in his eye. And, strangely enough, the boy would not answer to any other name. When Paul ventured to remonstrate with him by saying, "But don't you know that I am your father now, Jupe?" he would answer with a wicked-looking leer, "no, you ain't! you've bin took in, oh crikey! Somebody's made you believe it, precious. I'm Jupe, and you can't scratch it out, and they used to call my father, that's if I ever had any father, 'old Jake;' seems 'sif I remembered of it all, sometimes."

And then Paul would say, "Well, perhaps you want to go back to your old life, and sleep on the wharves, and wear rags and eat bread that any dog would refuse."

"No you don't!" Jupe would reply, "s'longs I can ride in the carridge, and go to the theatre, and git turkey and oysters, guess I'll stick on."

"Then you are very happy—you enjoy yourself?"

"Only if the darned old achin' here an' there would stop," the boy would answer, his grey eyes moist and troubled.

Sometimes little Angy came to see him, and it was wonderful to behold how he worshiped her. Not for a moment did he lose her from his sight, nor would he allow her to leave him, unless accompanied by some costly gift.

"You *do* believe in heaven, don't you?" said Angy, one day.

"Do'no, do you?" queried Jupe.

"Yes, indeed!" said Angy earnestly.

"How we go'ne to git there?" asked Jupe, thoughtfully—"shovel out as we shovel in?"

"Why, no, Jupe, we go right up from our beds here: this body is put into the cold grave—didn't you know that?"

"Can you see 'em go?" queried the matter-of-fact Jupe.

"No, Jupe—it's the soul that goes."

Jupe tried in vain to comprehend, muttering that he didn't see how a feller could be in two places to onc't.

"Heaven's a delightful place, I expect, Jupe," little Angy went on, turning over the leaves of a book of engravings; "nobody will ever have any *kind* of trouble there. We shall all love *every* body dearly; and God best of all; we shall see beautiful sights, and they'll be kind to us there—the angels. We never shall be hungry, nor sorrowful, nor have any pain forever and ever."

Jupe's eyes sparkled with joy; a flush reddened his cheek—his breath came quickly—"Say," he cried, breathlessly, "wish I could go there to-night, so's I needn't have a aching here an' there."

"You must be good, you know, Jupe, to get there."

"I'll be as darn good as ever I can," muttered Jupe, with a glowing face, nodding his head in earnest confirmation.

CHAPTER LI.

APPREHENSION.

AFTER Gracie Amber's signal triumph in the old cradle of liberty, her correspondence with Hart had been renewed, but this time in such a manner that failure to receive the letters was impossible; inasmuch as they were placed directly in

hand by some interested person. Since then, her mother had seemed in better health, though there was little token that the insidious complaint had loosened its hold upon her vitals; yet better food, better spirits, and a prospect of comparative independence, had written their hope upon her cheerful face. And Gracie, after all her discouragements, conscious that she had been sustained by the hand of God, felt a more earnest wish than ever to devote her life to the service of her Creator. It was no bigoted desire, therefore, that led her humbly and cheerfully to seek an admission into the visible church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Beautiful she looked as she stood before the altar, young and pure and timid, yet ready to consecrate herself to a life of goodness, and a career of usefulness. The fervent welcome of the devoted Gilbert Waldron, proved that he felt the strongest faith in her integrity; and the beaming face of Doctor Andover, as he opened his pew door that she might enter at the conclusion of the ceremony, and his smile as he led her by the hand, scattered the remaining doubts of a few stiff necked persons, who were always ready to pick a flaw if some one with less scrupulous eyes would point it out to them. Miss Maligna sneered when she heard of it on the following day, and nearly ruined the skirt of a rich broad cloth coat she was repairing, by a vindictive flirt of her small, sharp scissors. Paul Halburton had resumed his seat, and affected not to notice Gracie, who leaned upon the arm of the good old doctor, while mother Mott going forward, took the young girl's hands in both of hers, and though she spoke not a word, that beaming smile, trembling through tears, told the story of her joy.

And before long, Gracie was the established organist of the old church. There was no lack of scholars now, and those who had before sneered at the friendless girl, sued for her favor. Miss Maligna nearly fell into a fit one day, on seeing Gracie with her music book, teaching Mrs. Lakely's little

girls, while the latter, who had long ago repented of her rashness, in condemning a young, fatherless girl, without strong evidence of her imprudence, and having also suffered from the French tailoress, treated Gracie as one would a beloved and petted daughter.

It was nearing Christmas; the weather was intensely cold, but delightfully clear. The Ambers had moved from the large, cheerless rooms so generously offered them by the jovial coffin-maker, into a neat little house on a street near the central part of the city, not having yet been annoyed by the ghosts which were said to be part and parcel of the deserted premises.

Here their pretty parlor was made cheerful by the music of the piano forte, and the sweet voice of Ella, who led the singing now at the old church. The kind friends who in adversity had lightened their burdens, often came to this cosy little place to while away an hour. Among them, Allan Beauvine was not the least welcome. One evening he came in with a solemn face. It was the night before Christmas eve, and the bold chimes of the old North Church rang out in merry measure. But Allan's face partook not of Christmas cheer; and as he drew a chair towards the blazing fire, he said, "Well, I've heard some bad news, friends, and some good news; which shall I tell you first?"

"The bad, of course," said Gracie, thinking it was only some of his jesting; "if we hear the bad last, its shadows would remain; but the good will be like the sunlight and will chase them away."

"Cute," chuckled Allan, turning towards her, "that's poetry, isn't it? But the bad news first, then; poor little Angy Harkness has lost her mother."

A simultaneous exclamation of surprise burst from all three.

"Then the managers of the circus have no longer any con-

trol over her!" cried Gracie, springing from her seat, and speaking with eagerness.

"I suppose not, but she's a monstrous way off by this time."

"No matter, she shall come back; she shall come here; we can take care of her, can we not, mother?"

Mrs. Amber smiled in the beautiful, flushed face, so earnestly regarding her; "if you consent to take such a burden upon you, I ought to be willing," she said.

"Consent! oh, joyfully!" Gracie cried, "she must be saved from the degradation of such a life; but where did her mother die?"

"Somewhere in New York State," Allan replied: "a stage upset and she was killed; you'll hear all the particulars in a day or two, I suppose, but why don't you ask me what the good news is?" he queried, the corners of his lips edging into a smile.

"Well, we are all waiting to hear," replied Ella.

"Why, you see," began Allan, with some embarrassment, running his fingers through his straight iron-grey hair, "the old man that mended shoes on Charity corner, down by the wharf, he's dead too."

"And is that good news?" queried Gracie.

"No—not all—for you see he was a bit related to me, and he has left about seven thousand dollars for this very child that sits here a telling you."

"Why, Allan! I wish you joy!" broke from one and another, as they caught his rough hands; and their exclamations of delight were heartfelt and sincere.

"Well, it does feel kind o' queer," resumed Allan, still fumbling about his hair; "but I don't know as it makes much difference—I don't feel a mite lifted up."

"I don't think a fortune of seventy thousand would make you proud, Allan," said Mrs. Amber.

"No—I don't know's it would; it's kind o' pleasant though,

to know you've got the chink, ain't it? The first thing I'm agoing to do is to put a hundred dollars towards eddicating that poor little motherless thing, Angy Harkness. And next," he continued, not heeding their pleased surprise, "and what I've perticklerly called to see about, is furnishing a snug house for my Sally Malindy. Sally's a good girl, Sally is, and I don't believe has got different notions from either me or her poor sick mother; she's a sight more nice in her idees, which I can't raly say I'm sorry for. Now Sally Malindy's worked hard for us, Sally has; her mother's sickness is put an uncommon portion of labor on our Sally's shoulders, that's a fact; and I'm going to reward her for it. They don't any of them know it at home—that is—they know old uncle Siah is kicked the bucket, but further this deponent saith not, as the lawyears tell of; so I came over here to see if Miss Gracie wouldn't help me about gittin' farniter; you see they've kinder furnished the little place they took, but I've bought the house, and mean to make 'em a present of it. They've got kitchen things, but I want to git 'em a nice carpet, and a nice clock—and a new set o' chairs, and many other little articles that'll make 'em comfortable; p'r'aps you'll jest help me choose 'em."

Gracie said nothing would please her better. So the next day she went with the old man to an upholsterer's, and there selected what suited her fancy—Allan paying down for everything in solid silver, and chuckling at each new payment. Together they visited the little house, and saw the articles put in their places. Gracie's taste arranged, also, a neat collection of window-curtains, and she and Ella fitted the carpets, and placed the bran new clock in a conspicuous situation.

All things looked auspicious for the wedding of Sally Malinda and Jack Flint, the grocer's clerk. The latter was a young man of unexceptionable character. Very few of the petty weaknesses belonging to the estate of young manhood

had fallen to his share. He was comely in person, and unexceptionable in temper, never losing the latter unless there was full and good occasion for it.

And Christmas day had come. Since morning rain had fallen—not from the clouds—for the sun never shone more brightly, but from the dim eyes of poor, miserable, low-spirited Mrs. Beauvine, rocking her sorrows away. According to her account, there never was a greater sufferer than she, and why Sally Malinda should want to go off and leave her with that young and helpless family on her hands, she couldn't tell. Sally herself became almost crazed with her lamentations, but it was as apparent to her as to every body else, that Mrs. Beauvine's greatest suffering was a disinclination to use her hands and feet, and an immeasurable love of rocking-chairs.

"Why, father!" exclaimed Sally, opening her eyes with astonishment, as Allan came in with a suit of new black clothes, the first he had bought for ten years. And, "la! father!" said the elder Sally languidly, when he displayed before her vision a new shawl, of a really beautiful pattern; but neither dreamed where his resources came from.

At last Sally was becomingly dressed in a white muslin, so fine, it looked like a cloud of gauze—it was Gracie's gift, together with a delicate veil and a wreath of snowy flowers. She appeared almost charming, nay, quite, in the eyes of our happy lover, and he told her so when they together entered one of the carriages that was to convey them to the minister. The ceremony over, the young couple proceeded to their house—little dreaming it was in reality their own. What was their surprise to see the whole place illuminated, to hear the sounds of mirth and music as they alighted.

"Welcome to your new home," said Gracie, appearing at the door, and leading the bewildered bride and groom into the beautiful little parlor.

"This is not it," said Sally, looking at the carpet; but the congratulations of friends, and the smiles of her mother, gaily dressed, and, above all, seated in a large rocking chair, assured her that it was no illusion. She saw the clock, the new tables, the curtains, and expressed her wonder at each. Letta Holden was present, jealous and mortified at the thought that this ordinary girl, only the daughter of a coffin-maker, had succeeded so soon in obtaining a husband of her own; for Allan explained the circumstances before the bride and bridegroom, and the astonished company. Dick was there, but he had grown to be an insolent, good-for-nothing, drunken Dick, addicted to gambling and other sad vices. He was very wretched at beholding the success of his rival, and inconsolable because Ella would not sing for him. Altogether, the position of the Holden's was unenviable.

Letta asked Gracie if she had heard from Hart Holden lately, with a look of such dark meaning that the latter felt a cold shudder run through her veins. But when she added, "It will be a match with Miss Kate Homer and Hart, I expect," she turned contemptuously away, but, sorry in a moment for her unchristian manner, she sought to efface the recollection, but the violent girl would not deign to speak with her again.

"Why should Letta Holden be so assiduous in striving to injure Hart?" Gracie said partly to herself, partly to her mother.

"Maybe she wants him herself," suggested Ella, who was sitting by, quietly sewing.

"I always thought her very fond of him," said Mrs. Amber.

"That is strange," continued Gracie, pausing in her work, and then, with an absent smile, she sat for some moments in sweet abstraction. Looking up in a little while, she caught her mother's eye. She, too, was smiling a cunning smile.

Gracie blushed as she resumed her work.

"I was thinking, after all my trials, how happy I am at last," she said, with a sweet confusion in her manner. "It seems to me I am entirely contented; my disappointments, most of them, have been good for me, and now my enemies seem to let me alone; even Paul Halburton has apparently forgotten the blacking I gave him—he is as quiet as a lamb. Mrs. Lakely has ceased to put confidence in Miss Maligna, and treats me as kindly as if she were my mother; this is the calm after the storm; this is the victory after persecution!"

"My child—my child,

'We should suspect some danger nigh
Where we possess delight,'"

said a low voice, which Gracie knew to be mother Mott's, and the old lady came forward with outstretched hand.

"Oh! mother Mott, you have chilled me through and through," murmured Gracie, with sudden, upspringing tears.

"My dear heart, I wish I had held my silly old tongue!" cried mother Mott, "but when I heard you say you were entirely contented, the words sprang to my lips, and came forth before I could repress them; why, my child, forgive me!"

"Gracie, what is the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Amber, alarmed, for the young girl, resting her head against mother Mott's arm, was violently sobbing.

"Why, Gracie, you frighten us all!" cried Ella, springing to her side and caressing her; "how strange! a moment ago she was so happy," she added, looking up in a distressed way at Mrs. Amber.

"And my thoughtless words have done it all," said mother Mott.

"No, no!" Gracie sobbed, striving to command her feelings; "but just now there came over me such a shuddering and dread! it seemed as if my heart would break. I don't know what it was, but it will pass off soon—I shall be better;

it is weakness to give way to it, but I could not help it," and a sad smile glittered through her tears. "I seemed to be in some dreadful danger, I know not what, but it is passing away," and she wiped the tears that had been falling freely, while mother Mott and Mrs. Amber exchanged glances.

CHAPTER LII.

CLOUDS AND SHADOWS.

THERE is a mysterious, instinctive sense of danger when suffering of a peculiarly painful character impends over one, the sadness of which cannot be resisted. It unbraces the nerves, and gives languor to all the movements; throws clouds over the sun itself, and shrouds all nature in a universal melancholy. The victim sighs and wonders why--weeps and smiles at his tears--trembles at every sound, and chides his weakness--grows cold at the sight of the postman, and feverish at every knock at his door--averts his eye from the columns of deaths and marriages, then greedily runs them over--shudders at books of a substantial character, and sings to keep his spirits up if by chance he finds himself alone where there is gloom or darkness. With some, its experience is frightful and rapid--consummation of fears which they put afar off with a strong will, strikes them like a thunderbolt. With others it is the lingering agony of months, the sword forever hanging by the hair--the steps constantly impelled towards the brink of a precipice down which the dizzy brain must gaze or plunge headlong.

In such an unenviable frame of mind, Hart Holden had

fallen--every look threatened danger--every whisper of the wind imported evil. He had been startled at the knowledge of the deep deception, which it was evident some unscrupulous enemy had plotted to his injury. Again he had thrust the intimation, that it might be Letta Holden, his foster sister, from his mind, and again it would return with tenfold vividness. By every means in his power he had striven to ascertain who had intercepted his correspondence so mysteriously as to leave no clue. He examined the letters of his foster sister; they were very black and cruel, now that he saw beneath their cunningly constructed sentences and pathetic exclamations. She was then involved in the plot. Suddenly there rushed to his mind recollections of her more than sisterly acts of kindness; her conscious blushes, her every word and look rose up as witnesses against her, and Hart's cheek burnt hotly as the conviction that she had hoped to win him to her love, flashed upon him. He had never seen it so fully before, though once or twice a suspicion had crossed him--for he was not famous in his own conceit, having a remarkably modest and refined imagination, and bearing in his breast a love for Gracie Amber, which, though not vehement, was deep seated and firm as the everlasting hills. His resentment towards Letta Holden grew almost unbounded, as at last he left the table where he was sitting and walked his room with folded arms. And Lovejoy--why had he become an accomplice? In vain he said to himself, it was only a boyish freak, born of conceit and coxcombry, and an itching desire to tease his fellow student--or perhaps he had been fascinated by Gracie's sweet face, and so as the work had been cut out for him, yielded to his preference of an hour in order to display a foolish triumph over his rival. He even partly excused the "poor fellow," as he called him, for since he had divined his really vehement passion for Kate Homer, and since he could not but perceive that the latter gave himself the first place

among her friends—and even, conscience whispered, though he would not harbor the thought—the first place in her heart—he pitied and excused him. Hence the reason why, though he knew his follies and feared his habits, he still stood in the relation of room-mate to the misguided young man.

“But oh! this strange apprehension,” he muttered, “what is it? why can I not shake it off? Can Gracie be sick, or her mother dying? I feel my heart drawn towards them, and wish I had not given an unqualified assent to attend this party to-night.”

At that moment Lovejoy entered; his manner was reckless and his eye averted. Hart had noticed for some time lately that he had seldom given him a steady look, and often on awakening, he had seen him gliding uneasily about the chamber, and to his questions he would answer that he was not well, or he was worried; so Hart, believing it was the result of his unrequited passion, pitied him, and fell asleep with words of consolation on his lips.

“I suppose you are going to-night,” Lovejoy said, carelessly throwing his overcoat on its accustomed peg, and preparing to dress for the evening.

“I presume I shall,” Hart replied, looking gloomily out on the snow-crueted roofs around.

“Oh, by the way, did you get that—rat poison, the arsenic, you know?”

“Yes,” said Hart, taking a small package from his pocket—“take it; I don’t like to have poison about me. The druggist looked at me rather suspiciously; I asked him if he thought I was going to do any harm with it, and in a joke enquired how much of that it would take to kill a human being. I don’t know what impelled me, for, of course, I was posted up, but I suppose his solemn manner and strange look led me to joke on the subject. Nevertheless, happening to turn about, as I left the shop, the man was still eyeing me.”

The other laughed with an effort, and his hand shook perceptibly as he took the neatly folded paper.

“It will make quick work with these fellows,” he said—“I should like to see somebody who had died by this poison,” he remarked a few moments after, stropping his razor, “merely as a professional curiosity.”

“I was talking to old Ingerson,” remarked Hart, carefully taking some folded clothes from his trunk, and shaking them as he spoke; “he happened to be at the house of a friend of mine, last Sunday night, and I asked him, if in his experience, he had ever seen such a sight. He related one or two very curious incidents, and fully sustained the assertion of our learned doctor, that the poison renders the skin hard, fair and white, sometimes for years after the subject is entombed.”

A quick, almost spasmodic look of exultation passed over the face of Lovejoy; he turned, rapidly and defiantly shook his hand at the back of the unconscious student, muttering to himself—“I have *you* fast—should *he* foil me.”

“Did you speak?” asked Hart, moving forward to near the glass.

“These rats—I was saying they would not disturb us much longer,” replied Lovejoy carelessly.

“No! perhaps not,” returned the other.

“I don’t know when I have felt less like going to a party than I do to-night,” Hart remarked as they neared the brilliantly illuminated mansion; “if I was superstitious, I should say that my impressions boded harm.”

“Perhaps you are going to fall desperately in love with somebody,” said Lovejoy with a covert sneer.

“Perhaps so,” answered Hart, falling in with his humor.

Almost the first person they met after their presentation to the lady of the house, was Kate Homer, richly dressed, but pale as a marble statue. As the two young men passed the usual compliments, a bright red flushed her cheeks for a single instant, then receded, leaving her paler than before.

"That is for him," said Lovejoy to himself, suddenly loosening his arm from that of the young man. "I'll know my final fate to-night!" he muttered, "and if worst comes to worst—then, vengeance, do thy work! *He* noted that blush and exulted; he knows she loves him—pshaw! it may be after all but a whim of mine—to-night, to-night, shall solve the question!"

"You are positively stupid!" cried a gay young creature who had tried in vain to engage the student's attention.

"My gallantry is unpardonable if it cannot be roused by the fairest lady in the room," rejoined Lovejoy, gracefully bowing.

"I don't deserve that compliment and Miss Homer present," said the young lady; "she has been so annoyed with her multiplicity of beaux, that she has this instant slipped off into an unperceivable nook behind the vase of roses. A small conservatory is attainable from that direction, and there, no doubt, she has gone to enjoy the novel charm of solitude. Now just go in the main conservatory, and slip through the vines at the end, and you will catch the bird in as pretty a cage of exotics as ever blessed mortal vision; but mind," she added, laying her hand on his arm and laughing roguishly, "don't say I told you!" and away she ran. The young man preferred the hidden path, so stealing along by the Parian vase, and wheeling carelessly about, he followed the winding passage, and emerged into the conservatory, which was lighted only by a few colored lamps.

A DECLARATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Kate stood near a superb magnolia, in an attitude of the deepest dejection. She was alone; at sound of the young man's footsteps she turned, and, startled at his wild, worshiping glance, she would have passed him, but he detained her.

"Stay, most glorious being!" he exclaimed passionately, "listen to me—listen to me, only for one little moment. I madly, irretrievably—perhaps, hopelessly, love you—you *must* have seen—*must* know it. You *will* not scorn me—you will *not* crush me—God only knows how fervently I worship—adore you!"

"No more—no more!" said Kate hurriedly, her color coming and receding—"I cannot listen to such language."

"But for a little moment hear me—may I hope that by the deepest devotion—by years even of patient waiting, you will learn to look upon me as a lover—tell me, I can bear suspense no longer!"

"Never—should you wait a thousand years!" said Kate impetuously, "let me go!"

"I will not, proud woman; I cannot, I cannot; I *must* plead with you as the culprit pleads for life; do you not see that none other *can* love you as I love—my life, my very life must be the forfeit of your rejection!"

"I have heard these things so many times," ejaculated Kate, with a grieved voice and subdued manner; "can these college *boys* never learn to temper their passions?" she added in tones slightly sarcastic.

"Boys!" cried Lovejoy, stung by her manner, "there is one, perhaps, *boy* though he is, who, if he asked for your preference with the cold, calculating voice of an ascetic, you would pour all the love of your heart at his feet!"

Kate drew herself proudly up and flashed an angry glance upon him, but the vivid crimson that instantly overspread her cheeks told that the suggestion was true.

"I see it in your looks, Miss Homer!" said the youth, almost beside himself with jealousy, "I see you love him, but, by heaven! you shall love as I do, *in vain*!" his voice shook with suppressed passion.

"Sir, whom do you address? Sir Insolence, be silent!"

said Kate, speaking with all the majesty of her queenly manner.

"I will *not* be silent!" cried he, forgetting himself, "you shall hear why I speak; you shall know *why* I would have saved you the humiliation that might break your proud spirit. Listen," he cried, retaining her hand with a violence that almost made her cry out with the pain; "you are doomed! I will tell you a story; one night an old man gambled, an old, grey-headed man, whose hands shook with age. He risked all he had—small stores of silver; houses and lands—and yet the fatal passion urged him on. An evil eye was fastened full in his; his possessions were gone—what, suppose you, he staked next?"

Kate looked at him with a fixed glance and rigid features, but never moved.

"His daughter!" hissed Lovejoy, releasing her hand and throwing it from him with violence. "His own child, his peerless woman daughter—he staked her, and *lost*—and the winner was Paul Halburton!"

"Oh!" cried Kate with a heart wail, moving unsteadily back and pressing both hands above her glaring eyes, that were set distractedly on the ground. "Oh!" she cried again, with a piteous, anguished, heart-rending glance at him, and in a hollow, broken voice—"unsay what you have said, or I shall fall dead at your feet!"

"I cannot!" said the young man softly, suddenly moved to tears, and fearful of the feeling he had evoked—"I cannot; would to heaven I could—but I can save you from a doom most fearful to contemplate—I can save the reputation of your wretched father; be my wife, Miss Homer—oh! be my wife—stoop to be my wife!"

"I have told you to be silent!" cried Kate, the slumbering tempest of her passion roused by this fresh insult—her eyes dry and hard—their glances frenzied—her lips blue, her

temples ghastly; "my father *never* did this deed—what, *my* father? never! leave me—for, woman as I am, if I should lose my reason you might lie cold before me; go!" she shook from head to foot, and Fred, fearful at her look, her manner, turned and left her presence. Then she sank down with faint and tremulous groans; then she sobbed, while not one tear fell from her eyes—then she prayed in her agony to die—to die then—that moment—only to die.

Lovejoy wandered hurriedly through the gorgeous rooms in search of Hart. No one could fail to notice his excited manner. On first leaving Kate Homer he had adjourned to the music room, and there, after earnest solicitation, had consented to sing. His voice was powerful, his manner distracted—the words were well adapted to his own condition, and he threw a fearful fervor into the song; his pale face and earnest gestures made him the subject of criticism among the lady guests, and various conjectures were hazarded, so that by the time he had finished it was settled among them that he was a discarded suitor.

The evening had waned into night; the whist tables were full, and the dancing in another quarter uninterrupted. A pale, lean student approached Lovejoy, saying in a whisper, "I have a scene for your especial eye, come along with me!"

Together they passed into the large conservatory, which was empty now, and lightly going towards the vine-clad end, the student said softly, "look and see what you *shall* see!"

A pang, terrible and sharp, pierced the already lacerated bosom of the young man, as he beheld Hart Holden standing beside Kate Homer in a listening, respectful attitude. Her face was upturned, still white and tearless, as she talked. Presently Hart started, made an angry gesture—shook his head and pressed his lips together. His form dilated, his eyes glistened; a look of deep sorrow stole over his expres-

sive features, and, as she paused, he raised her hand and respectfully kissed it.

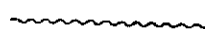
The student's rage boiled, but he restrained himself and still gazed, for they were too far off to be easily heard. He saw Hart seat himself beside her; he saw her burst into a passion of tears, and unconsciously, perhaps, allow her head to drop upon his shoulder; and again she spoke, sobbing when Hart took what was seemingly a miniature from his bosom, raised it to his lips, and then clasping one of her hands in his, talked rapidly.

Then she said something at which he sprang furiously from his seat, and with clenched hand and rigid brow almost madly gesticulated, while the words—"you shall suffer for this," spoken in a louder key, reached the ears of the listeners.

"Poor fellow!" muttered Fred's companion, "he takes it hard; you wouldn't catch me to do that for any girl." He believed Hart was a rejected lover; Lovejoy knew better; *he* understood every look, every gesture of both—his love was maddened and changed to hate. He moved away sick at heart, but the current of his thought was turned by an expression dropped by his fellow student—"that you shall suffer for this" smacked a little of revenge, did it not?

"Aye!" said the other eagerly, "so it sounded to me. He is merciless as the tiger when he is crossed; look out for some deed of violence, for as sure as you and I live, I believe he'll attempt her life before he will see her wed another."

"Is it so?" asked the student—"I thought it impossible to rouse his temper; he has always seemed to me as impregnable as adamant—I never even thought him capable of loving, although I'll do him the justice to say I think he's the smartest fellow in college—I do, indeed!"



CHAPTER LIII.

THE MURDER.

THE tragedy was already near its culminating point; the scales, on an even poise heretofore, were just turning—the clouds gradually enlarging and threatening so long, on the moment of bursting and spending their fury upon the innocent head of Hart Holden. Kate Homer, who, since the night of the party, had been violently ill, her life despaired of, laid hovering between life and death. Her father had told her all, and then gone out, as did Judas after his repentance, and hung himself. The grey hairs of the old gambler went down in sorrow to the grave; what had his child to live for?

It was on the eve of a blustering day that Fred Lovejoy and Paul Halburton parted at the corner of a narrow street, on the outskirts of Boston.

"Send it precisely at eight, or as near as you can," muttered the student, lingering for a moment—"send it by some chance passer-by, somebody who will never trouble us again."

"Very well!" responded Paul, and Lovejoy hurried to his lodgings. He knew that Hart would not return from lecture until eight. It was a gusty night. He held his cloak with a tight grasp, pausing for a moment in the shadow of a large, gloomy house. "There is no one with her but the nurse, since her aunt is sick," he muttered—"and she is a stranger. To-night, then, to-night let it be!"

Hurrying home and to the chamber occupied by Hart and himself, he, in an agitated manner, abstracted from the common wardrobe a dressing-gown of elegant style and bright crimson color, and a smoking-cap of the same shade, orna-

mented with a rich band and tassels. These Hart had received from some unknown donor. As they were very fine and unique in ornament, Hart went often by the title of the "crimson student," and was recognized peculiarly by his attire.

Pausing for a moment the young man muttered, "Yes, *sweet* uncle of mine—*dear* uncle Paul, a deed *shall* be done, but not in the manner *you* imagine. I read you, crafty uncle—but I have sworn—no man comes between me and Kate Homer—not even *you*, my dearly, *dearly* beloved uncle. And for this deed *he* shall suffer—not I!"

Wrapping himself in the gown and cap, and carrying with a guilty mien his own cap and cloak over his arm, Lovejoy proceeded rapidly towards another room, the door of which he softly opened. A young man with goggles on his eyes, who was intently studying, looked up for a moment and exclaimed carelessly—

"Halloa, Holden! come in—I shall be at leisure in a moment: I'm almost done with the 'old Roman'—come in!"

"Impossible!" said Lovejoy, imitating the voice and manner of Hart, and folding his crimson dressing-gown more closely—"did you know Miss Homer was worse? I'm going over there—that is—no—I don't think I shall either!" he added incoherently, with a laugh; "it might be dangerous; what time are you, Mark?—eight and five minutes—possible?—good evening, old fellow—repeat a prayer for the dying—I'm going to take some pills for the nervosities—and then to bed!"

The door was closed upon the astounded student, who muttered that Holden was drunk—and Lovejoy, standing a moment longer in the dim light, saw Hart leave their room and spring down the steps three at a time. Then he regained his chamber. A note lay upon the table; Fred caught it up eagerly and read its contents; they ran thus:—

"Mr. Hart Holden:—

Sir:—A young lady by the name of Amber, lies in convulsions at my house. Come quickly to Spring street, at Mrs. Lake's, if you would see her alive.

MRS. LAKE'S, No. 18."

"Good!" chuckled Fred, as he consumed it in the grate, "now to *the* business." He lifted his face towards the lamp; the flesh was struck into the bones like a dead man's; a fearful lividness had settled about the mouth, but its muscles were firm. Again he left the room, after extinguishing the light, threw his own cloak over the dressing gown, and breasted a high wind in the direction of the house where Kate Homer resided with an aged aunt. Noiselessly lifting the latch of the ponderous front door, he glided like a cat up stairs, leaving his coat and hat in the hall. Pausing before a dimly lighted chamber, he looked within. On the canopied bed in the centre of the apartment, lay a white, motionless figure. The room was shrouded in that gloom, which though not deep, still has an intensity of shadow that awes and subdues.

"What did you want, sir?" said a voice at his elbow. He turned and encountered the sharp-eyed nurse.

"I am sent by Doctor Gale," he said, commanding his voice, "who cannot come to-night, to administer medicine to Miss Homer. How is she this evening?"

"Oh! getting along bravely," replied the nurse, in a whisper—"come in; she is asleep now, dear heart."

"I am not asleep, nurse," said a faint, low voice, that set the student quivering from head to foot; "is it the doctor?"

"You will say that Mr. Hart Holden has come in Dr. Gale's stead, and by his direction," said the guilty man, taking from the table one of the five small folded papers, that laid ready for use.

He had dissolved a powder, and held the mixture in a silver spoon, when suddenly he grew faint, and was impelled

towards another room, in which the lamps, though shaded, were brighter. No one was there; he lifted his cap, and gently agitated the air; it revived him, but still he was deadly pale. He saw himself in a mirror opposite, and shook like an aspen, as the shrunken features met his view; then returning, he gently moved to the bedside of the patient, and pulling his cap closer over his brows, administered the powder. At that awful moment he reeled—he gasped for breath—the spoon as he withdrew it from the white lips, fell on the bed quilt—the lovely but deathly face of the fated girl floated away from before his sight, and her tremulous words, “you are very kind, Mr. Holden,” sounded like ten thousand thunders in his ear. But he conquered himself to whisper a sentence or two, averted his face from the nurse—hurried from the room, down stairs, resumed his outer garments, regained his lodgings, threw the dressing gown and cap in a corner, secreted something in an old lexicon belonging to Hart, and sat down to compose himself. The deed was done—and his soul lost eternally.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE HOAX.

HART had returned from the lecture as Lovejoy had predicted, precisely at eight. His eyes fell upon the note that had been left upon the table but a moment before. To read it, dash it down, and seize his hat, was but the work of a minute. Like one frantic, he rushed from the house. The night was dark, lighted only by the stars and the disc of a young moon, that feebly struggled with here and there a mass of cloud.

“This then,” he muttered, “is the tangible form my apprehensions have taken at last—my idolized Gracie is perhaps near to death! Heaven be merciful and spare her!” With rapid steps he gained the bridge. The water dashed sullenly against the posts and sounded dirge-like, as it swept by with a strong current, sometimes showing a rift of white light where the wind topped its mimic waves with foam. A dull red lantern in the centre of the bridge, warned the rapid walker that repairs were going on, and the tollman remarked that he had better take the other side, for it was rather dangerous getting over the sleepers. Forced to go slowly in the uncertain light, the young man said impatiently that he might be too late; and when passed the impediment, he doubled his speed, his fears deepening with every step. If he *should* be too late! The thought was agonizing. He tortured himself with painful pictures, and fed upon horrors. The sweat started from his temples; convulsions! too horrible—she had probably been giving a music lesson—and taken ill suddenly; perhaps she was senseless and would not recognize him. On he sped—he had reached the corner of Spring street, when a collision caused him to rebound. Hastily begging pardon, he turned, and the rays of the street lamp shone directly on the frowning face of Paul Halburton. He cast one reproving glance upon the face of his persecutor, and hurried on, little knowing that Paul stood still at the corner, chuckling as he watched him.

It is needless to say that Hart’s mission was unsuccessful; that haggard, half angry, and completely mystified, he retraced his steps and turned them in the direction of Gracie’s home, which he reached long after the old church bells had rung out the hour of nine. There he was still more surprised, though delighted to find Gracie in the best of spirits, laughing, singing and of course pleased, and a little alarmed to see him at so late an hour.

"There, mother! I told you I felt as if Hart would be here to-night; didn't I?" she exclaimed, as the latter sank exhausted and pallid upon a seat. "Why, what have you been getting so pale and haggard for?"

"For you," said Hart, smilingly, and then he told of his search.

"They have been hoaxing you," Gracie said, with a serious face.

"It was a cruel hoax," he returned, wiping his streaming forehead and throwing back the moistened curls.

"Poor fellow!" Gracie said, patting his shoulder, lightly. "I am so sorry for you, and yet so glad you've come!" she shrank back timidly after this frank avowal—then in low whispering tones, she said, "if it will be any consolation for you, I will tell you who, I have just found out, you resemble very much."

"Who?" he asked, raising his eyes beaming with love, to her gentle face.

"Why, Robert Burns," she replied; "I saw a portrait of him to-day, a glorious picture, and I said as I first looked upon it, it is Hart Holden; oh! it was so much like you—the same full, dark eyes, the same mouth, and above all that brow, and the curls so dark and thick."

It was settled that Hart should stay all night, and return early in the morning.

"But!" cried Gracie, a while after, reverting to his appearance, "you can't think how wild and haggard you looked, Sir Collegian; didn't he, Ella!"

"Yes, I was frightened," Ella replied; "I thought something had happened at the college—students are sometimes so reckless, they say."

During the night all the bells rang out, loud, sturdily, yet mournfully. The red flames of a great conflagration lighted half the city. The roofs were filled with men, women, and

children, gazing with lurid, frightened faces upon the terrible scene. Whole streets were laid in ruins, and half burned furniture and terrified throngs filled every gap, wherever the flames had spent their fury. Hart, roused from his first sleep, worked like a hero with the crowds who had promptly sped to the rescue. House after house fell with a crash into a gulf of liquid flame; shriek after shriek rent the air, and the smoke purple and dense arose towards heaven, like an unholy offering. Paul Halburton was on the ground, offering great rewards, cheering the firemen till he was hoarse, appearing and disappearing with the velocity of thought—for—it was his most valuable property that the flames were consuming; his warehouses, his dwelling-houses, his shops and his offices. But in vain; morning dawned upon desolation, and Paul Halburton was poorer by hundreds of thousands than he had been the preceding day.

That same night saw a *darker* tragedy. All the medical men in the town stood by Kate Homer's bedside, as the poor girl laid writhing and speechless. Her sufferings, however, were of short duration. Too much spent with sickness to struggle long with the destroyer, Death, she gave her pure soul into the keeping of her God, just as the dawn broke the quiet of the night. The symptoms were peculiar, "very peculiar, *very* peculiar," muttered a little testy, shrivelled old doctor: "in a strong man, I should have said they were caused by poison."

The faculty bowed their heads, and after a hurried consultation, proceeded to test the question. Too true; poison had been administered in a dose or in doses sufficient to have killed vigorous, healthy life. The doctors stood aghast—examined all the medicines and bottles in the house. The frightened nurse wrung her hands at the suggestion from one of the servants that "she had never liked her looks," until the visit of the stranger on the preceding night flashed over her mind.

"She hasn't taken one bit of medicine, Doctor Gale, since the young man you sent here last night, gave her the powder," she cried.

"Young man I sent—young man I sent," muttered the doctor, "the woman is crazy; I sent no young man."

"Well, sir—nevertheless, a young man came, as she would tell you, poor dear, if she was only alive; he had on a red cap and dressing gown, and said he was one of the students. His name was—was Hogan—or Homer—or—"

"Holden!" exclaimed the physician, as he gazed towards her with perplexed brows—he spoke as if impelled, for his lips moved not.

"That's it," cried the nurse, with a gesture of relief, "the poor lady seemed to know him, too, and called him Mr. Holden, and I'm sure I thought it was all right—oh! dear—oh! dear—he killed her, poor soul! he must have killed her."

"There is some shocking meaning in all this," said Doctor Gale, terribly agitated as he spoke, "I mean—some deception, some plot, some mistake; did any one else see the young man?"

"Yes, one of the servants testified to seeing somebody come in the entry, take off a cloak and cap—put on a red cap and go up stairs, but he had thought nothing of it since."

The doctor stood like one transfixed, alternately gazing at the corpse and the jury of physicians, who stared back again with blank faces. Hart Holden! he was a favorite with the whole faculty—they would as soon have thought of imputing crimes to heaven as to him.

"Let us not be hasty," muttered Doctor Gale, "there is some awful mystery about this affair—how it will end, God only knows." They proceeded to the College. By this time the murder had been noised all over town, and the streets were blocked up with human beings, their faces mingled horror and curiosity. Hart was not in his room—Lovejoy answered for him—had not been home all night.

"Humph! that looks bad," muttered the little Doctor, taking off his hat with energy, and putting it on again.

"Gentlemen, what is the matter?" asked the student, coolly, though he grasped the door to steady himself.

"When was young Holden here last?" returned the anxious Doctor Gale.

"Well, really, he could'nt tell precisely, somewhere in the neighborhood of eight o'clock," replied Lovejoy, regaining his composure; "he came in, and went immediately out after lecture; returned, and went out again; he had not seen him since."

The doctor pursued his enquiries, when some one said they had better wait (in a whisper) until there were legal witnesses; but suggested that the young man should be arrested as soon as found, together with the nurse and servants, and a servant on the premises, who involuntarily said that he had seen Mr. Holden rushing out of the house as frightened as if the old Harry was after him.

HART HOLDEN'S ARREST.

Wearied with his exertions, Hart awoke at a late hour. So restless was he at the breakfast table, that he started up before his appetite was half satisfied—said he felt as if he must return, and would listen to no entreaties. Gracie came forward in a few moments, attired in bonnet and cloak; she was pulling on her gloves.

"What! are you going out so early?" enquired Hart, smiling, as he gave one stride towards the door; "then we'll walk along together."

"That's what I intended," replied the fair girl; "I mean to go with you as far as the bridge, it's such a delightful morning."

"And next time you come I hope you'll not be frightened

into it," said Mrs. Amber, laughingly. "There—go, for you're as restless as you can live."

Together they walked up into the small square, on one corner of which stood what was once the old colonial governor's mansion, surrounded by oaks and butternuts, whose gnarled roots, spurning their enclosure, intruded into the open street. At a turning they espied Paul Halburton, haggard and with soiled attire. He had apparently just returned from the smoking ruins of his lately fair possessions.

"How he looked at you," murmured Gracie, in suppressed tones.

"Yes, the base villain! Gracie, I know something of that man that should consign him to the gallows—a deed—oh! a deed so horrible that the bare thought of its recital makes me shudder!"

He said nothing more, and Gracie did not urge his confidence. Nearly the whole way they traversed in silence; Gracie wondered, and thought to herself Hart never appeared so stern and solemn.

"How they look at you!" exclaimed Gracie, when, as they gained the bridge, a knot of men who had been coming towards them stopped suddenly in their walk and conversed together; "they look at us so strangely, I feel afraid," and she instinctively stopped.

"Nonsense, my dear; one of them is our good sheriff of Cambridge; the others are two of the police; they are after some rogue probably—they want nothing of us—they know me well!"

"Oh! I have such a singular dread," murmured Gracie, clinging to his arm—"I feel so very strangely; let us turn back, Hart—turn back—oh, do!"

He smiled at her wild appeal; but as he looked in her face, that had grown white with some intense terror, he paused to reassure her.

"Turn back, Hart. I have not this feeling for nothing—oh! turn back—there is some great danger threatening you. Oh, my God, save us! they are coming towards us—they want *you*; Hart! see, they block the passage!" and she, clinging, strove to drag him away.

"Sir—Mr. Holden," said the sheriff, who had neared him by this time, "I am sorry to be compelled to arrest you for the crime of murder!" and he laid his hand upon the young man, as Gracie, after one horrified glance, with a wild, piercing, agonizing shriek, fell to the ground senseless.

The young man was stunned—bewildered; then, maddened at the insult, and furious at seeing his betrothed lying in her deathly swoon, he writhed in the grasp of two strong men, exclaiming with forced calmness—"What does this mean? why am I arrested? man, release me!"

"Mr. Holden, it will do you no good to resist our authority, and may do you harm," said the sheriff, pointing to the collecting crowd; "be quiet, and you shall be treated with respect; a carriage shall be called to avoid publicity. I assure you this cannot be more painful to you than to myself!"

In a moment the student's equanimity was restored; and, begging pardon, he remained quiet till a carriage could be procured, into which Gracie was placed, still insensible, with the prisoner and his guard, and they drove rapidly off. The young girl was left at her own door, where her mother, in an agony of apprehension, received her in her arms; and frightened by Hart's ghastly smile and faltering assurance that all was right, bore the pale burden in and laid her on her bed.

"Oh, mother, I must *die*!" gasped the girl with returning consciousness—mother, mother, pity your unhappy child! oh, I *must* die!"

"My daughter, my poor Gracie—what has happened? My child, you afflict me with your looks; my lamb—my lamb!"

Still the poor girl could only utter—"I must die, mother, I *must* die; my heart is broken!"

"What *shall* I do for her?" cried the widow in frantic tones, as Gracie, unable to weep, writhed in her arms, her eyes glassy and all color fled from her face; while Ella uttered loud lamentations, and the children screamed and clung frightened to her garments.

"Here is Doctor Andover!" Ella almost shrieked, as she flew to lead him forward; "oh! Doctor, what has happened? look at her—only look!"

The doctor went hurriedly to the bedside, and partially lifted the helpless girl.

"My dear," he said, chafing her hands, "Hart sent me here—don't be frightened—it will all turn out right. Hart is innocent, my child, innocent as a lamb; keep up your courage, because, you know, you will need it all to help him," he said soothingly. "It is a wicked plot—some monstrously wicked plot! don't you understand, my dear, that it is all a mistake? the sheriff said he believed so."

Mrs. Amber stood by in distressed wonder, her blood almost frozen in her veins, for she instinctively felt that Hart's name was coupled with some revolting crime; while Gracie slowly, very slowly, turned her glance to the light, and gazed in the face of the good doctor as if her very salvation depended on what he had just said.

"He *is* innocent!" she gasped.

"Innocent—undoubtedly!" answered the doctor.

"But oh, doctor—you heard what it was—oh, Doctor Andover, the very suspicion will kill me!"

"No it won't, dear—oh, no! you are not going to be killed so easily; you must save all your strength, for you may possibly do much to defend him."

"Then I am strong!" said Gracie with a loud voice, lifting herself from the bed, her pallid cheek evoking a groan of an-

guish from Ella. "May I go now?" she asked, standing unsteadily, her wild eye roving from face to face—"is he—is Hart—oh!—in prison?" she forced herself to ask.

"He will not need you yet, my dear," the doctor said, gently forcing her into a seat. "Meanwhile, you must reserve your strength, or I shall insist upon your remaining at home for weeks, perhaps. You shall know every thing; and may God give us grace to bear whatever he shall send upon us all; pray to Him, my child; lean on your faith now, it will prove no broken reed."

At the mention of prayer, the poor girl raised her hands and eyes to heaven, and burst into a flood of tears. Then the doctor smiled, though his own eyes were wet. "Give her this sedative," he murmured to the widow, down whose cheeks tears were falling like rain; "I must off to the poor boy, and see what all this means. In an hour or two, at the most, I will be back. Meanwhile, be assured it is some infernal plot. What! Hart a murderer? I'd as soon commit murder myself!"

CHAPTER LV.

HART IN HIS PRISON CELL.

THE cell in which Hart was confined wore an appearance of comfort. A soft and rich carpet covered the narrow floor, a beautiful little table and writing-desk stood beneath the window, which, to be divested of a prison-like appearance as far as possible, was covered with a full white curtain, embroidered and festooned, one of plain, white cambric falling underneath. The bed, so narrow and uncomfortable, was yet

decked with a pretty quilt of white Marseilles, and a few choice pictures hung against the wall. All these had been furnished by some unknown hand, as well as the nutritious food that three times a day was sent from a neighboring eating-house. A collection of books was stored within the desk, but conspicuous above all, and bearing the marks of constant usage, was a neatly bound Bible, that lay open upon the pillow of his little bed.

Mother Mott, tearless and pale, though composed, sat upon the little bed's foot; and Abram Taylor, with hands clasped before him, from one of which his hat depended, stood near the door, leaning against the wall. Hart sat on the bed by the side of mother Mott. The sight of these, his friends, had thrown him at first into a violent agitation, as it always did, from which he was now recovering, but yet his head was bowed upon his folded hands, and sunken on his bosom.

Little by little he recovered himself, and lifting his head slowly, turned, with a face rigid with suffering, white with the pallor that succeeds mental exhaustion, but at the same time serenely, nay, even loftily innocent.

Mother Mott felt her firmness fast forsaking her as she took his hand and held its icy coldness within the warmth of hers; thought of Gracie, and the tears fell. The good minister, on the contrary, smiled as he shook the released hand heartily, exclaiming, "God is on the side of justice, my son!"

"But for that consolation," rejoined Hart, "this strange providence had overwhelmed me; but how is—is Gracie, poor girl! she does not—cannot believe—" he turned his head to hide the quivering lips and tears of sudden anguish.

"Nobody that knows you believes you guilty, my son!" exclaimed Taylor with vehemence; then returning the pressure of the hand still locked in his own, he said, "above all, you have the consolation that the Almighty has knowledge of your integrity;" and he proceeded to administer spiritual

consolation, while Hart listened with respectful deference, though his absent eye indicated that his thoughts were exclusively occupied by the horrible novelty of his situation.

It was early in the morning on the first day of his trial. Without, the grey gloom of a March sky, in bird's-eye patches, could be seen through the bars of the prison-cell. The wind, sharp and whistling, shook the naked branches of an old elm tree that stood near the window, and the roofs visible from that small space were lightly dappled with snow. All these Hart noticed with a restless vision, comparing his own emotions with the turbulence of the elements and the aspect of the heavens. Sometimes he would compose himself to listen with pleased attention to the fine voice of the minister, then, chafing as his thoughts roved outward towards the scenes in which his unhappy lot was to be cast, until innocence or apparent guilt, God only knew which, were proven upon him by an earthly tribunal, he would compress his lips and strike his moody brow. Sustained by a consciousness of his integrity, he had until now preserved his calm demeanor, after the first harrowing wretchedness succeeding his committal; but the crisis seemed too near to admit of calmness now. To mother Mott only would he give his undivided attention, for she talked of Gracie. Her visits during the long illness that had prostrated his betrothed had been like balm to his weary soul.

"You say," he cried with energy, starting out of the reverie into which the expressive prayer of Abram Taylor had thrown him temporarily, "that Gracie will be present to-day!"

"She is there already!" replied mother Mott, "or she would have called with us. I protested against her leaving the house, so did Doctor Andover; but I believe she would walk naked-footed through coals of fire, rather than not to be present."

"Oh, my God!" cried Hart in a low, anguished voice, and

then he seemed, as he held one hand close over his eyes, to pray inwardly.

"You will find Gracie altered some," said mother Mott with a faint smile.

"And what—what will she behold in me? God only knows what I have suffered, not only on my own account, but on hers!"

"You are both called to go through the furnace of affliction early," murmured mother Mott, looking away from him with a gentle sigh, and slowly wiping her tears with her worn but snowy handkerchief.

The jailor just then admitted the prisoner's counsel, and mother Mott retired, soon joining her minister, who was walking slowly towards the court-house."

"What do you think?" she asked eagerly.

"It will go hard with the poor fellow if what is said be proved!"

"Oh! no—no—no!" reiterated mother Mott, striking the point of her umbrella impatiently upon the ground; "surely God will defend the innocent!"

"Ah! if he was only of God's children," said Abram Taylor, shaking his head and sighing.

"Oh! but, brother, brother, be merciful, be tender. Remember his youth, his blameless life—and because he is so distracted now with his position, he does not give one of your or my evidences of being a Christian—don't condemn him, brother; 'let charity abound!'"

"True, Christ said he had found an Israelite, indeed, in whom there was no guile!"

"Oh! yes, yes, Christ will guard the dear boy—God will defend him—let us hope. Gracie, my child!"

Thus she exclaimed, as Gracie, walking slowly in her weakness, met them both.

"No room!" she murmured, almost weeping.

"I lost my friend in the crowd, and oh! there are so many people there! How will poor Hart bear it?"

"I will find you a seat!" said Abram Taylor, as Gracie, already exhausted, sank upon the arm of mother Mott, and he disappeared, presently appearing again with a constable, through whose efforts they were provided for. For a few moments the densely packed crowd swam before the vision of the exhausted girl, and when she did look up, her tears blotting a hundred faces into one; she could distinguish nothing plainly. Nearer, she saw the judge—and oh! had he read that wild, imploring look with which she fixedly regarded him! "He has no mercy!" whispered Gracie, referring to his stern forehead.

"We cannot tell!" replied mother Mott.

"When he comes—oh! when he comes," murmured the excited girl, shaking from head to foot whenever there was a stir in the suffocating crowd.

Suddenly there was a hush; Gracie clutched the hand of mother Mott, gasping as the blood rushed back upon her heart. The prisoner had entered—was there, within sight and hearing. Calm, pale, yet mournful was his face, collected and quiet his manner. "It seems as if strength had been given him, my child," said mother Mott.

That day was fearful to the accused. It appeared in the full and protracted evidence, that he had not only committed the crime, but had been for a long time preparing for the awful deed. The testimony of the student, relating to the hurried visit and incoherent manner of the prisoner, as he supposed, filled the crowd with vengeance, and they thirsted for his blood. When questioned closely, he averred that he did not distinctly see his face, but the voice, the apparel, the manner, all were Hart's. The nurse of Miss Homer went farther when confronted with the prisoner. Trembling, pale and indignant, she cried—"I should remember his face—I could

swear to his face, *that* was the face—besides, did not the poor soul herself call him by name? oh, the villain!”

The counsel cut short her testimony, and other witnesses were examined. The fact that the prisoner had been seen to rush from his boarding-house about the time of the murder; that he had applied to the house of a relative of the unfortunate girl, inquiring incoherently for a young lady sick there; that he had been heard to say threatening things at various times; that he had asked the druggist how much arsenic would kill a person; that he had bought the arsenic; that he had made enquiries as to its nature and results of the professors; that Kate herself had recognized him; that he had been absent all that fatal night; that he had betrayed the greatest agitation at his arrest, and finally that an abstracted paper had been found in his lexicon, containing the powder that should have been administered according to directions, to the poor victim of passion, and another, folded and charred with the remnant of arsenic still coating its creases; that arsenic was found in the pocket of his dressing gown; all these, as the prosecuting attorney said, looked like damning proofs of (the prisoner's) guilt.

At the close of that long examination, Gracie stood like a statue, seeming to have neither the inclination nor the power to move. She looked in mother Mott's eyes with a cold, bewildered stare—but when she would have spoken, she shuddered and pressed her hand over her heart.

And thus the trial continued for four days. Jem Holden, with a face changed by contending emotions, swore that Hart in his youth had been addicted to thieving; and Dick, his hopeful son, perjured his soul likewise. Jem averred that Hart had brought him money in a pocket book, which he said had been given to him for the concealment of a secret, and Paul Halburton declared that the money had been stolen from him. Jupe was brought as a witness, sick, pale, and

under a threatening injunction from Paul Halburton. With some variations from the truth, he told the story as it occurred, describing in his strange way, the wharf and the hiding place of Jem the stevedore. Such a chain of closely connected facts was never before thrown around the integrity of any human being. It seemed to the crowded assembly, as if murder stood before them, embodied in that pale, youthful figure, who dared to hold his head up, nay, to look the court, jury and people in the face.

On the last day of the trial but one, the court had adjourned at a late hour, and the morrow was looked to by thousands as an eventful day. Everything had been done by the friends of the prisoner and his able counsel to procure him a vindication, but seemingly in vain. The twelve men selected from the midst of an upright and intelligent community, had with grave and sorrowful faces, gone alone together to render against a frail brother, a verdict from whose fiat there was no appeal—or to restore him to the doubtful confidence of an angry and hotly roused public, that had sworn to take the law in its own hands, if by any possibility the murderer should escape what seemed a just sentence—and returned, with the word guilty upon their tongues. On the morrow, sentence would be pronounced upon the unfortunate student.

Alone—dejected—only having faith in God, and preparing for his doom, sat Hart in his transformed cell. Pale and shining, his marble-like face gleamed in the gloomy light of the one dull flame that flickered beside him, and his hands, grown thin and transparent, supported his chin. Thus immovable had he sat since his return from the court house.

He was striving to gather, in one stupendous whole, the strong evidence that like a wall of iron had shut his soul from hope. He shivered every few moments, and twice clasped his hands nervously around his throat. His eyes looked preternaturally large, and his cheeks sunken. He

started nervously as the jailor entered and removed a box that laid upon his desk, containing his razors.

"The last thing I should resort to," he murmured, conjecturing the motive that led to their abstraction, "no; I am innocent; let me die innocent, if die I must."

Again the door opened; with one low cry, a figure sprang towards him and fell within his outstretched arms.

"Gracie!" he said, folding her to his bosom with a strong passionate embrace; "have you come to see the poor, reputed criminal? this is kind in you, my dear one; and you too!" he exclaimed, his voice faltering, as he turned to Doctor Gilbert Waldron, who, much agitated, entered after Gracie, "this is an unexpected pleasure."

But Gracie, overwhelmed with her feelings, could not utter a word of consolation or welcome; she only clung tightly to him and sobbed upon his shoulder.

"Can you not console her?" cried Hart in agony, "you know how it is with me; there is no hope—no hope can I give you, my poor girl—only—only you believe, you *know* me innocent."

"I come to give you proof that I believe you so," Gracie said, in another moment, composing herself with one mighty effort—"Doctor Waldron will tell you," she added, in a low voice. The jailor still stood by the door; Hart looked his enquiry, steadying himself by leaning his shaking hand on the table; the other arm was clasped close around the form of the poor girl.

"It is *her* wish," spoke the minister in a voice so low, that it was scarcely heard; "to be united in marriage with you this hour; thus she expresses her confidence in and love for you."

"But I shall be hung!" articulated Hart, in a strange, hoarse voice; "I cannot consent that she bring a stigma upon her fair name."

"She is willing to abide the issue!" exclaimed Gracie, catching his hand in hers, and bathing it with tears: "it must be so; this dear hand that was never, *never* stained with crime," she murmured, with a fresh burst of grief.

"Only fifteen minutes," said the jailor in a business voice.

Gracie turned with an appealing glance to Doctor Waldron, uttering these expressive words, "to-morrow it will be too late." He came forward, took the pale hands, joined them together, and repeated an impressive marriage service, faltering often, his voice at times almost lost in tears.

"*His*, forever and forever!" shrieked Gracie, flinging her arms convulsively around her husband's neck, as the last amen was uttered.

"My wife—and yet—oh, God! wedded to a convict!" sobbed Hart, utterly overcome.

"My children—oh! my poor children—I am weeping too," said Doctor Waldron, bowing his head.

"Five minutes!" interposed the jailor, concealing his face from observation.

"We must part, my husband—it is time!" whispered Gracie, still evincing no inclination to move.

"No—not yet—only a moment—a little moment longer!"

"There must be no delay!" said the jailor with averted eyes.

"Then farewell!" said Gracie, "my good and *innocent* husband—believe that I never for a moment doubted!"

"I knew it!" said Hart fervently, and still detaining both hands and gazing in her eyes as if it were a pain to desist, "God keep you—my own!"

"Good-bye!" Gracie repeated less firmly.

"Yes, Gracie—good-bye forever!"

"No—not forever! in heaven," she pointed upward.

"Yes, in heaven then. I am so distracted—God help us both—my soul will go before Him innocent, sweet wife—one more kiss—the last, the last embrace till—heaven!"

The heavy door shut gloomily; like a statue stood Hart, gazing at its vacant blackness—then, with a loud groan, fell heavily to the floor.

That same night Paul Halburton was "at home" to no one. The excitement that had grown out of success had been followed by a sudden physical and mental prostration. His enormities were beginning to appear frightful to himself. Besides, for the first time in months, he had that evening seen the veiled lady. Secure in the conviction that she had returned to Europe, he had lulled his suspicious fancies to rest, and reckless from habit and by nature cruel, had exulted over the grand climax towards which his criminal manoeuvrings had steadily progressed. Hart was as good as sentenced, that was clear; and he himself had not even the smell of fire on his garments. Yet why paced he back and forth unsteadily, crushing with each step the emerald-leaved and rose-limbed flowers that crowded the gorgeous carpets? Why paused he to gaze again and again in that malignant face, that, now he was alone, looked like a poisonous though beautiful serpent, disclosed beneath a vase of crystal? He knew himself base; rotten to the core; guilty from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. He had turned the last page of his depraved nature, and there was not a white spot upon it. He trembled before his own evil, not in homage now, but in horror. An accusing presence floated dimly before him; he stuffed his ears to shut out the voice of conscience; vain hope!—she was trumpet-tongued. He threw himself upon his downy couches, first one and then another. Had they been bayonets they had been less uneasy. He forced his mind to dream of speculation; his gold was covered with blood. He conjured up pleasure. The flesh had wasted from her skeleton which grinned at him. He summoned cards; old Bob Homer chuckled over his shoulder, and, maddened, he threw the demon from him. He was bewildered, crazed,

desperate, and drank till he drowned his perverted reason, and thus he slept in the midst of his splendor till morning.

CHAPTER LVI.

HART'S DEFENCE.—LOVEJOY'S GUILT.

"How like a fool you act!"

Such were the words addressed to Letta Holden, who was weeping upon her bed. Her mother's sharp voice roused her, and she cried sobbingly.

"It is all terrible—it is cruel—it is *false*—oh! he is innocent—*innocent*! what shall I do to save him?"

"Be sensible, will you!" cried the mother again, shaking her by the shoulder; "remember Gracie Amber!"

"Oh! I don't care for that now, mother; Gracie might marry him—yes, and welcome, so I could only clear him—oh! she might have him a *thousand* times!"

"Yes, now that everybody calls him a murderer!"

"No, no—you know better—you know better!" she cried wildly, raising herself in the bed: "you know I don't mean that; you know I never would have done as I have, if you hadn't told me to!" cried the miserable girl with a frenzied manner and flashing eyes.

"Well—you better cuss me next!" said her mother with a savage look.

"Yes—I do, I *do*!" shouted the misguided creature, "and if I'm lost eternally, it will be you who did it all. Oh! Hart, Hart—if I only knew how to clear you!"

"Perhaps you do," said her mother, her temper grown furious; "perhaps you can perjury somebody, and get him

out of the scrape; it'll be nice to set a fellow murderer at liberty, won't it?"

"Ah!" muttered Letta bitterly, and it is impossible to describe the anguish that rankled in her manner, "I *could* tell some things. How is it father has got along so fast? tell me *that*! What's he going into a new house for? a house that *he* never bought with his own money; a house that Paul Halburton helped him to!"

"You jade!" cried Mrs. Holden with set teeth and growing pale.

"I know it; I see all the wickedness now. I never did before—but I see it all now. It's awful—awful to have such things on your soul. It's worse than all the hells that Abram Taylor could frighten me about—oh, its awful!" she groaned, shrinking back faint with the intensity of her feelings.

"Oh! what a precious good girl you have grown!" cried the fearful mother, ironically, and trembling from head to foot.

"Good—never! if I could return all the letters, and clear my mind—if I could do something to prove Hart's innocence, if I could be anybody's daughter besides yours, I might sometime be good—but never now, never now!"

"Hold your tongue! or I don't know what I'll do to you!" cried Mrs. Holden, suppressing her rage, and lifting her arm as if she would fell her to the earth; and Letta, frightened at her foaming mouth and wild eyes, crouched down and hid her face in the bed-clothes. An hour later, and she was wending her way, with hundreds of others, to the court-room.

"Is that you, Letta Holden? La! I didn't know you, you're so rigged up," said a quiet voice at her elbow, as she was preparing to ascend the court-house steps.

"Why, granny Howell!" cried Letta, startled, and turning her pale face towards her. The good old lady, enveloped in a short grey cloak, with an enormous hood attached, led

by the hand a puny but still rather pretty child, the little one of poor Minnie Dale.

"I don't know what I'm come for, though the Lord above knows I'd wade on my knees through the snow to do anything for that poor young creeter," granny Howell said, as she was swayed from side to side, by the crowd; "I'm sent for here, by somebody, but who, the mercy knows, I don't," and so speaking a large bonnet and a throng of mis-shapen hats interposed between herself and the warm-hearted old woman.

Paul—Lovejoy—Doctor Andover—Abram Taylor, and Rev. Dr. Waldron, were present, the three latter with deeply solemn faces. Indeed a solemnity rested on the whole assembly, for the youth and signally noble presence of the prisoner, together with his demeanor, in which a lofty calmness was expressed, had enlisted many in his favor.

Hart seemed unusually serene on this morning; not a cloud rested upon his brow. He had made his peace with God, and though no calamity can stun the soul like the consciousness that sudden and violent death will, ere many hours, cut off an existence that has known little beside the pleasant experience of life, yet he had mounted above his regret, and, secure in his innocence, could even contemplate the event with a strange pleasure. Never had his sleep been sweeter than on the preceding night. A holy calmness permeated his bosom as he laid his head upon his pillow; it was a new and overwhelming emotion that led him to clasp his hands, and whisper, "My Father," and that was all he could say, while he felt as if angels filled the narrow space about his bed. Lifted as on wings to the summit beyond mortality, he saw the unapproachable wisdom of the power that had borne him into the deep waters, that had encompassed him with affliction's whelming waves; and he ceased to argue with God, and to complain of his providence. Besides, a new and

sublime love had been added to his experience; he was a husband; and though he could not place his protecting arm about the gentle being who had displayed such exalted confidence in his integrity, though he was to leave her a name disgraced by an ignominious exit, he felt as if she would be more nearly an object of the Father's protecting care—as if in a future existence he should have superior claims to watch over her, as the guardian spirit of her life.

Thus when silence reigned, and after the preliminaries of the court had been adjusted, when the judge asked him if he had any reason to show why sentence of death should not be passed upon him, he arose, almost grandly, from his seat, and with clear tones, an unfaltering voice, and an undimmed eye, thus spoke :—

“May it please the court, in this solemn presence I declare my *entire innocence* of the deed which has been imputed to me. To my counsel I return my thanks for his manly and most able defence; I believe he has done his best. That I am not proved innocent, I must bear as one of the inscrutable providences of Almighty God, and bend myself humbly to his will. I am overpowered by the position in which I stand; yet, sustained by a conscious innocence, I dare still to stand. I can look the court in the face—I can look the jury in the face—I can look this assembled multitude in the face—I can look my accusers—nay!” he added, with slow emphasis as he turned calmly about and fixed his steady eye upon Paul Halburton—“my *executioners* in the face—and above all, I dare look *heaven* in the face, as no guilty man *could* dare. My counsel has most truly appealed to you in my behalf. He has told you the story of the seven hundred dollars which in a freak of boyish ignorance, I rashly but not guiltily gave into the care of my foster father, thus consider-

ing that I repaid him for his constant kindness to myself. To my counsel I explained all—all but one thing—my interview with Miss Kate Homer in the small conservatory on the night of the party. That, for motives which I will not now dwell upon, I kept in my own bosom; that, I will now disclose. The unhappy girl was led to confide in me because she believed, she knew, that my friendship for herself was disinterested, and occasioned by no lover's whim. Carried away by the impetuosity of her emotions, she disclosed to me with tears, the advances made to her by one of my fellow students, and a still more horrible information, namely, that her old father, seduced by a fiend in human shape, had sold her to his partner at cards; had staked her against five thousand dollars. That partner sits before you,” he continued, turning with bloodless face and lips, and pointing to Paul Halburton; “that is he who would consign to everlasting infamy, a pure and beautiful woman, and lay waste the heaven in her soul by the hell in his own.”

Paul flashed back a guilty and defiant look; all eyes were turned towards him, and a low murmur of “shame!” ran round the court-house.

“The honorable court has asked if I have any reason why sentence of death should not be passed upon me; I answer yes—yes! two powerful reasons; they are here—one is Paul Halburton—the other his reputed nephew. Of the latter I know more than I could wish; and standing here soon to be a corpse, hurried from existence in the very flush and holiday of manhood—cut off when life looks so beautiful—denied hope, sympathy—the confidence of my fellow beings—suspected, traduced, hated—gazed at with loathing, spoken of with abhorrence; Death himself deigning not to visit me as he comes to ordinary mortals, I had rather ten thousand times so stand, clothed in the mantle of seeming disgrace and the dyes of infamy, than change places with Paul Halburton

as he sits before you, his soul loaded with the guilt of a crime unconfessed; his very conscience quaking in its iron-bound secrecy---his whole being a blood-stained lie."

"The prisoner will confine himself to his defence," said the judge, speaking with a voice of mild severity.

Hart wiped the cold drops from his pallid forehead, and for a moment seemed to waver and sink—but he recovered himself, and while the stillness of death reigned over the great assembly, continued:—

"When the poor young girl had said this, I ejaculated thus—addressing the cruel cause of her sorrow—'you shall suffer for this!' heaven knows it was not a threat towards that lovely, ill-fated being. And now I have no more to say, all the facts tending to establish my innocence having been skilfully laid before you. I have only one Christian act to perform before I die, and with God's help I will do that; I will forgive my enemies; for in the light of the vengeance of Almighty God—in the light of the fearful retribution that must sooner or later overtake them—I cannot carry an unforgiving spirit to the tomb."

Quick feminine sobs sounded on the still air, as Hart, trembling, whiter than marble, and almost gasping in his strong excitement, turned slowly about and met the sea of faces that swayed restlessly like great waves, mysteriously moving without sound. Calmly his lustrous eyes, shaded by a purple tinge around their hollows, surveyed the various throng, as he continued:—

"And I must ask of the assembly before me, to believe that I meet my doom as innocent, as guiltless in thought or deed, as the babes they have left sleeping in their cradles. Come from the sheeted grave!" he cried, with an emphasis that set every heart throbbing, and lifting his arms and eyes toward heaven, "come from the cold grave, and tell them I was *not* thy murderer. Come in thy peerless beauty—come,

oh! come and proclaim my innocence. Or if thy spirit is here, hovering about me, whisper to the few who knew me—to the many I love—whisper of my innocence. Tell them I saw thee not from the hour of thy disclosure till I saw thee in thy winding-sheet; tell them that even in thought I never harmed thy purity; tell them I never sought thy love; tell them I am guiltless—guiltless—*guiltless* of thy blood!" and sank fainting into his seat, white and deathly cold.

The immense audience gazed with blanched faces and rigid muscles. Tears ran down stern cheeks, and women wept aloud—when, as the judge arose, there came one low, thrilling, spirit-like voice, that seemed to sound high up amid the arches of the court-room, saying, "He is innocent!"

A shivering fear seized the spectators, and the great mass, with horror in their looks, began to sway like leaves in a tempest—a chill superstition took possession of their bosoms, and they glanced threateningly from man to man, and shook their heads as though they would say, there is some awful mistake here—the man is innocent.

The judge had but begun to pronounce sentence of death upon the overpowered student, when the crowd swayed more violently; a hoarse whisper of "make room—make room!" was heard, while a majestic figure, enveloped from head to foot in sable garments, came slowly along and paused near the prisoner. It was THE VEILED LADY. She led a child, a little girl dressed in deep mourning, by one hand, and thus she stood like a statue in ebony; while the very judge, struck to silence, gazed with open lips whereon speech was hung suspended—and Paul Halburton, starting from his seat, bent a haggard glance, biting his lips almost through in the intensity of his criminal terror.

"I have some new testimony to give! I would respectfully ask to be put under oath, as I have some *important* testimony to give!" spoke the clear, low tones from under the long veil.

The judge expressed no unwillingness at the delay, his sympathies having been powerfully drawn towards the prisoner. On the application of Hart's counsel a new trial was soon granted, on the ground of newly discovered evidence. At this trial and at the proper time, the veiled lady was again sworn and gave the following testimony—

"In the stead of the murdered girl, in whose house I was sojourning at the time of her death and for months previous, I declare, and I can prove, that the accused is not the person who administered the poison."

Fred started bolt upright, but he could not move; his feet were rooted to the earth, and Paul Halburton seized his hand with an icy grasp, strong as iron.

"On the night of Kate Homer's death, I sat with her until, hearing a footstep upon the stair, I stole to a curtained recess in the adjoining room, as I always did at any noise, not even allowing myself to be seen by the nurse. It proved to be a man; I knew by the voice; and after some moments he came to the door near where I was concealed. He was dressed in a red gown with tassels—I saw it in the mirror, which, as the light was placed a little back, reflected strongly; I saw him lift his red cap and fan his face. The features were *not* those of this young man, the prisoner—but," and rapidly turning, she threw back her veil, and pointing with a gesture, that was awful in its impressiveness, to Lovejoy, who stood still and motionless, she exclaimed, "*thou art the man!*" A cry of horror, that he could not repress, issued from the lips of the guilty student.

No pen can picture the solemnity of the silence that followed—the rapid transitions of countenance that passed over the shrinking and transfixed murderer—the fiendish, passionate face of Paul Halburton, with its swelling nostrils, red, dry eyes and parched and parted lips—the unearthly beauty of the veiled lady, whose face had so long been an unsealed

mystery, who, with accusing eye and brow, black, sweeping garments and black-gloved finger, pointing immovably at the shuddering student; the lighted, swimming eyes and springing attitude of the overwhelmed prisoner.

Suddenly a prolonged shriek rent the air; it was Letta Holden's voice; anguish and joy had nearly overmastered her reason. Instantaneously a shout went up from thousands, long, loud, enthusiastic.

It was some time before order could be restored, and then the evidence of the stranger was taken down by the trembling hands of the reporters. Proof after proof she unfolded—secrets which Paul had rashly deemed safe in his own bosom, relating to his interviews with his presumed nephew.

"She is mad—she is mad—she is mad!" he cried recklessly, the barriers of caution which he had been for a life time erecting swept down in a moment, as she called little Angy Harkness forward, and the child confirmed Hart's story of the note, in which was stated the illness of Gracie Amber on that fatal night. She was going from the hotel, the child said, with a man who sometimes acted with the company, when *that* man, pointing to Paul, met them, and asked her companion to carry a note for him, directing him very cautiously and giving him a piece of gold. "He," pointing again, had talked with her till the actor returned and then disappeared.

"Mad—a maniac!" shouted Paul again, when another sight that shook his reason met his hot eyes; the judge received something from the hands of the veiled lady that glittered in the sun-rays—staggered and uttered an exclamation that startled the court and the excited throng. It was a watch set round with brilliants.

At this Paul Halburton gasped, turned right and left, and shrank cowardly back, while the judge, stooping a little, pressed a spring and disclosed to himself a face that was the counterpart of his own.

"I denounce Paul Halburton as the murderer of that man, your twin brother!" exclaimed the veiled lady, as the judge, in extreme agitation, turned towards her his wondering gaze.

In the period that followed, Hart Holden had been triumphantly acquitted and discharged as *innocent*! Fred was carried from the court-room a raving maniac. Three strong men could scarcely hold him, while his imprecations, his blasphemy, made hardened swearers shudder. Paul Halburton had escaped, and the officers of justice were already on the search for him; the whole city was astir with the excitement of the trial, and the veiled lady was more of a wonder and a mystery than ever.

CHAPTER LVII.

SAVED.

On the morning of the day just reviewed, Gracie had arisen from her bed, only to dress, and then, weak and faint, she threw herself down again. Mother Mott, who latterly spent all her time at the Ambers, sat talking in her own most Christian way, and silently imploring divine assistance for the poor girl. Mrs. Amber seemed bowed to the earth by this last great stroke. Ella had taken the children out to walk; it would break her heart, she said, to stay at home and witness so much misery.

After a long silence, Gracie unclasped her hands from over her white face, and turning, said in a voice unnaturally calm, referring to the sentence:—

"Do you suppose it is over by this time?"

"Alas! my child, I cannot tell," was the sad reply.

"I think I shall die after—when he dies," she spoke shudderingly, and still in that unnatural tone.

No one responded. Mrs. Amber bowed her head in silent suffering; mother Mott, after some moments, said softly: "We have a mighty God; it may be, even at the eleventh hour Hart will be saved."

Gracie only groaned, and covered her face again with her hands; nor did she remove them till some startling noise outside arrested her attention; it was the loud hurrah of several lads who had run all the way from the court-house, to surround the dwelling of the Ambers, and shout their joy.

At this Gracie half sprang from her reclining posture; her eyes grew terribly brilliant as she cried—"What does that mean, mother Mott? what does it mean? Hear them!"

Steps now sounded in the hall, and presently, with disheveled locks and disordered garments, her bonnet awry and her eyes suffused with tears, Letta Holden almost fell in at the door, crying out like one frantic, "He is saved! *saved*! SAVED! Oh, Gracie! forgive me, for I am miserable!"

Gracie sprang to her feet, and stood irresolute for a moment, then, holding her arms towards mother Mott, she exclaimed—

"I told you so!" and swooned away upon her shoulder.

Doctor Andover was the next visitor; Abram Taylor the next. Soon the little room was crowded, for Allan Beauvine, and the old sexton, had hastened to tell the news, presently confirmed by the arrival of Doctor Waldron, Hart himself, and the veiled lady, who, on seeing Gracie, threw aside her veil, and taking her in her arms, kissed her pale cheek with the tenderness of a mother, and laid her gently within the open arms of Hart.

"I told you we'd have him cleared!" cried Doctor Andover, while Allan clapped his hands, and, with tears running down his cheeks, declared that "*that* was fun; *that* was

what he called fun alive." Letta Holden, pale with shame and sorrow, stood dejectedly in the corner, until Mrs. Amber found her, and gently taking her hand, said, "My poor Letta."

"Oh! if I had such a mother as you!" sobbed the girl in a choked voice, "I never should have been what I have—never, *never*!"

"It is all past now," murmured Mrs. Amber, gently; "look forward to a purer life, my child; there are many years before you yet."

"Oh! but if he *had* been hung!" cried the wretched girl.

"May God forgive me!"

"Amen!" said mother Mott, who stood near her.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE CRIMES OF PAUL HALBURTON.

It is only necessary for me to say that, in the dead of night, fifteen years previous to the commencement of this story, Paul Halburton had murdered a man, in cold blood, for the sake of gold, an immense sum of which his victim was transporting to the United States. The tragedy occurred in Canada, and the body of the unhappy stranger was so secured that months passed before the deed became publicly known. His sister Catherine, to whose care Paul was committed by their only parent, on her dying bed, when he was only three years old, and she twelve, became cognizant of the deed at the time of its perpetration. Paul De Barry was then twenty-seven, and had been a husband and a parent three years, but his wife had died soon after the birth of her child. Frozen with hor-

ror, the poor young woman knew not what course to pursue. Denounce her brother, she could not—remain in the vicinity of the awful deed, she dared not. Though almost distracted, she had yet the courage to pursue the following plan:—

Claiming the remnant of her fortune from her guardian, amounting to six thousand pounds, she made a thorough disguise, and thus protected, took the child, in secret and in silence, and fled to America, leaving behind her affianced lover, to whom she was most ardently attached. When arrived at her place of destination, what was her terror, her agony, to find herself so implicated by the brother she had nurtured, that when the body was brought to light, she was instantly denounced as the murderer, and a close description of her person given.

Subsequently, she learned, through the same medium, that, the river being dragged, a female, supposed to be herself, had been found and recognized by certain remnants of clothing. This was a poor unfortunate whom she had aided in her distress, and most providentially it was decided that the body could be no other than her own. Then she took a solemn vow that none should see her face until she should be able to establish her innocence before the world; and committed her cause to the God of the oppressed. Investing her money, she found a poor family, whom she deemed honest, and free from unworthy motives, and there placed the son of Paul Halburton, (disguising herself at the time,) and regularly paid his expenses, determined that he should not be reared in luxury.

The boy was *Hart Holden*, who in his career proved that whatever vices his father had acquired, he had inherited the gentle, beautiful, yet courageous nature of his angel mother.

Retiring to an obscure country place, Catherine De Barry had passed her life in almost entire solitude; while Paul, in a successful mercantile career, had escaped justice, and lived

honored, envied, and admired, in the city of Boston, whither his sister had removed when Hart was in his sixteenth year. Then began the retribution; and the reader has followed me nearly unto its end.

While the ill-fated stranger remained their guest, at the time previous to the dreadful occurrence related, he had shown his watch, a rare and costly mechanism, to Catherine. This she remembered well; and by some private papers, which her brother in his hasty flight had left behind, she learned that the twin brother of the murdered man was an eminent lawyer, and resided in one of the New England States. These things, like the woman in sacred writ, she treasured in her mind; and Paul's libertine career justified her judgment in bringing him to justice, that more souls, through his influence, might not be corrupted. In various ways she had striven to lead the guilty man to repentance, but naught availed; he was headlong on his way to perdition; no earthly power could arrest his course.

Catherine read the plot that was going on, and concealed herself that she might the more surely bring the guilty to account. The death of Kate Homer, the only female friend she had ever confided in, almost maddened her; for she rightly judged that Paul, in his hostility towards Hart, (little dreaming that it was his own child he would blast,) had become an accomplice to the deed.

By a strange coincidence, brother, sister, and lover, met in the same sanctuary, Sabbath after Sabbath; for, as has been perhaps already surmised, Doctor Waldron was the once affianced husband of the veiled lady; nor till her sickness had he known of her near vicinity, or even that she yet lived.

It was she who had furnished the prisoner's cell, and sent him his nourishing food. Every phase of his trial she had closely watched, though not in person; delaying till the very last moment, when the guilty youth should feel that the dan-

ger had passed, to strike more surely and impressively. Thus, her every action had been studied with diplomatic skill.

CHAPTER LIX.

A DYING BED.

PAUL, the murderer, lies once again on his luxuriant bed; but what to him now are the downy pillows, the laces, the soft velvets? He is a dying man. Look at him. From that heaving chest downwards, there is no life in him! His blanched face has lost all semblance of beauty, and only a haggard horror looks forth from the shrunken features. From the terrible fall he met, when springing from the hands of his pursuers, from the roof of his own house, he will never recover; and he curses himself that the blow was not surer. The doctors say he may linger thus for weeks, as for weeks he has already lingered; and one week, with such a conscience, is an eternity. The chamber is darkened, for to-night he cannot endure the light. It is the only time that his burning eyeballs refuse to bear the overwhelming blaze that they have been so long accustomed to. And he is uneasy in the absence of somebody; he frowns at the long, ominous shadows, and turns away from the great black shape of the urn lamp, reflected on the curtain like a monument for the dead.

He strives to lift his hand, forgetting that there is no power nor vital life in any of its muscles, and with an execration from between his shut teeth, shakes his head savagely. The nurse asks him if he wishes drink; he mutters "No, no,"

and, with closed eyes, endeavors to lose the power of thought. Vain strife!

Soon the door opens, and his sister enters, divested of her veil. She is yet stately and beautiful, though on the verge of fifty years. Her hair is black, like her brother's, save where, at the edge of her temples, it is silver white. Her eyes are large, mournful, and lustrous, swelling slightly forward and beautifully shaped; the contour of her face and cast of her features are almost faultless.

Thus she looked as advancing with an anxious expression, she seated herself by the side of the bed. Paul had averted his face, and was breathing heavily.

"You sent for me," at last she said.

"I did," he repeated, with a shocking oath.

She shrank back. "No repentance yet!" she said mournfully.

"Don't talk of repentance to me!" cried Paul, savagely; "you, who have brought me here!"

"I would it might save your soul," she said, with tears.

"My soul will go to *hell*!" exclaimed Paul, with awful emphasis.

Yet farther shrank the horror-struck sister from the bed of pain.

At last Paul slowly turned his head, and uttered a cry that froze the blood of the listener, for Catherine was alone with Paul; he had sent the nurse out. She followed the direction of his eyes, which seemed fixed and starting forward; the minute and hour hand were on the figure of twelve.

A long silence ensued. Paul grew calm again.

"Do you suffer?" at last asked Catherine.

"Torments!" he answered, harshly; "but willingly, since you are balked of your revenge—you will not see me swing! Ha, ha!—I can afford to suffer!"

"God, Thou knowest!" said Catherine, solemnly lifting

her eyes to heaven—her lip quivered. At that great word, Paul raved again, and Catherine, leaving her seat, paced the floor rapidly.

"Where is my son?" asked the dying man, after an interval of some moments.

Approaching the bed, greatly agitated, Catherine ejaculated, "Forgive me, my brother, I have allowed you to deceive yourself; the poor wretch who lives upon your bounty is not your son."

Paul spoke not, but his parched lips sprung apart, and there paused as if they had not the power to shut. His eyes were fixed on hers with a deadly glare.

"Where—then—is he?" at last he said, with difficulty.

"Alas! he whom you have been persecuting, and whose fate you would have sealed by a fearful death, is your poor boy—Hart Holden; or, in other words, Henry De Barry, is your lawful son."

Before she had spoken the name, a spasm attacked the wretched victim of his base passions.

The fit hung on till morning, and when it passed, Paul lay utterly exhausted, neither speaking nor receiving nourishment.

Again the hour of twelve approached, and he revived. Turning his feeble glance towards where his sister was bending over him, he murmured, "It has been all wrong—all wrong."

"Have I, then, done wrong?" asked Catherine.

"No—no!" he answered, emphatically, "right!"

"And you are conscious of your sins?"

"Too conscious. God, have mercy! but he will have none—none! No, no, I want no prayers; I will not have *one*. You will call my son," he said, after that.

Catherine explained, gently, that he was not aware of Paul's relationship, and—

"You are right," said Paul, feebly smiling; "let him not know; tell him I asked his forgiveness," and he never spoke again.

JUPE TAKES HIS FAREWELL.

"THE achin' here'n there," had reduced poor Jupe to a shadow of his former self. His rich clothes hung around his shrunken form in folds. He had grown silent but not morose. The great mystery approaching him with slow and solemn step, threw the luminous light of eternity upon his brow. His smile grew sweet, though mournful, and in his old dialect he said, "'Twan't nary matter how soon he took and died." The death of Paul affected him powerfully. He shed tears, and exclaimed amidst his sobs, "Seems 's if everybody went and died! Somebody'll have to pay!"

Hart and Gracie petitioned to take care of Jupe during the remainder of his short life. Angy, a beautiful girl of ten years, was already an inmate of their little family.

One tranquil autumn's day, Jupe came out of a long, lethargic sleep, and looked quietly around him. Seeing Doctor De Barry, he smiled peacefully, as he whispered, "It's all gone now."

"What has gone, Jupe?" asked the doctor, taking the boy's wasted hand.

"The achin' here'n there," and again a seraphic smile broke over his face.

"Don't you feel as if you would like to remain with us, now, Jupe?" enquired Gracie.

"I've been where there's a grand light, and I saw lots of angels—I guess they was," murmured Jupe, as his face grew brighter; "they said I was a comin'—and a comin', but Angy couldn't go yet."

At that moment the door was flung open. A graceful little

form hurried towards his bedside, and kneeling there, bent a tearful face over Jupe's extended hand.

The boy lifted his emaciated form, but fell back again as a smile broke brightly over his sunken features, and he repeated lovingly and lingeringly—"A-n-g-y—dear A-n-g-y."

"Must he go, must he leave us?" cried the tearful girl, lifting her overflowing eyes towards Doctor De Barry; "oh! we can't spare him." Then reading in the young physician's face a confirmation of her worst fears, she let her head fall on Jupe's thin, wasted hand, and abandoned herself to grief, until Gracie, with caresses, whispered that she was distressing him. Then with great effort she controlled her sorrow, until she could look calmly upon the solemn scene—upon the seraph peace that shone on the face of the dying boy—the "Peace that passes all human comprehension."

A solemn shadow gathered over the pallid countenance—once a triumph-flash lighted his face with supernatural beauty, as, throwing up his hands, he cried, "the angels—the angels!" then like a white pall drawn over, came a quick, throbbing change adown every feature, and the poor, weary pilgrim was at rest in Heaven.

The romance of his life had raised his fame abroad, and great crowds followed the outcast, the unknown, to his grave, lingering long after the sods were placed over his breast. And their tears fell upon the child of misfortune.

LAST CHAPTER

Hart Remained ignorant of his near connection with one whom he considered a monster of vice.

"I remember," said mother Mott, putting on her old, well mended black silk shawl; "the time Mr. Halburton came to the widow Amber's, when I told him that God would not allow the wicked to flourish *only* for a time, how pompously he

said—"I doubt it, madam, I doubt it"—pulling his gloves on with the air of a lord. And here I am going to his funeral to-day, poor man! Ah! I wish he had died a good Christian; but the Lord is merciful—as merciful as just—as just as merciful."

"What does Miss Maligna think of things as they've come out?" queried the neighbor, while mother Mott locked the outside door, and placed the key in her pocket.

"Well, I expect she thinks by this time that the Lord is above man; but since she's been waited upon by old Deacon Hinges, she has stopped slandering her neighbors, they say."

"I never!" exclaimed the other. "Single blessedness is answerable for a good many sins, ain't it?"

Mother Mott smiled benevolently, as if she had her own private opinion upon the matter; her neighbor took the smile for an assent.

"What is that they are going to do with the little actor girl?" asked the little gossiping woman, who, although she was married, had not lost the use of her tongue.

"Angy Harkness? The veiled lady has adopted the poor little thing; and Miss Homer's aunt wishes to take granny Howell's charge, and bring her up, as it was Kate's intention to do."

"My! that's nice!" exclaimed the other, with a smack of satisfaction.

A year passed; Jem Holden had become a common drunkard, and, with his poor worthless boys, was fast descending the broad road to ruin. Letta, a changed woman and a gentle Christian, labored almost night and day to supply the broken family with comforts; and her mother, under the influence of her example, assisted her, and overcame her harsh temper by degrees, till she too learned to put her faith in the Almighty, and gained purity and strength through

suffering. Miss Maligna never was married, for the old deacon died on what was to have been his wedding night, and the good lady dressed so gravely that in wicked sport the people called her the "Veiled Lady," though she was thin, ungainly and homely.

Dr. Andover had the pleasure of taking tea with and teasing Gracie about love in a cottage, many a time, in a little bower of a home, just far enough from the city to be called the country—while Lovejoy raved for years in a mad-house. Old Allan, though he became rich, never forsook his calling; neither did his spouse abandon her rocking-chair. There she sat, till there gathered about her knee curly headed grand children, not limp, lifeless and lumpy, like her own white babies, but sprightly, screaming, boisterous children, who always gave her the "headache." Mrs. Amber enjoyed many years of happiness, although she never recovered her health, and Ella became a famous singer and actually married a great man who fell in love first with her voice, and then, by an easy and natural transition, with herself.

As for old Ingerson, he stood by the church and opened its doors, and laid the communion service on snow white cloths, till his hands were palsied; and even when his ear had grown deaf to all sweet sounds, he would get near Gracie as she played on the fine organ, and declare, turning to Hart, (known now as Doctor Henry De Barry, the *protégé* of the veiled lady,) that it sounded just as sweet as ever, invariably adding, "you've got a gem of a wife, doctor. God never made a better woman; I always said so."

After much persuasion, and overcoming many scruples, Catherine De Barry yielded to the earnest wishes of Doctor Waldron, and became his wife. There were folks to be sure, who said that he had injured his popularity by so doing, and the young people thinned off wonderfully, but I never heard that he regretted it. "Little Bob Amber" became a prom-

ising lawyer, and the girls, splendidly educated by their incomparable sister, have long ago taken the first place in the society made select by genius, wealth and intellect.

Paul rests in one of the old burial grounds of Boston. Above him rises a slab of grey granite, but there is no inscription on it; his property was disposed of by law, and some gold was found in the wine cellar where he had been in the habit of secreting his guilty gains.

Minnie Dale's poor child lived to close the eyes of granny Howell, and to bless all who surrounded her with her gentle, unobtrusive charities. Angy Harkness became a lovely woman and an artist of no mean ability. The sculptured stone that rises above the tomb of Rink, the old "sea-dog," was designed by herself, and she still lives to exercise her beautiful genius, and to give the cold canvas the glowing hues of life.

THE END.

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