

AGNES GRAHAM.

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A Novel.

BY FILIA.

(Ellis)

(Mrs Sarah Anne Dorsey)

Experience like a pale musician holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand.
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in his worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad perplexed minors! Deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear and countermand
Our sanguine hearts back from the fancy land
With Nightingales in visionary worlds.
We murmur "Where is any certain time
Or measured music in such notes as these?"
But angels, leaning from their golden seats,
Are not so minded, their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences!
And smiling down the stars, they whisper,
"Sweet!"

E. B. BROWNING.



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TO
A WOMAN WHO HAS BEEN FOUND FAITHFUL IN ALL THE DUTIES OF TRUE
WOMANHOOD, BOTH IN PROSPERITY AND IN ADVERSITY;

TO MRS. MARY JANE PRENTISS, OF NEW ORLEANS,

THIS BOOK

Is Inscribed.

1869-4

PREFACE.

THIS story was published in 1862 as a serial in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, under the name of "Agnes;" but as Mrs. Oliphant has since printed her beautiful novel of "Agnes," I resign the name, and call mine now "AGNES GRAHAM."

LAKE ST. JOSEPH, LOUISIANA, 1869.

AGNES GRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

"HOLA, Antonio!" cried lustily a traveller to his courier. They were amongst the ruggedest mountains of Sicily. Tempted by the beauty of the night, Mr. Murray had started with no guide but his faithful courier, resolving to prosecute his journey to Palermo without further delay. He rejected the usual route through the interior of the Island of Sicily, which was in excellent keeping, and convenient even for carriages. But with his love of novelty he preferred the solitary, unfrequented bridle path, rocky and rugged, scarcely marked out, which followed the coast. This gave him a variety of scenery, a succession of naked promontories and mountains, of sinuous and cultivated valleys, to cross; while the beautiful sea, so blue, so limpid, at their feet, the coast so severe in its outlines, and the magnificent luxuriance and splendor of the half European, half African flora spread out before him under the transparent air, scintillating with the brilliant light of the moon and stars, awoke sensations of the liveliest pleasure and admiration in his soul. From the valleys rose the fragrance of cultivated and indigenous flowers. The hedges which sometimes bordered the path were occasionally filled with furze, rose-laurel, and cacti. These plants clung, too, to the rocky edges and sides of the ravines, and crowned these deep chasms with beauty and verdure. The olive and myrtle, aloes, jasmines, and Indian fig prospered well in the more sheltered spots, while an occasional stately palm added to the oriental aspect of the scenery, and the penetrating perfume of the flowers upon thick orange groves was heavy on the night breeze.

As the traveller inhaled the strongly scented breathings from these latter flowers, he checked his mule, and looking down into the narrow valley far beneath his feet, he remained stationary for some minutes, apparently lost in thought or remembrance, for he began unconsciously to hum the well-known air from Anna Bolena, which, to English and American ears, always suggests the idea of "Home, Sweet Home." Suddenly rousing himself from his abstraction, he discovered that his courier had

pressed on without observing the long pause he had made, and was now out of sight far in advance of him. Encouraging his mule by a peculiar whistle, which is used by and known only to mountaineers and those who have often frequented their society, Mr. Murray turned again towards the steep mountain path in the hope of soon overtaking his guide. A few clouds gathering in the south warned him that it would be safer to try to get over this very rugged pass and into the valley he knew lay cradled between these high peaks he was traversing before the storm should break upon him. The atmosphere was growing warm and close from the sultry African wind. Sicily is subject to these sudden winds, these tropical dust and rain storms, being open and defenceless on the side towards the continent of Africa and its burning deserts. But in making a turn around a projecting rock, the traveller took the wrong path and found himself in an entanglement of rocks and chasms that he did not see his way out of. His mule stood upon a smooth rock, now slippery and polished as glass, and, "like a mule," refused to move either forward or backward. Her neck stretched out, her ears fixed straight, her feet gathered together closely, she stood moveless, obstinate. There seemed to be an abyss on the right, on the left, and in face of him, as far as he could see. Finding himself in this condition, Mr. Murray rose in his stirrups, and shouted aloud the name of his courier, "Hola, Antonio!" But in vain; Antonio was too far in advance to hear the cry. Mr. Murray now dismounted and tried to coax his mule to retrace her steps, to back out of immediate danger, but she would not be persuaded. At last, weary of the effort, he threw the reins loose upon her neck and sat down disgusted and tired. He had been in the saddle nearly eight hours, and was in no humor for an altercation with an obstinate mule. After a moment of apparent cogitation with herself, the mule, with the powerful instinct which belongs to that animal, putting her nose to the ground, wheeled abruptly half around and began cautiously to descend into the ravine upon her left. Mr. Murray had no choice but to follow her as closely and carefully as he

could, grasping at the shrubs jutting out from the crevices to aid his descent, keeping as near as he could to the mule. He found himself at last in the valley. The moon shone out at intervals, though the heavens were rapidly growing obscure, and the clouds were massing themselves. Mr. Murray heard the rushing of a small stream, which seemed to make cascates in its route, judging from the noise of apparently falling waters. The valley seemed narrow and long. Far out, miles and miles away, Mr. Murray caught a glimpse of bright, white-capped sea. The mule had struck into a wider but not much smoother track. She pressed on with more rapidity, either from instinct of nearing a human habitation, or to get out in the more open valley. At last she stopped absolutely still. Mr. Murray saw no shelter near, not even a hut, though on casting his eyes upward he caught dimly a gleam of paling moonbeam, or something that loomed up like a tower. It seemed too regular in outline for Nature's work. It had not the beautiful irregularity of a peak or needle of a mountain; but the rock on both sides rose precipitously to it. If it was a habitation, it might as well be at Palermo, so far as his convenience was concerned. There was no appearance of a path leading to this eyrie out of the valley. Listening anxiously amidst the noise of the rushing stream, Mr. Murray was certain he distinguished the shrill note of a shepherd's pipe, for the shepherd of Sicily still uses the ancient reeds of his ancestors to serve his turn for music. The notes seemed to come from the side of the rock just above Mr. Murray's head. The traveller shouted aloud with all the power of his vigorous lungs. Suddenly a dark curtain of skins was withdrawn, and a man, standing in the entrance of a large cavern, just above the path, answered the cry. Mr. Murray, familiar with the dialect of the country, and an experienced traveller, soon made his situation known to the shepherd, for such seemed to be the occupation of the man in the cavern, as, at the sound of his voice replying to Mr. Murray, there arose a response from some caves lower down of the bleating of sheep and cry of goats. Dropping his curtain of skins over the entrance of his cave, the shepherd sprang lightly down by certain well-known (to him) stepping stones or points of rock, and soon stood by the side of the benighted traveller, whom he cordially invited into his cavern. Leading the mule, carefully he conducted her into a cave near by, which answered very well for a temporary stable. Hastening away, he returned in a few moments with a bundle of straw and fresh grasses, which he hospitably placed before the weary animal. He tethered the mule near a sort of hollowed out basin or trough in this cavern; he

brought water for her from the brawling stream. After aiding in attending to the wants of the poor animal, Mr. Murray took his small valise, which was attached by straps to his English saddle, and followed the shepherd by a steeply ascending sort of rough staircase cut in the rocks, up to the cavern, which seemed to be his only domicile. The shepherd lifted the curtain of skins, and the traveller entered. The cave was large. It bore traces everywhere of the hand of man; there were benches cut solidly out upon the sides, all around it, at a commodious height for seats. In the centre was a large round basin or hole cut out of the rock, and there were round arches sculptured on every side of the cavern, as if in rude ornamentation; some Greek inscriptions still remaining on the sides. Mr. Murray examined these after he had warmed his hands at the bright fire which the shepherd had lighted on account of the dampness of the cavern, in which he was roasting his chestnuts and baking black bread for his supper. His Pan's pipe lay upon one of the broad stone benches, and on another was heaped some straw covered with sheepskin—the bed of the rustic. The shepherd offered all he had to the wayfarer, his nuts, his black bread, his bowl of curds, and his paillasse. Mr. Murray partook of the humble fare, rather to gratify his host than his own appetite; but, declining to deprive the poor man of his only resting-place, Mr. Murray put his saddle on one of the benches, to serve for a pillow. Drawing out a flask of excellent wine of the country from his valise, he offered some in the silver cup which fitted on the end of the flask, to the shepherd. The shepherd drank eagerly, and his generous soul still more largely opened by the generous liquor, he was more profuse than at first in his proffers of hospitality. The shepherd informed Mr. Murray that he was in the curious valley of Ispica, five miles from Modica. The inscriptions, Mr. Murray knew now, must be the remains of the ancient epitaphs upon the graves of the Christians who sought an asylum here during the earliest persecutions. He found the word *ενομηθη*—"He fell asleep"—the usual Christian epitaph inscribed in several places on the walls about him. He knew that this valley was filled with these caves, natural or artificial, which were used by the suffering saints as sanctuaries, tombs, houses, or chapels. This one he supposed had been a chapel. He questioned the shepherd closely about the valley and its caves; about his own mode of life; the products of the country, and the thousand things an intelligent traveller likes to ask about in a new land. The shepherd told him. The inhabitants of this portion of the island lived either a pastoral life or that of fishermen.

Large numbers of tunny were killed on this coast. They frequented this sea, which was sometimes red with the blood of the huge fishes, as they were speared or struck with three-pronged forks in shape very like the antique trident of Neptune. The fishes were very bold—going far out to sea sometimes in pursuit of their prey. In reply to Mr. Murray's question as to whether it was a tower he had dimly descried poised aloft, it seemed, on the very topmost crag of the opposite mountain? the shepherd said it was the ancient castle of the Counts di Serimia; that it belonged to the young count, who lived principally at Palermo—rarely ever visiting this decayed home of his ancestors. The peasant spoke of the young count with some interest and affection; seemed to have a sort of feudal attachment to him. But Mr. Murray gained from some observations an idea that the young count led rather a reckless life, both in Palermo and on the occasions of his rare visits to the castle.

The tempest was raging by this time amongst the mountain cliffs, and the roar of the wind and rain drowned the pleasant sound of the cascates in the stream which flowed through the valley. Mr. Murray congratulated himself on his safe, if not very commodious shelter; gave a few thoughts to his faithful courier; but Antonio had travelled with him too many years, and Mr. Murray was too cognizant of his great fertility in resources to feel any prolonged uneasiness in regard to him. The American, for such Mr. Murray was, driven by a restlessness almost equal to that of the "sting-driven" Jo, had wandered for years over the world. He too could have complained—"Amplly have my much traversed wanderings harassed me; nor can I discover how I may avoid pain." Memory and remorse drove him ever onward with pitiless scourging, and the very breath of the orange blooms brought with it the thought of his home in Louisiana, and of associations that made his heart throb with dull anguish—anguish hopeless and irremediable on earth, because his sins, his errors were all towards the dead.

A few hours of repose in the cavern brought back strength to the wearied traveller, and he sprang with alacrity from his couch of rock at the earliest piping note of the shepherd, who had risen without awaking his guest, and had gone down to remove the barriers from the entrances of the caves, where his flock had been securely folded during the night. Mr. Murray saddled his mule, and liberally rewarding the hospitable shepherd, who forced upon him the half of his black loaf by way of breakfast, he struck into a well used path, way which his host had directed him to take, which led him partly through, and

up out of the valley—past the frowning Castle of the Serimias back into the road he should have followed on the travel of the previous night. He found the sides of the precipitous valley pierced into thousands of caves. They were innumerable—terraced up, line above line; but narrow paths could be distinctly traced, which connected one with another. Some of these caves were very long, others shallow. They were all filled with the oblong cavities which are also to be seen in the catacombs of Rome. It was a valley of tombs. Mr. Murray breathed more lightly when he issued from it and stood once more on the mountain top. He urged his mule forward, but had not gone very far before he met his courier returning, in great alarm, to look for him. It seemed Antonio had not missed him until he had nearly reached Spacciformo. Then he had hastened back as soon as the storm permitted him to do so; stopped at all the places *en route* he had supposed Mr. Murray might possibly have sought shelter in; spent the rest of the night in vain search; had gone back to the city, procured additional guides, and was starting out once more with the determination to search until he could find at least some trace of his employer who had so mysteriously disappeared.

Antonio wept with joy when he recognized Mr. Murray.

"Ah! Signor," he exclaimed, "I have not been so unhappy about you since that time you were so ill at Smyrna, and I went after the Signor Graham to come and nurse you well."

Mr. Murray explained his adventure, and, after seeing the other guides, he and Antonio resumed their journey towards Palermo.

Mr. Murray now pursued his journey without further adventure, through the provinces of Siragossa, Cantania, Caltanissetta, Girgenti, Trapani, to Palermo; having thus made the circuit of the whole island from Messina to Palermo.

Mr. Murray made some stay in Palermo, attracted by the beauty of the climate and the charms of society.

Charles Didier says, in "*L'Italie Pittoresque*," "The Palermians, amongst all the people of Italy, have the most marked character and physiognomy. One feels that if one is not yet in Africa, one is still less in Europe. The Sicilian unites the Italian mobility with the impassivity of the Moor. He is at the same time a graduate in the art of dissimulation and that of imitation of character. This contradiction is piquant, and the union of these two extremes of nature is an interesting object of observation and study. If Sicily had political passions and manners she would be the country of conspiracies, and the secrets would be well kept."

"The Sicilian nobility are all ruined, and wanting revenue, it is too numerous for the names, although very ancient, to have any prestige or consequence. There are still in Sicily, according to the census, 123 princes, 90 dukes, 157 marquises, 51 counts, 29 viscounts—without counting barons, who are innumerable; and, as to simple knights, they mount up to myriads."

Amongst the 51 counts, of whom Mr. Murray met many in society, he also encountered the young Count di Serimia. He was not attracted by the handsome "fast" young nobleman who spent most of his nights at the gaming table. The American at last grew weary of even the summer skies of Sicily; quite suddenly made up his mind to return to his long-neglected home on the banks of the Mississippi; summoned Antonio, and ordered preparations to be made immediately to go to Marseilles. Thence sending Antonio back to Paris, Mr. Murray took a vessel for New Orleans.

He established himself once more in his solitary, though splendid home, where his loneliness was rarely ever disturbed, except by his little god-daughter, Elizabeth Hudson, who resided near by with her mother—a widow. But little Elizabeth was sent off to school, and Mr. Murray was deprived of even that sole consolation, the occasional society of the innocent bright child. He could not make the effort to resume his natural position in his own small world of "society" and neighborhood.

CHAPTER II.

The day was warm and bright. The large well-shaded playground of the fashionable school of Madame de Moncour was filled with groups of young girls of various ages, sizes, and types of woman-kind. Some were jumping the rope, some playing ball, some sewing or knitting fancy-work, seated at the foot of the large trees, and a very few were reading. It was the long recess at noon. For two hours the young ladies were allowed to follow their inclinations undisturbed by the espionage of Madame or the teachers. It was part of Madame's policy, she said, "to endeavor to excite the principle of honor in the breasts of her pupils." So at this time she withdrew all visible surveillance over their conduct. Some of the older girls declared, however, that Madame had a full view of the playground from the windows of her private apartments, which they observed she never quitted at these hours. Certainly she showed, in the management of her scholars, a wonderful knowledge of their peculiarities and little idiosyncrasies, that she never could have acquired by seeing their behavior only in

her presence or that of the teachers. Notwithstanding their suspicions, the girls generally, unconscious of being watched, gave full play to their inclinations, and an invisible observer had a fine opportunity of judging of their different characters. In the midst of the playground was a small shallow cemented duck-pond. It was kept very nicely—filled with fresh water every morning for Madame's beautiful white ducks. It was quite a source of amusement to the girls, who never wearied of feeding the ducks, or of watching the young ones swim. Not far off from this spot, a group of girls were playing "I lost my glove yesterday;" there was much racing, romping, and screaming here. Pre-eminent among the rompers was a tall red-haired girl, whose long tawny plaits swung around her head like the tail of a comet, as she raced against the wind. Her features were good, complexion fine, though badly freckled—her eyes a pretty bright blue, but spoiled by the extremely light lashes and eyebrows. Her forehead was square, and just now lowering. She looked as if she had a quick, fiery, almost malignant temper, though capable at times of impulsive, generous deeds. She was chasing one of the girls in and out of the circle of players. The girl she pursued, agile and swift, had so far escaped her grasp. At last, finding that Emily Adams (for so was named the red-haired girl) could not readily overtake her, the runner enlarged her course, and flew hither and thither around and about the playground. Emily Adams ran after her till she was almost out of breath, and began to grow excited and angry at the futile pursuit. The runner too seemed to grow tired and to relax her steps. Emily redoubled her attempts when she perceived this, and watching her opportunity headed the girl around the duck-pond, and would have caught her but for the sudden interposition of a little girl, who, holding an open letter in her hand, ran heedlessly in between the opponents. Emily stumbled and fell down. Exasperated at the general laugh occasioned by her discomfiture, she sprang hastily to her feet, and seizing the child by the arms, shook her violently, then, snatching the letter from her hand, was about to tear it in pieces in spite of the child's sobs, and expostulations "that she did not do it on purpose," and the cries of "shame, shame!" from the circle of playmates, when her arm was suddenly but firmly seized from behind, and Emily, convulsed with rage, turned to meet a new adversary. The girl who had interfered was much smaller than Emily, and apparently not more than twelve years old. She was very thin, slightly formed, but her limbs well knit and well shaped; her eyes were immense for her face, dark, and now flashing fiery glances;

her clustering ringlets thrown back from her brow fell in a heavy mass to her waist; her thin upper lip curved and quivered with indignation; the small white teeth were firmly pressed upon her lower lip, expressing determination—the proud nostrils dilated—she was evidently making a powerful effort to control the passion that nearly mastered her. She spoke in a voice low and tremulous with anger:—

"Emily Adams, give back Elizabeth Hudson's letter!"

"I shall not, Miss Agnes Graham. Who made you a dictator over me?"

Agnes made no reply, but grasping the arm she held with one hand like a vice, she simply caught the other by the wrist, and said to Elizabeth Hudson, "Take your letter." The little girl caught it from the imprisoned hand and ran off as fast as she could. Then Agnes Graham released her prisoner—flinging her hands contemptuously from her, saying: "Shame on a great girl like you to strike a little child." Emily Adams, livid with rage, struck violently at her, and slapped her cheek. Agnes Graham laughed a low laugh of derision. "I am stronger than you, Emily Adams; your blows don't hurt me; besides, I never strike; it is not *lady-like*!"

"Well! if my blows don't hurt you, this will." Springing past her, Emily picked up the book Agnes had been reading, and pitched it into the midst of the duck-pond.

Agnes Graham turned pale—she stood as if paralyzed a moment, and then saying, "Yes, you have hurt me now," deliberately walked into the pond, and picked up her book. It was a handsome illustrated copy of Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats. Alas! wofully injured by its sudden acquaintance with water and mud. Agnes looked at it sadly.

"Teach you to mind your own business next time, Agnes Graham," said Emily Adams.

"Whatever concerns Elizabeth Hudson is my business," replied Agnes.

"Oh! I had forgotten that your ladyship had taken that little cry-baby under your mighty protection, else I might have been more considerate in my treatment of her," retorted Emily.

Agnes fixed her large eyes on her with a calm quiet glance. "Emily Adams! you tyrannize over all the little girls; I see it more and more every day. Now if you continue to do so, I shall inform Madame; and I give you fair warning."

"Oh! oh! Agnes, will you turn informer and tale-bearer?" the girls all cried at once.

Agnes turned and faced them all as she deliberately repeated her words, adding: "Not having the power to prevent oppression myself, I shall have recourse to those who do possess it."

Any further discussion of the question was cut short by the sudden ringing of the recitation bell, and the girls flocked into the school-rooms as rapidly as they could. Emily Adams tossed her head and laughed triumphantly as she passed Agnes standing with wet feet and dripping garments, holding at arm's length her spoiled, muddy book.

"Now, my lady championess, we'll see what you'll say for not being present at your French recitation! and what Madame will think of her favorite's absences from her class."

"I reckon you'll catch it too, Emily Adams," exclaimed one of the girls hurrying by, "if Madame makes any inquiry, and serve you right."

"I don't care if I do," retorted Emily, "so Agnes Graham is mortified and loses her place."

"Oh! how mean! I don't believe she will lose it if Madame hears the whole story."

Agnes made no reply to the speakers. She looked at them abstractedly as if she neither saw nor heard them, and walked slowly to the house. As she crossed the hall which led to the dormitory little Elizabeth Hudson darted out of one of the rooms, and seizing her hand, said: "Dear, dear Agnes, I am so sorry, so very sorry you have got into this trouble for me. I would almost rather have let Emily take my letter; but it was mamma's letter, and I was bringing it to you to read; such a sweet kind letter from mamma, and such a grateful message to you in it for all your goodness to me."

"I am much obliged to your mother, and to you, too, Elizabeth, for thinking of allowing me to read your previous letter; but don't fret about me."

"But, Agnes, you know you'll miss your recitation, and lose your place, and your prize-marks; and oh! Agnes, if you should miss the gold medal next week, only think! after all your trying so hard for it all this whole term."

Agnes winced. There was no doubt it would be a sore trial to her. She did so long for the gold medal this term. She *had* tried *hard* for it. So far her report was perfect—but now! The penalty was severe when a boarder was absent without good cause from a recitation.

"Well, Elizabeth, it can't be helped: I must hurry now and change these wet clothes."

"Give me your poor book at any rate, Agnes; I'll take it to the laundry and ask Aunt Milly to dry it for you. What a pity! such a pretty book."

Agnes gave it, and a tear rolled down her cheek. "It is not the prettiness of the book, Elizabeth! it is because it was a gift from —," Agnes' voice failed. She choked

with emotion and hastened away, leaving the book in Elizabeth's hands. She soon changed her clothes, and running back entered the school-room. Her class was reciting. In an instant every eye was turned on her. Her cheeks flushed, but she walked forward and quietly took a place at the foot instead of the head of her class. Madame looked at her inquiringly, but took no notice of her until the lesson was concluded. Then as the class turned to depart, she waved her hand, "Remain, young ladies. Miss Graham, why were you so late at your recitation?"

Agnes' face crimsoned, but she replied instantly, "I had gotten my clothes wet in the duck-pond, and I had to change them."

"Was it accident, Miss Graham, that made you so unfortunate?"

"No, Madame; I walked in it purposely."

"Why! Miss Graham?"

Agnes' eyes fell as she replied, "I was very angry, Madame!"

"Will you explain what the circumstances were which led to such conduct on your part?"

The girls all pressed forward to hear Agnes' answer. Madame looked at her with stern, steady eyes. Emily Adams bit her lip. Agnes raised her large eyes to those of her preceptress.

"Madame! I prefer not to explain. If you please—if you will be so kind—I will take the penalty in preference."

"As you like, Miss Graham. Your name stands now first on my list for the gold medal; I shall place it last." Madame took the list from the desk before her, and passed her gold pen in her fingers—waiting a few minutes and steadily regarding Agnes. Agnes bowed in silence. In an instant her name was erased, and written at the bottom of the list. Madame waved her hand—the class was dismissed.

CHAPTER III.

THE following day at the "long recess" there was considerable discussion among the girls as to the propriety of Agnes' conduct.

"I think it very foolish in you, Agnes Graham, to have taken all the blame upon yourself, as you did," remarked the beauty of the school, a blonde of fifteen years.

"I could not do otherwise, Clara Bell," replied Agnes; "Emily Adams did not put me in the pond. She only threw my book in, and if I had not been so angry, I could have pulled it out with a stick."

This common sense view of the matter placed it in a new light before the girls—so they ceased their arguments about it, and separated to their several amusements—leaving Agnes seated under her favorite

tree, with little Elizabeth crouched down beside her. Agnes held her book in her hand, much injured, it is true, by its bath, but still readable. She had covered the unsightly back with clean, white paper. Elizabeth spoke—

"Agnes, you like that book very much?"
"Very much, Elizabeth. It is full of beautiful poetry. Let me read you some."

Agnes began to read in a low voice; Elizabeth listened.

"Well, Agnes, I suppose it is all very fine—but I don't understand it."

"Ah! but you like this, don't you?"

Agnes read the chorus of the beneficent Earth-Spirits, in Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound":—

"From unremembered ages, we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of Heaven oppressed mortality!"

Agnes read beautifully, and as she uttered the words—

"I all
On a great ship, lightning split,
And was borne hither by the sigh
Of one, who gave an enemy
His plank—then plunged aside to die!"—

she said with enthusiasm—

"Oh, that was beautiful and noble, Elizabeth!"

"Yes, that was very good for the man to do," replied the little girl; "but I don't think that is as pretty as the fairy tales you read me last week."

Agnes sighed.

"Well, Elizabeth, I suppose I would not like this much better than you do—but Robert gave me this book, and he has often read the poetry and explained it to me out of one like it in Uncle Elmsworth's library. So I suppose that is the reason I like it so much."

"Who is Robert, Agnes?"

"Robert Selman is my only cousin. I have no relative except Aunt and Uncle Selman, and Aunt and Uncle Elmsworth, and Robert. Aunt Eleanor Selman and Aunt Emmeline were my mother's sisters. You know I told you, Elizabeth, my parents died when I was only six years old. Then papa left me to Aunt Emmeline, and I came to live with her. And as Uncle Selman lives on his plantation, Robert stayed at Uncle Elmsworth's too, in order to go to school. He was already there when I came to live at it—and we have been together ever since—except when he went home in vacations, until he was sent to college, and I was sent here to school. We used to study together, that is, Robert used to *teach* me, and read to me, after we learned our lessons for school. Oh! I miss him so very, very much."

Agnes wiped off the tears that were gathering fast in her eyes.

"It is very sad not to have a mamma;"

and the little Elizabeth put her arms around her Agnes's neck; "but your aunt is very kind to you, Agnes?"

"Yes, very kind; but I should like best to have been left to Aunt Eleanor."

"Why, Agnes?"

"Well, in the first place, I should have lived with Robert always. Now that he is gone to college, he will not live at Uncle Elmsworth's. Another thing—I like Uncle Selman better than Uncle Elmsworth. And Aunt Eleanor! Oh, Elizabeth, I wish you knew her. She is splendid!"

"Tell me about her."

"Well, she is very handsome. Aunt Emmeline is pretty, too, but not like *her*. She has great, dark gray eyes, that look right through you, and such long, black lashes you never saw. And her hair is so fine, so glossy, and black and long. It reaches to her knees when it is down, and it is soft and wavy, like floss silk. Her teeth are so even, and so white, and her skin so clear, and so pale, her lips are so red; and her head sits on her shoulders like a queen's: and such beautiful hands! They feel like satin. Oh, my Aunt Eleanor is superb. Aunt Emmeline has blue eyes, and light-brown, curling hair, and fair skin; and her hands are soft, and pink, with dimples like a baby's. She is very sweet and good, but, oh, not like Aunt Eleanor!"

"Is Robert like his mother?"

"Very like her."

"Then he must be handsome, too?"

"I think he is *very* handsome."

"He does not look *like* you then, Agnes, at all, does he?"

"No; I am said to be like my father."

"I wonder if that is the 'Mr. Selman' Emily Adams was teasing Clara Bell about, the other day. Clara said he danced with her three times, at a party her mother gave her, when she was at home in the vacation—and she has got a dried bouquet in her trunk he gave her."

Agnes flushed up.

"Clara Bell is a very silly girl. I don't believe Robert cares for her, at all. She is not good company for you, Elizabeth. Aunt Eleanor says, it is very foolish for girls to talk so about sweethearts and beaux. I *never* did like Clara Bell."

"Well, Agnes, it doesn't matter; Clara wasn't talking to me, but to Emily, and she did not mind my sitting there. So I heard what they said."

"But, Elizabeth, it is not right to repeat what you overhear, in that way; so don't let us talk any more about it. I have a book—here you'll like better perhaps than Shelley."

Agnes took up another small volume that lay on the ground by her side, opened it, and began to read Hans Andersen's charming story of the "Ugly Duck."

Elizabeth was delighted; listened most attentively, and when the pretty tale was ended, took the book from Agnes, and began to examine it.

"Why, Agnes, I can't read this—it is not English at all."

Agnes smiled.

"No, it is German."

"But you read it in English."

"Yes, I know it so well; besides, I read German as readily as English, Elizabeth. My father was English, and he did not like colored servants; so all of ours were white. My nurse—my good Meta—was a German; and she always spoke German to me—so I learned it as soon as English. Mamma liked me to speak it. When I came to live with Aunt Emmeline, Meta came too, and she stayed with me till last year, when she went back to the 'Fatherland.' My papa left her money to live on. My dear Meta! She was my second mother, Elizabeth. She writes me sometimes."

"Oh, that was her letter, that *funny-looking* one that came for you last week. Emily Adams said, 'you were very high and mighty with your foreign correspondence.'"

"Elizabeth, please not to tell me what Emily Adams says about me. I don't like her, and it is not good for me to talk about her."

"Agnes, I think you are very good, and very smart, if you are not pretty. You know so much—German and French—and you are studying Spanish and Italian too, now. Then you know how to draw and paint; and I heard Madame say to Signor Parini, that you would have a most superb voice, equal to Mali something, if you lived."

"Malibran," laughed Agnes; "I should like to see that. You see, Elizabeth, I have had to study, because I had no sister, nor brother, only Robert, and he is so much older than I—he likes to study—so I learned to like it, too."

"Does he know all you do, Agnes?"

"Oh, a great deal more. He does not know so much German, and does not like to draw as much as I do, but, of all other things, much, much more."

"I think you like him very much, Agnes."

"I have nobody else in the world, Elizabeth, but Robert."

"And me," said the little girl, kissing her.

Agnes warmly returned the caress, and the two sincere, though unequally matched friends, rose to take a walk through the play-ground.

"Agnes, you don't play much with the other girls," remarked Elizabeth.

"They never ask me to play, Elizabeth, and you know I always spend two hours

at the Gymnasium every day. So I don't need the exercise."

"It is the gymnastics that make you so strong in the arms, ain't it, Agnes? You are stronger than Emily Adams, but not near so big."

Elizabeth took hold of her friend's small, thin hand. The lithe fingers closed firmly around hers.

"Take care; you hurt, Agnes."

"It is gymnastics, playing the harp, and what Aunt Eleanor calls 'nervous energy.' But what can be the matter with Emily Adams?"

Emily was coming out of the hall-door, book in hand, her eyes swollen and red with weeping, evidently in great distress. The girls looked at her, and went on with their games. Agnes and Elizabeth walked towards her—Agnes spoke to her kindly:—

"You seem to be in trouble, Emily; what is the matter?"

"Matter enough! Miss McGowan has given me six whole pages of this hateful old *Télémaque* to translate, as a punishment for missing my French this morning; and I was to have gone home this evening; and she says if I don't do it she will tell my mother, and request her not to take me home. And my brother Tom will be there, and I sha'n't see him; just like old mean McGowan! hateful old thing! oh! oh! oh!"

Emily's tears broke out afresh as she spoke. Agnes took the book from her hand. "Had you not better try to do it, Emily? We have an hour yet; if you will get your slate and pencil, I will go over it with you, and perhaps you can get it done before school begins."

Emily took her handkerchief from her eyes and looked at Agnes. "Do you mean to say you will help me, Agnes Graham, after all the harm I have done you?"

"I mean to help you if you will let me, Emily," said Agnes, smiling. "It is very little trouble to me, because I read French easily."

Emily Adams sprang forward and threw her arms around Agnes's neck. "Agnes Graham, you are a noble girl, and I mean to be your friend as long as I live."

"I shall be very glad, Emily; but get the slate now."

As Emily ran off for the slate, little Elizabeth said: "I understand now, Agnes,

Who gave an enemy his plank,
And turned aside to die."

You have lost the gold medal, though."

"And gained a friend," replied Agnes.

CHAPTER IV.

A FEW months after the events we have been relating, Agnes Graham sat in the

pleasant library of Judge Selman's newly purchased house in N——. On the sofa near her, lay at full length, in an easy, lounging attitude, the handsome figure of Robert Selman. It was dark out of doors, but the lamps were not lighted yet. The room was illumined only by the fitful flames of a bright coal fire, before which Agnes sat, half-reclining in a large arm-chair. As the glowing light flashed upon her from time to time, one could see how full of weary sadness her attitude was. The small hands crossed languidly in her lap; the head bowed forwards upon her breast, her face half hidden by the masses of clustering curls, she sat steadfastly gazing on the burning coals. Her large eyes were swimming in tears that she would not allow to fall. Robert lay with his eyes fixed on her melancholy face. It was a remarkable face. One could not call it pretty—it was too thin and sharply cut for beauty now—but it was so full of intelligence, repressed fire, energy, and genius; so clear, and pale, and brilliant, her eyes so large, dark, and weird-looking, when they flashed upon one, that it was almost startling. It was a countenance which might round and soften into beauty of the highest and most exquisite order; or, if the sharpness remained and the nose grew longer as she advanced to womanhood, she might become very ugly. So thought Robert Selman as he looked steadily upon her fixed, immovable countenance. He spoke at last.

"Agnes, you did not give me the watch and letter to put in my trunk for Meta."

"I will give them to you to-night, Robert."

"When I reach Heidelberg, my first visit shall be to Meta, Agnes."

"Thank you, Robert; Meta will be so glad to see you." Agnes spoke with difficulty; her tears were nearly choking her.

"I shall tell Meta that you are almost grown up, Agnes, and have not forgotten your German. You must keep up your readings; for, when I come back, I shall be able to talk as fast as you do now in that guttural tongue."

"When you come back! O Robert! not for six long years."

"Five, little one, only five. Two years for Heidelberg, and three for medicine in Paris, then I shall turn my face homewards."

"Well, five years is a long, long time! And perhaps you will come back changed, not caring for us all as you do now—no longer my Robert."

"You fear I shall conjugate the verb *lieben* with some of those blue-eyed frauleins, do you? Their eyes can't be bluer than Clara Bell's," said Robert, gayly.

"I never saw any great beauty in Clara Bell's eyes," replied Agnes, rather sharply; "they are stony blue, like a china doll's."

"O Agnes, Agnes! with your artistic tastes, I am surprised you see no beauty in that most lovely specimen of blondes. It is unkind to me, too, when you know my extravagant admiration for her."

Agnes looked keenly at him. Robert laughed. "So I can't ask you to deliver that bouquet of jasmines on the table with my adieux to the fair Clara, Agnes?"

Agnes turned to the table. The fragrant flowers were arranged with great care. "Did you intend that for Clara, Robert?"

"For whom else, little one, do you suppose I could take the trouble to arrange them?"

Agnes said nothing; but, reaching out her hand, took the flowers, held them to her face an instant, inhaling the delicious fragrance; in another moment they lay in the burning coals. Robert sprang up, with an exclamation of dismay:—

"You miserable, jealous little child! That was for Aunt Emmeline—her favorite flowers. I gathered them to leave as I passed her house to-morrow morning."

"You shouldn't tell stories, Robert. I'll make you another, prettier, by daylight to-morrow morning. I am sorry I burnt it, though; please to forgive me."

"Come here, then."

Agnes rose, and Robert sat up in the sofa, making a place for her by his side. Agnes laid her head upon his shoulder.

"O Robert, Robert! how shall I live without you all those long, long years?"

"Don't cry, Agnes. You promised you would not." Robert's own eyes were filling fast with tears, and his voice faltered as he spoke. Agnes uttered a low, smothered sob, almost a moan.

"Only once—let me weep once, Robert. Oh! my heart is breaking."

She threw her arms around his neck and broke out in a passionate flood of tears, as if, like Undine, she would weep her life away. It was pitiable. Robert could only clasp her closely in his arms, his own tears falling upon her dark hair, the drops gleaming like diamonds in the firelight.

Agnes sat up at length and wiped her tears away. "I am better now, Robert; I will try to bear it."

Robert did not speak, but kissed again and again the glossy head.

"Agnes, you will write often, and will not forget me?"

"Never—oh! Robert, how could I?"

Robert's reply was prevented by the servant bringing in the lamps, and the entrance of Judge and Mrs. Selman. The evening wore sadly away—the last evening! The parents were separating themselves from their only child—they thought for his good; but their anxious eyes rested upon him with grief and tenderness which they strove in vain to conceal. Agnes was wretched be-

yond expression—but the young orphan, like many impassioned natures, possessed a wonderful power of outward control. So she talked and smiled, and strove to lighten the leaden weight of sorrow which hung over them all.

"I expect young Evelyn to join me in New Orleans," said Robert to his parents.

"Who is he?" asked Judge Selman.

"A clever fellow I knew at college—he intends studying at Heidelberg, too."

The "good-nights" were tender and lingering among the little group that night. Robert begged that his parents should not accompany him to the boat, which was to take him down the river the next morning, but that the parting, so painful to all, might take place at home. His secret intention was to steal off before they rose the next day, in order to escape the last sad words. So he pressed his father's hand with unusual fervor—followed his mother to her dressing-room, and embraced and kissed her repeatedly. Agnes had slipped off before he returned to the library—he was vexed that she had not remained to say "good-night." After the house was quiet, Robert called his own servant boy, Jim, and arranged with him that his own saddle-horse should be ready by day-break. He made Jim strap his trunk and valise, and carry them into the kitchen, so as to have them where they could be removed without noise the next morning. Jim got safely into the kitchen with the trunk, and was in the act of carrying out the valise, when he met Agnes in the hall, a candle in one hand, and a lovely bouquet in the other. She was coming in out of the garden—evidently had visited the green-houses. When Jim perceived the white figure advancing towards him up the long, dark passage, with hasty, noiseless steps, the dim light falling upon the weird eyes, and the pale face gleaming in the midst of the dark masses of black hair, his knees trembled with affright—he dropped the valise with an exclamation of horror, and began to mutter the Lord's Prayer as fast as he could; but, as she approached, he recognized her.

"Lord ha' mercy! Miss Agnes, what you arter dis time o' night? You skeerd me most to deff! You looks mighty sperrit-like, a wanderin' about like a hanted ghost!"

"Jim, that is Robert's valise—I know he's going away without saying 'good-bye' to us."

"Now den, if you please, Miss Agnes, don't say nuffin to nobody; cause you see Marse Robert he done trusted me with his private affairs, and I wouldn't like for to ne-tray him no how."

"I sha'n't betray you, Jim," and Agnes passed on.

Robert rose at day-break—stole out of his room—paused for an instant by his,

mother's door, then hurried on. He stood without in the gray dawn. The faithful Jim preceded him with his luggage—his horse was pawing the ground before him. Just as he was about to throw himself in the saddle, Agnes's little hand grasped his arm.

"Robert, here are your flowers—*dear* Robert, good-bye."

"God bless you, Agnes—good-bye. Tell my mother I go now to save her pain. Good-bye, my darling, good-bye!"

He sprang into the saddle, put spurs to his spirited horse—in a moment he was out of sight. Agnes listened until the sound of the hoofs died away in the distance—then turned sadly towards the, to her, desolated house.

CHAPTER V.

AGNES TO HER COUSIN.

MY DEAR ROBERT: You have been gone a week. It has been a long, sad week to us all, but the "*strong hours*" have conquered us so far that we are able to renew our accustomed occupations. Aunt Eleanor and Uncle were troubled when they found you had stolen off the morning you left, but aunt said, afterwards, "it was best, and considerate of you." Aunt Eleanor spent almost the whole day in her oratory; you know that is her refuge in all times of trouble. Uncle shut himself up in his office with his law papers, but I heard him walking up and down the room all the time. So I don't think he accomplished much at law. After Jim came back from seeing you off, he went into your room, where he was found at noon lying on the floor at the foot of your bed. He had cried himself to sleep. *Besides, you made him get up so early!* I don't know what I did—nothing but wander from room to room, restless and miserable. We were all sitting at tea, that evening, making believe to eat and talk, when the door suddenly opened and two gentlemen walked in. Uncle Selman sprang up to meet them, and Aunt Eleanor extended both hands in greeting. They called them "James and George." Everybody forgot me until the strangers were divested of their outer wrapping and seated at the table.

"So the boy stole off, did he? and we coming all this way to see him? The fog on the river detained the boat, but we were mistaken in the day of his departure."

The speaker was a tall, stout man, over six feet in height, powerfully made; with keen black eyes, massive, well-moulded features, and a quantity of short, thick iron gray hair and a long beard. His companion was evidently a clergyman, from his white

cravat and clerical dress. His face was very pleasing—large, serious, deep-blue eyes; regular, thin features; a beautiful benevolent mouth, that looked as if it could only breathe blessings; and long thin locks, that had once been rich brown hair, though faded and slightly streaked with white, now. I had risen at their entrance and retreated to the sofa, from which I was summoned by Aunt Eleanor, who simply said to the gentlemen, "This is Agnes Graham."

The tall gentleman put down his cup of tea, looked quickly at me, extending his hand as he said, "Ah! like her father, I see." The clergyman rose, and putting his hand on my head, blessed me. Do you recognize your friends, Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers? I have often heard you speak of them—the good physician and clergyman, who lived near Aunt Eleanor's plantation—our old family homestead. Well, here they are still. I think their visit has done Aunt Eleanor a great deal of good; Uncle Selman seems so fond of them, too. I like them—especially Mr. Danvers—he is so good and gentle. They seem to love you very much, and talk of you as if you were their own son. I think Dr. Leonard is very eccentric; he is so decided and quick in his movements, and his eyes are so black and so penetrating they startle me. I believe I am a little afraid of him. Aunt Emmeline allows me to stay here the rest of the vacation. I am very glad. I like to be with your mother.

* * * * *

Uncle Selman is elected Senator to Congress, and he goes soon to the Capital. Aunt Eleanor is not to accompany, but will join him later. She is to go to the plantation for a while. Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers are to stay here until she is ready to go; that will be in three weeks. School begins then, and I am to go back then. Aunt Emmeline is to take me. I like Mr. Danvers more and more. He is just what I imagine a scholar would be. Aunt says he lives only in his books and his professional duties. He is especially interested in the religious teaching of the negroes. He officiates as chaplain on aunt's plantation, besides his parochial duties among the whites in the neighborhood. Aunt says he is one of the purest and best men she ever knew. I forgot that you know all about him, though he is a new acquaintance to me. He is very kind, and talks a good deal to me. He is fond of music, and makes me play on the piano for him. I have promised him to learn to play on the organ. He is to send me some fine sacred music. I am sorry I can't sing for him, but aunt will not allow me to sing. Signor Parini told her I must not use my voice until after I am sixteen. Aunt says if I practise then I will sing very well. I should like to sing

well, so as to sing with you, Robert. I hope you will study that beautiful German music; your voice is so fine now, it will be superb with cultivation. *Don't serenade the frauleins.* I am puzzled about Dr. Leonard; he is kind, but so queer. He came in the other day when I was painting—I am trying to paint Aunt Eleanor. She has been so good as to sit to me several times. It begins to look something like her, but it is difficult to paint the beautiful, stately face, so tender and yet so haughty. Did you ever see Aunt Eleanor angry, Robert? I did—a few days ago. We went to see Aunt Emmeline, and Uncle Elmsworth was in one of his moods—you know what they are, Robert. He spoke very short to Aunt Emmeline, and cursed somebody! In an instant, Aunt Eleanor turned, her eyes gleamed like lightning, her lips curled. She did not flush, as most people do, but turned so white—like marble; her voice was so low, yet so stern, it seemed as if the words forced themselves out of her very heart. She said something to Uncle Elmsworth I didn't hear what it was, but he got up and went out of the room. Aunt Emmeline wept. We soon left, and when we got in the carriage, Aunt Eleanor leaned back with her hand over her eyes. She did not speak, nor did I. When we reached home, she went into her oratory, whence she came out a little after serene as usual. Well, I cannot forget the expression of her face, and I have involuntarily given it to the miniature. I don't like it, but I can't help it. I was painting on this when Dr. Leonard came in. He leaned over me and looked at my work. "Good heavens! Who is that? how did you get hold of that likeness?"

I was troubled in my turn. "What do you mean, Dr. Leonard? It is *Aunt Eleanor* I am trying to paint." He was walking hurriedly up and down the room. "Don't, child, don't paint that expression. My God! it chills me." He passed his hand over his eyes; then, coming forward, he said: "Give me that picture." I handed it to him; he took it and went out of the room. I shall try another. He does not approve of my books either; advises me to pitch Shelley and all of my German into the fire; to read "only Shakespeare, Walter Scott, and the Bible," and to "go, play with my doll." He treats me like a baby. I wonder whose likeness he meant! Do you know?

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. SELMAN and her friends, Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers, sat conversing around the fire one cold morning. Agnes

was in Judge Selman's office, having volunteered to aid him in copying some documents and arranging Congressional reports. Mrs. Selman was knitting a woolen scarf for Agnes. Mr. Danvers had a book in his hand, into which he would glance occasionally, joining from time to time in the conversation. Dr. Leonard was speaking now.

"That child of Agnes's is very gifted, Eleanor."

"Wonderfully so," was Mrs. Selman's reply.

The doctor folded his arms, leant back and looked in the fire.

"Fatal gifts! fatal genius!" murmured he.

"Not so," said Mr. Danvers quickly, "not so, James. This child may inherit the talents without the weakness of her ancestors. Everything depends on education, early training, teaching of self-control, self-denial, submission to God's will. Make her a Christian; give her our Lord to trust in. There will be no danger in her magnificent intellectual endowments. Look at Eleanor! How sorely has she been tried, and yet—"

Dr. Leonard extended his hand to Mr. Selman, and finished the sentence himself: "And yet she is the noblest woman God's sun shines upon this day."

Mrs. Selman answered: "What I should have been without my good husband—my domestic peace—without your steady friendship and aid during these long years of sorrow, God only knows."

"Your religion would have sustained you, Eleanor," said Mr. Danvers. "Christ would have been sufficient for you."

"He has brought me so far in my life's journey, George; but it was most merciful in Him to permit me such earthly supports and consolations."

"Do you think that child is being trained as she should be, Eleanor?" continued the doctor. "Emmeline is not strong, either physically or mentally; though an excellent, amiable woman; and Elmsworth I regard as a man without principle or feeling."

Mrs. Selman sighed.

"Emmeline is not happy, James; her health is feeble; the loss of her children has saddened her greatly; but Emmeline is a Christian, conscientious and truly attached to the child; she will do her duty as far as she can. Mr. Elmsworth is embittered by his children's death, by Emmeline's feebleness. He has indulged his temper until he has lost control of it, and Emmeline has submitted until he has lost respect for her. He is not, however, unkind to Agnes. She has a large fortune, and he fully appreciates the advantage of its guardianship."

"It is a pity the child was left to Em-

meline instead of to you, Eleanor. You could have guided and trained her better."

"At the time, it was the only arrangement possible. My sister Agnes, you know, was incapable of attention to business for months before her death; her husband followed her to the grave very soon, heart-broken at her loss and severe sufferings. There was but the choice between Emmeline and myself for him. The child has no other relatives—her father was an only child. It was impossible for me to take her; you know Alice was with me then, and in her situation, I could not bring the child to my home. I sent Robert away on that account. No, no, I could not shadow those young lives with that dark cloud of sorrow—too much at times for our strong hearts, James."

Mrs. Selman's tears fell fast as she spoke. The doctor sprang up and walked to the window at the extremity of the apartment.

Mr. Danvers said: "He cannot yet bear to hear her mentioned, Eleanor. Poor James!"

Mrs. Selman wiped away her tears.

"It is all sad, all dark to me sometimes, George; but God's will be done."

"Amen," said Mr. Danvers reverently.

Dr. Leonard came back and resumed his seat.

"Eleanor, the child reads too much—she is too precocious; it should be checked. Why don't she romp and play like other girls of her age? Books all day—painting—music—German—transcendentalism; with that startling intelligence. It is not natural; it is not right! you must stop it."

"I do all I can, James. She goes to a very fashionable school, with a large number of scholars. I persuaded Emmeline to board her there, in order that she might have young companions and learn how to play. She has never had any playmate but Robert, living solely with grown-up, sober people."

"Robert! Umph! umph!"

"Perhaps it is well, however, that they are separated; it may spare them suffering. Robert will see the world, and she will gradually become estranged and less dependent on him. Every thought turns to him now," said the doctor.

Mrs. Selman put her hand to her head.

"You alarm me unnecessarily—there is no danger; so young!"

"They are better apart, at any rate," said Dr. Leonard.

The conversation was interrupted here by the entrance of the subject of it. She was followed by Judge Selman, who exclaimed:—

"Eleanor, I am under great obligations to my young secretary here. She has helped me very much."

Mrs. Selman extended her hand to Agnes,

and, drawing her to her side, kissed her cheek. It was an unusual caress from her, and Agnes flushed with gratification.

"Now, my dear," said her aunt, "put on your habit; tell Jim to get your horse, and one for himself, and take a ride. The morning is lovely."

"Tell Jim to get your horse and one for me," interrupted Dr. Leonard. "I will escort you myself—with your permission," added he.

Agnes bowed her head in acquiescence, but looked rather embarrassed at the promised attendance. She glided out of the room, however, to give the order. Judge Selman laughed.

"What have you been doing, James, to make the child afraid of you?"

"I?—nothing—only gave her the advice St. Paul did to the Ephesians—told her to 'burn her books,' and also to 'play with her doll.'"

Agnes soon returned, equipped for her ride. She was rather shy at first—but the good doctor exerted all his powers of pleasing, which were very great when he chose to exercise them, and his young companion was won from her silent shyness. When they returned at a full gallop, Agnes's laugh rang as merrily out as if she were with her young companions. From that day the doctor and she were fast friends. Both the doctor and Mr. Danvers promised, when the little group was compelled to separate, to keep an eye over Agnes, and made Mrs. Selman write to Madame de Monceur to permit their visits to her niece.

A passing ship brought letters from Robert. He was well, and wrote gayly.

Agnes returned to her Uncle Elmsworth's house—her usual home.

She was devotedly attached to her gentle, simple-hearted Aunt Emmeline, but she was not so fond of her aunt's husband. "Uncle Elmsworth" had a good many "peculiarities," she thought, and these peculiarities became more and more distasteful to her as she grew older. Charlton Elmsworth was a bad, weak man, with inordinate pride, arrogance, and a very hateful temper. He was subject to petty explosions of rage; his passions were undisciplined, his tastes unrefined, and he had, unfortunately, some smartness and quickness of intellect, which increased his powers for evil. He was selfish to the core of his heart, and cunning in his self-conceit and self-indulgence. His little gray eyes were dull and ugly, but sometimes sparkled with keen scintillations of temper, crafty wickedness, or lust. His smile was excessively disagreeable. His eye rarely smiled with his mouth. The corners of his mouth were frequently drawn back with a grin, which showed his set teeth, and drew the

muscles of the face in a galvanic grimace, in which no other feature participated. His was a ghastly, hyenaish, death's head contortion of muscles, instead of a beaming, genial "lightning of a smile." Agnes always had an involuntary shudder when her uncle attempted a laugh, or relaxation of countenance.

Mrs. Selman told her husband, privately, she believed their brother-in-law, Elmsworth, was literally "possessed with a devil" sometimes—but then, Mrs. Selman was somewhat superstitious, and had her own opinion as to the possibility of diabolical possession in these days, as well as in ancient times. Elmsworth swaggered, and puffed himself up a great deal, boasting extraordinarily of his personal adventures, either with women or men. He had probably had some success, as men phrase it, with women. He was rather well-looking; a light-colored, fair, sandy-haired man, with the small, gray eyes, and red beard and whiskers which generally accompany that complexion. His features were regular. His nose too short, and somewhat thick at the nostrils. His mouth bad, sensual, though small. His teeth were dark, and ill-set in his jaw. His forehead was high and broad. His brows light and straight. His sandy hair thin, and nearly worn bare from the crown and upper part of the head. He had, somehow, conceived a fancy that there was strong resemblance between himself and the first Napoleon both in person and in character. He, therefore, was always Napoleonesque in his dress, in his attitudes, in his laconic style of speech and epistles. Nothing delighted him more than an opportunity of parading this wonderful resemblance. He had carefully studied every memoir and history of the Emperor, and really by dint of hard practice. Compressing his lips, holding his rather short neck stiffly upright, folding his arms over his breast, or walking with his hands clasped behind his back, Elmsworth imposed, not only on his wife and himself, but on some other people, in regard to the likeness. Like Mahomet, after he and Kadijah believed in his prophetic gifts, others collected around that nucleus of faith, and believed in Mahomet, too. "Allah illa Allah, Mahomet, rasoul Allah,"—people threw up their fezzes and cried loudly. And so some people began to discover also the "wonderful resemblance" to the Emperor, and whispers, not redounding to the fame of his mother in connection with the *émigré* of Bordentown (whom Mrs. Elmsworth had known in the North), were circulated in society at N——. It is but just to say that such whispers, however flattering to the son, did great wrong to a very fine and excellent woman, who was never unfaithful either to her God or her

husband. Mrs. Elmsworth, Jr., adored her husband. She was not a strong woman, but a kind, amiable one. It is said that the infant polyp Medusa rows itself as soon as it is spawned, sailing along in the ocean till it finds a rock, against which either a wave may dash it, or, perhaps, the infant Medusa, possessing tastes and peculiarities, individualities of selection, chooses out her own spot of life-anchorage. At any rate, this sea infant attaches itself to its rock; there it sticks, feeding itself with its long tentacles, growing larger and larger, spending its life, and there it dies eventually. And so it is with some women. Accident or ill-placed weak passion seizes them as they drift along the ocean of life in unformed girlhood. They get fastened to a rock or oyster shell, or a piece of driftwood, valueless specimens of mankind, and there they cling with all their inert, weak, tenacious strength of vitality till they die. "Oh! Oh! 'tis pitiful!" And yet, one cannot help but feel tenderly towards these weak, constant Opheliass! Who would crush the poor, jelly-like Medusa? Emmeline Elmsworth admired her husband, and agreed with him in considering him very like Napoleon Buonaparte. But Agnes, with her dark eyes, in their intense, analyzing, artist gaze, never saw the resemblance, and Mr. Elmsworth discovered the child's infidelity on this point early in her life. So he was often rather savage with the child's questioning looks, at times, when he would be grandiloquently dilating upon some mental, moral, physical trait, or some happy adventure, which illustrated either positively, or *insinuatingly*, the "wonderful resemblance." Robert once detected Agnes standing before an oil picture of "*Le Petit Corporal*," swung over a doorway in a conspicuous place, that Mrs. Elmsworth had recently purchased, which she was very attentively studying. The small, dark, oval face, with its perfect Greek features, and black, arched brows, its curved, haughty lips, and chiselled nose, attracted her.

"Well, Agnes?" exclaimed Robert, interrogatively.

"Well, Robert," said the child, hesitatingly, "I—I—don't see the likeness! Do you?"

"I—oh! of course—but the principal resemblance is mental, you know. Intellectual—military—undeveloped military talents, you know," said Robert, tapping his forehead with one finger as he spoke, nodding his head gravely.

"No," replied the honest child, "no—I don't know; but I suppose it is, Robert."

"Oh! you dear—precious—little—little—muff," exclaimed Robert, catching her in his arms and kissing her; then he ran off—laughing heartily to himself.

Agnes never—never *did* discover the

resemblance, even mental, between her uncle and the Emperor, and Mr. Elmsworth resented this stupidity upon her part very bitterly.

Another person in the little circle, who never saw the resemblance, and always felt an instinctive inclination to kick Elmsworth out of his presence, and out of the world if he could have done that wonder and continued to be a Christian, was Dr. Leonard. He had no patience with Elmsworth, and it required all his love for Mrs. Selman and her sister, and all the kindly persuasions of gentle Mr. Danvers to keep the doctor on speaking terms with Emmeline's husband. There was a good deal of Cayenne pepper in Dr. Leonard's physical morphology. He was rather hot and hasty, both in temper and speech. He was a good man, but had to struggle hard sometimes against the old Adam. He had modified his characteristics very much indeed by living with the pure, saintly Mr. Danvers—never bade any one *now*, to "go to the D—l," as he once did, in moments of vexation, when exasperated beyond endurance. He only said, *now*, and not often either, considering all things, "*Contrive it to the Deuce*," which sentence was always immediately followed by a "I sincerely beg your pardon, Danvers." And the doctor would be mild and penitent for a week afterwards. But Doctor Leonard never was in Elmsworth's presence without mentally contriving "*him*" to warmer gaolership than would have been agreeable. But, for Emmeline's sake, he swallowed the oburgation, or only muttered it between his teeth.

Agnes returned to school much better satisfied than she had supposed possible a few weeks previous. Mrs. Selman soon joined her husband at the Capital. Agnes's life passed quietly for the next five years; her time divided between school and her vacations at N—. During the recess of Congress, Judge Selman always returned to his beautiful home in the suburbs of N—, so that Agnes generally managed to spend a portion of her vacations with Mrs. Selman; her home at N— was brighter too. Mrs. Elmsworth had been blessed with a little daughter, who was the idol of her parents—a lovely little flaxen-haired child, Agnes's pet and plaything. The advent of this child had greatly softened the asperity of her father's nature. He adored her, and was kinder to her mother. Mrs. Elmsworth was happier than she had been for many years. The little Emmeline or "Mimi," as they called her, was a golden bond of union between her parents.

Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers had kept their promise of visiting Agnes at school. Now and then they came, singly or together, always bringing some little gift such as girls most value. Agnes's Christmas boxes

were the admiration of the school. The girls laughed at her a great deal about her "*old beaux*," but Agnes was invulnerable to all their railing. Most heartily did she reciprocate the affection lavished upon her by these worthy men, to whom she seemed to grow nearer and dearer as she advanced towards womanhood. She was the pride of their hearts—the very joy of their lives. They delighted in her development—her wonderful talents—her increasing beauty. Her features were already softening and rounding; her form began to grow full and graceful. The loveliest color would glow and fade upon her cheek with every passing emotion; her magnificent hair was now a weight to the small, exquisite head; her step was lithe and vigorous; every movement betokened a strong, healthy, nervous organization. Her voice, owing to Signor Parini's care in protecting and carefully cultivating it, was superb. Madame de Monceur was very fond of her pupil. Agnes had won her way, too, in the affections of her school-mates. Elizabeth Hudson and Emily Adams, her firm adherents, formed a nucleus, around which others clustered; and there was no girl in the school more popular than Agnes Graham when she quitted it, in spite of her having been, undoubtedly, Madame's favorite. This was owing, in a great measure, to Agnes's frank, unaffected uprightness; and also to the watchfulness of her faithful friends, Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers, who knew so well how to curb any little weeds of pride or vanity they saw springing up in the fair garden of her mind; the one, with his caustic satire; the other, with a gentle admonition. They kept her well supplied with proper books. Agnes Graham owed them much.

CHAPTER VII.

It was late in November. Judge and Mrs. Selman, with Dr. Leonard and their guest, were sitting around their dinner-table. The dessert had been removed. Nuts and wine and a stand of fruit alone remained on the shining mahogany board. The fire burnt brightly. The red curtains were drawn—the whole picture was full of ease and comfort. The shades of evening had begun to fall. The afternoons are very short in that latitude—so near the tropics. Dr. Leonard pulled out his watch.

"Six o'clock, I declare! and I promised Agnes to be with her at seven."

"You have a grand toilet to make, too, James; you must get yourself up in fine style to escort such pretty girls as you are going to have charge of this evening."

"James is really growing dissipated; he has been down only two weeks, and already

at three parties; this, of Mrs. Mathews, makes the fourth," said Mrs. Selman, smiling.

Dr. Leonard attempted a groan of penitence. "It is that witch Agnes, Eleanor; she will have me to go—and it is too late now for me to learn to say 'no' to her. She has had Danvers and myself under her imperious sway too long for us to think of rebellion."

Judge Selman laughed. "Confess the truth; you are so proud of Agnes that it is your delight to chaperon her, and gather up the homage laid at her little feet. I heard you, yesterday, dilating largely on her perfections to poor Murray, who, Heaven knows! is already too sensible of them."

The doctor began to crack his nuts vigorously, without replying. He could not deny the soft impeachment.

"It is astonishing how insensible Agnes is to all the flattery and attention she receives," he remarked, half apologetically.

"Agnes is not *insensible*; she likes it, is grateful for it—but she is not spoiled, and does not abuse it," replied Mrs. Selman.

"I take great credit to George and myself for her bringing up," said the Doctor, gayly; "if we had not taken her in hand, Eleanor, you would have ruined that noble nature with Germanisms, and your *laissez-aller* system."

"There is no doubt, James, but that George and you have done very much for Agnes," replied Mrs. Selman, seriously; "we are all sensible of that, and none more so than Agnes herself."

"She is to us like our own child, Eleanor," said the Doctor, warmly; "she is the light of our lives."

"I shall begin to be jealous for Robert! but I know your hearts are large enough to hold us all," replied Mrs. Selman.

"God bless the boy! You will begin to look for him by the last of the month, won't you, Eleanor?"

"It is not certain. He expected to leave Havre somewhere about that time; but he did not say what steamer he should take."

"Because he knew how anxious you would be, Eleanor, if you knew exactly when he was on the ocean."

"Do you mean to undertake all those girls by yourself to-night, James?" asked Judge Selman.

"I am to be commander-in-chief, I believe," replied the doctor; "but I shall have two aids-de-camp, Murray and Tom Adams, Miss Emily's brother, who is sighing at the feet of that pretty little Elizabeth Hudson."

"Then you'll have to be the attendant of the fair Emily! as I suppose you'll let Murray be happy for one hour at least, in waiting upon Agnes?"

"No," said the doctor stoutly, "I shall take Agnes myself, and let Murray go with

Miss Adams! I don't like red-haired women! I'm afraid of them!"

"Emily's red hair is not ugly, though, James," said Mrs. Selman; "and her complexion is so fine, her expression so bright, that I consider her very pretty, indeed."

"Well! well! she is good-looking enough—but not my style, Eleanor!"

"How long do the girls remain with Agnes?"

"Several weeks, I think, still; but I really must go."

The doctor pushed back his chair, and rose from the table. They had been so engaged in conversation, they had not heard the rolling of carriage wheels on the gravelled drive to the front of the house. Just as the doctor was opening the door of the dining-room to make his exit, it was pulled forcibly from him, and he fell violently forward in the arms of a young man who was in the act of entering. The new-comer was dressed in a stout travelling costume of a foreign cut and style. A long silky beard and a full moustache, however, did not hide the son's face from his mother's eye. She sprang towards him with outstretched arms:

"My son! my son!"

"God bless me, so it is!" exclaimed the doctor, recovering from the surprise the stranger's sudden, fervent embrace had caused him.

Robert was wrapped now in his mother's arms. She was weeping with joy on his shoulder; while his father grasped one of his hands.

"My boy! God bless you! Welcome home!" The worthy doctor waited until he had a chance for another warm greeting, and they all gathered around their newly recovered treasure. The mother's first thought was for her boy's comfort.

"Have you dined, my son?"

"Yes, thank you, two hours since on the packet."

"When did you arrive? how did you come?"

All the questions propounded to a newly-returned voyager followed in rapid succession. Robert satisfied all inquiries. He had arrived in the steamer two days previous, in New Orleans, and had taken the first boat up the river. His voyage across had been very pleasant, and he was glad to be at home. They had gotten around the fire; Robert was sitting by his mother on a sofa, with his arm around her, his father on his other side, and the doctor opposite; all remembrance of party engagements obliterated from his thoughts. So they sat asking questions—listening to Robert's account of his travels, without any sense of the flight of time—till Jim, the servant man, came in. "Ef you please, Dr. Leonard, Miss Agnes done sent Charles here, and she says, 'Is

you come to go to the party at Miss Mathew's, or is you not?"

"Contrive it to—I beg your pardon, Eleanor, I forgot all about it! Of course, Jim, of course I'm coming! be there in five minutes! tell Charles to say so; or stay, I'll tell him myself!"

The good man hastened out of the room. Jim stood staring at the young gentleman seated on the sofa, as if he mistrusted the evidence of his senses.

"Ef you please, ma'am, be that Mars Robert with all them 'stachers and whis-kers?"

Robert held out his hand. "Nobody else, Jim!"

Jim grasped the extended hand fervently—gave vent to his feelings in a loud guffaw; then began to weep quite as loudly, and finally rushed out of the room to hide the ebullitions of his emotion, and to be the first to take the good news to the other negroes. The room was soon filled with the servants, all anxious for a shake of the hand, and "bowdy" from "Mars Robert," who had got home again all the way from "Neurope." After they had satisfied their curiosity and affection, in repeated welcomes, they went off to discuss matters in their own regions.

Robert asked his mother where the doctor was going, and how Agnes was?

"James has become a great beau since Agnes's *début*! He spends a great deal of time down here, and she makes him go about with her everywhere. He goes to all the parties! There is to be a ball to-night at Mrs. Mathews', your friend William's mother. James has Agnes and two of her young friends to chaperon there. Your coming made him forget his engagement."

Robert laughed. "Funny, is it not! and does Mr. Danvers go, too, when he is here, to the parties?"

"I expect he would, if Agnes insisted upon it. They idolize her."

"She has often mentioned them in her letters. I think she fully reciprocates their affection. But tell me about my little cousin, mother! her mental qualifications I know, and can judge of through her letters; but the personelle, how about the *nose*? did it grow long or short? Agnes never would send me her daguerrotype, though I begged for it. So, strange to say, I don't know her appearance at all! I have always thought of her as the pale, slender child I left here."

"You must judge for yourself, Robert; beauty is dependent on taste. Of course Agnes is pretty to us. The nose could not grow shorter, you know!" Mrs. Selman laughed merrily.

"I tell you what, mamma; I have a great mind to go to the party, too, incog., and see all my old sweethearts."

"If you like, my dear, do so; your father

and I were invited, but we are too old to go to parties."

"Who is too old to go to parties?" inquired Dr. Leonard, who entered in full dress, with his white kid gloves ready for donning.

"Not you, James, only Eleanor and I," said Judge Selman, laughing. "Here's Robert, just safe from the dangers of the sea, talking of running the gauntlet of bright eyes to-night at Mrs. Mathews'."

"Well, why not? That's a good idea," responded the doctor. "Come with me, and help me with my bevy of beauties."

"No," said Robert, "if I go, I go incog. for the first hour, at any rate. Did you say anything to Charles about my arrival?"

"Stupid that I was," exclaimed the doctor, slapping his knee; "I positively forgot to mention it. You see I was thinking of Agnes's!"

"So much the better. Now you must promise to be equally oblivious until I give you leave to proclaim my arrival to-night, if I go to the party," interrupted Robert.

"Agreed," said the doctor; "I am not even to tell Agnes."

"No, above all, not Agnes!"

"You had better be off, James," said Judge Selman, "else you'll have all those girls abusing you for making them wait. Robert won't be able to go for an hour or so yet. He has to dress. I see his trunks are come; I hear Jim taking them through the hall now. You go—he'll follow in my buggy with Jim when he's ready."

"Well, *au revoir*. I shall have a headache to-morrow, I know, from keeping such a secret, and shall be afraid to venture in Agnes's presence for a week to come. Bless me! it is nine o'clock now, I declare!" The worthy man hurried off to Mr. Elmsworth's, where the girls met him with good-humored reproaches for making them wait so long for him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two hours later, an elegantly dressed young man, a stranger, was led up by Will Mathews and presented to his mother.

Mrs. Mathews greeted him warmly, and smiled at some request he seemed to make of her. "As you like about that," she said, nodding pleasantly as he and Will walked off together.

"Who is that young man, Mrs. Mathews?" inquired a lady near her.

"A friend of William's, just from Europe to-day," replied she, graciously.

"What name did you say?"

Mrs. Mathews was conveniently deaf, and turned to give some directions to a servant bearing a waiter of ices. It was the ball of the season. All the grace and beauty of

N—— was assembled in the splendid parlors. A fine band of music was playing in the hall, which was filled with dancers.

"You'll see all the beauties in the hall, Selman," said Will Mathews; "all of your old acquaintances."

He led the way through the crowd till they attained a good position for a *coup d'œil*. "Where is Dr. Leonard?" asked Robert.

"Taking a game of whist in the card room."

"Where is his party?"

"All dancing. That lovely little blonde in front there is one—a Miss Hudson; the lady in the next set, another—that tall girl with, I suppose, I ought to say, auburn hair."

"Both pretty. That little blonde is exquisite. Agnes is not dancing?"

"Yes," said Will, mischievously; "but you wished to discover her yourself."

"So I do! It is preposterous to think I should not recognize her," answered Robert, rather impatiently; "I shall find her out presently."

Just then a change of positions in the figure of the dance brought some of the dancers into view that had been partially concealed as they had been arranged before. Robert caught Will's arm. "Mathews! who is that? that girl? She is turning in the dance now at the end of the hall; her face is turned from us. What a perfect form! Just look at that neck and arm! She is very graceful! *Éblouissante*!"

"What girl?" asked Will, looking purposely another way. "That one with long golden ringlets? That's your old flame, Clara Bell."

"Pshaw! I know her! Not that one. Look! she has a corn-colored silk dress, with wreaths of crimson pomegranate blossoms. She wears her hair plain, knotted low on the neck, with a red coral comb; no flowers. I can't see her face. If it's worthy the form, she is a beauty!"

"That must be Ellen Ford. She is one of our reigning stars among the brunettes," replied Will, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

The set broke up, and Robert's beauty was lost in the mazes of the crowd, who pressed back into the parlors for rest and refreshment. The two young men followed. "Agnes can't be in the rooms just now," remarked Robert, as they took their position in the door-way that divided the parlors. The rooms were filled with brilliant groups—chatting, flirting, eating ices, standing, sitting; promenading. Will suddenly exclaimed:—

"Stand before me, Selman, and hide me; I am going to take refuge on this ottoman in the corner, and put my fingers in my ears. That girl is going to sing! I see my mother leading her to the piano. Now

we'll have 'Robert, Robert, *toi que j'aime*' in the most approved hurdy-gurdy style! It always sets my teeth on edge to hear her!"

"What girl is it, Will?" asked Robert, smiling, as he took the position requested.

"Oh! that Clara Bell! Her voice is as cold as ice, and as high as Teneriffe, and sharp as its peak. She always gives me an ague."

Robert laughed. "Mad as ever about music, Will."

"I wouldn't trust a woman with a voice like that, for any consideration, Selman," said Will, solemnly; "I believe she would commit murder without a qualm. I had rather hear an old saw file grate."

"Nonsense, Will. You'll be overheard if you don't speak lower."

Will Mathews stopped his ears with his fingers, and looked up in Robert's face, with a comic expression of despair. The crowd scattered in front of them. Miss Bell was seated at the piano, and began to sing, after a brilliant prelude, not "Robert," but an exceedingly difficult bravura. Her voice was, as Will said, cold, high and piercing, though flexible and cultivated. Robert wished his ears stopped, like Will's, before she got through all her trills and roulades. Mrs. Mathews thanked her for her obligingness, and hurried off to secure another performer to fill up the interval between the dances. The slight buzz of voices suddenly ceased, every eye turned towards Mrs. Mathews as she advanced to a harp standing in a corner, and ordered a servant to lift it out farther into the middle of the room. Will sprang up and hastened past Robert, who saw him bowing low before the lovely brunette he had called Ellen Ford. He was speaking very earnestly, evidently urging her to comply with his mother's request to play upon the harp. The young lady rose, and, slipping her hand within his proffered arm, walked up to the instrument. Robert spoke aloud, involuntarily: "She must be a good musician if Will wants her to play!"

"She is!" replied a gentleman who had taken a position beside him.

Robert looked at the speaker. He was a fine-looking, middle-aged man, his hair mingled with gray; but well preserved, and well dressed, with an air of gentlemanly ease and good breeding unmistakable. His face was noble and benevolent rather than handsome. He stood with his eyes fixed upon the young lady, who, after passing her fingers lightly over the strings, took her seat, and played a brilliant, merry polka. Robert had a full view of her face now—it was more beautiful than he expected. The color glowed vividly upon her cheek, from the excitement of playing; her large eyes were concealed by their long, black

lashes. Will stooped over, and spoke in a low tone. The lids were lifted, and a radiant smile gleamed like lightning over the lovely face. Striking a few modulations upon the strings, the music changed from the gay polka movement to a slow, plaintive measure. The red lips parted, and breathed most touchingly the exquisite, melancholy strain of Schubert's "Wanderer." Robert's heart beat fast; his eyes filled with tears. The rich voice stirred every depth in his soul. The song ended. Again Will entreated. The fair musician remonstrated, but Will was importunate. The chords swelled on the air. She sang the scena and aria from *Der Freischütz*.—"Wie nahte mir der schlummer bevor ich ihn gesehn!"

It is a gem of music, and it was sung to perfection. The joyous allegro movement at the close, "*Alle meine pulse schlagen*," was admirably rendered. Robert could hardly restrain a loud expression of delight. He turned to the gentleman opposite, who looked at him with a smile.

"You seem to be a stranger, sir, in N—, and have never heard that superb voice before?"

"Not exactly a stranger, though I have been long absent from N—, but a stranger to that young lady. Her singing is magnificent. I have heard the most celebrated *artistes* of the world, I believe; I never listened to a finer voice than that. It is Jenny Lind and Alboni combined."

The young lady had quitted the harp, and was advancing towards the doorway in which they were standing, leaning on Will Mathews' arm. She bowed gracefully as they stepped back to make way for her to pass through. Her bracelet fell from her arm. Robert picked it up, and handed it back to her with a bow.

"Pardon me, your bracelet."

The young lady stopped, and lifted her eyes, with her radiant smile of thanks, to his. He recognized the eyes—the familiar glance.

"Good heavens, Agnes!"

"Robert, my dear Robert!"

Robert caught her extended hands in both of his. Will Mathews laughed heartily.

"So much for Buckingham! Miss Graham, he has been so long making you out, I should disown him if I were you."

"I have too few relatives to indulge in such an extreme measure, Mr. Mathews; though my cousin deserves some punishment for having kept me in ignorance of his arrival, which must have been to-night, as my escort, Dr. Leonard, left my uncle's after dark."

"I did arrive to-night, Agnes—came here especially to meet you, and wishing to give you and myself a surprise, forbade the doctor to mention my coming. Now, if

Mr. Mathews will allow me, I will beg to exchange positions with him, and carry you off for a few moments."

Agnes took his proffered arm, and, without further apology, the cousins walked away to the conservatory at the end of the hall, which was lighted with variegated lamps, and had sofas disposed for the convenience of loungers. They seated themselves on a sofa behind some huge tropical plants. Robert drew a long breath: taking Agnes's hand in his, he bent over it and pressed a warm, fervent kiss upon it.

"Agnes, dearest, my darling little cousin, I am so glad to be with you once more."

Agnes pressed the hand which held hers.

"How long have you been in this house, Robert? How many happy moments have you cheated me out of?"

"Agnes, I have been here more than an hour looking for you—looking at you—and never recognized you till I looked into those sweet eyes:

"Still the sweetest ever seen."

Agnes blushed and smiled.

"You have learned how to flatter gracefully, among your other foreign accomplishments, Dr. Selman. I must not forget your new dignity, you know; but I am very glad to feel that I have not lost my cousin Robert in the travelled and elegant young M.D."

"Always, Robert to you, little one, though I really scarcely dare to use such old familiar terms to the dazzling young lady beside me. How have you made yourself such a beauty, Agnes? I believe there is some witchcraft about it. It is not an Armida, or snowy Florimel I have sitting here by my side, is it?"

"Only your plain little Agnes; not much wiser than she was when you left her, Robert—as you could readily see by her letters."

"I always found wisdom in Agnes's letters; but I doubt whether I shall be able to retain much in my own brain in her intoxicating presence. Have you found a fairy godmother, who has turned my pale, delicate, little cousin into this magnificent princess? Did she feed you on nightingale's tongues to make you sing so? Do you know you drew tears to my worldly eyes, and those of the respectable gentleman who held up the opposite post of my doorway?"

"Oh, Mr. Murray, you mean! He has often heard me sing before. He's a great friend of mine."

"Murray! So, that's his name. Well, from his expression of absorbing admiration, I expect I'll have to combat *à l'outrance* with him for your smiles, which I consider belong to me by right of pre-emption, Agnes."

"Have you seen your old sweetheart, Clara Bell?" replied Agnes.

"Oh, yes! knew her instantly, and heard her sing."

Robert laughed mischievously: "How fond Will Mathews is of her music, Agnes!"

"Not morally benefited, Dr. Selman, by your protracted residence abroad. Still somewhat *malicious*, I see."

"Agnes, did you ever apologize to me for burning the bouquet I fixed for her before I left?"

"I was very jealous and silly then, Dr. Selman, but have put away all childish things since I have become what Jim calls 'a sure 'nuff young lady.'"

"Poor Jim! he was delighted to see me, Agnes; had real hysterics from joy; more glad than you, ungrateful girl."

"For the heart feels most when the lips move not, And the eye speaks a welcome home."

said Agnes, raising her beautiful eyes to his face.

Robert bent towards her. Her glance was the tender, loving look of a sister, but his eyes expressed deep, burning, passionate admiration; such a look as a man bends on the woman he loves above all others. Agnes's eyes fell—the bright color suffused itself over cheek and brow—even her snowy neck was crimson from the rush of conflicting feelings. She attempted, instinctively, to draw her imprisoned hand from his grasp, but vainly—he only clasped it closer.

"But you have not told me yet of your voyage, and how you got home, and how you managed to persuade Aunt Eleanor to spare you to-night."

"All of which weighty matters shall be fully discussed in due order. But first allow me to clasp that bracelet on your arm. I see you hold it still."

He took the bracelet from her hand as he spoke. It was a broad band of linked gold, the clasp large, and studded with rubies. Robert looked at it.

"A pretty trinket," he said, and proceeded to fasten it on her arm. Accidentally he touched a hidden spring, the top of the clasp flew open, and he saw a miniature of himself. He looked quickly in Agnes's face. She blushed, took off the bracelet and laid it in his hand, saying, as she did so:—

"I painted it myself from the daguerreotype you sent Aunt Eleanor last year."

"A kind proof of affection! Thanks, cousin mine! Now let me replace it."

Robert's eyes gleamed as he clasped it on the rounded arm—repossessed himself of the dainty little hand, and begun his history.

They sat talking, forgetful how the time was flying, when they were interrupted by Will Mathews.

"Come, Selman, we have all magnanimously allowed you to monopolize Miss Graham; but patience has a limit, and ours is exhausted. There are half a dozen young fellows out there, whom Miss Graham was engaged to dance with, ready to hang themselves from spite and vexation. The young ladies are all dying to know you—a fresh importation from Paris! If you don't let Miss Graham go, you'll have a dozen duels on your hands to-morrow morning. Then, 'who will cheer your *mamma*,' after you are shot through the heart? Miss Graham, this is my set. I'll introduce Selman to Miss Hudson, and he'll be our *vis-à-vis*."

The cousins rose.

"When can I have the pleasure of dancing with you, Agnes?" asked Robert.

Agnes took out her tablet.

"Every set is full, Robert." Robert looked over the tablet.

"All the quadrilles and fancy dances, but not the round dances. Don't you waltz—polka dance—fast redowa, Agnes?"

"I never have with a gentleman," replied Agnes.

"Well, you can't object to dancing them with me; so I claim all of them. I'll follow, Will," he continued to Mr. Mathews. He threw himself on the sofa as they quitted the conservatory, and passed his hands over his eyes—his heart throbbed—his veins were on fire.

"My God! how beautiful she is!" he murmured. "A dream of loveliness! and *this* my little Agnes!" One of her gloves had fallen to the floor, and was lying near his feet. He picked it up—it was violet-scented—he pressed the glove to his lips and thrust it in his vest-pocket; then he followed his cousin to the dancing-hall, where he was presented to Miss Hudson, and the set was made up. The round dance, afterwards, was a fast redowa. Robert advanced to the spot where Agnes was standing with her recent partners.

"It is my turn now, Agnes."

He took her hand, encircled her slender waist with his arm, and they were soon whirling around the room with flying steps, to the quick movement of the waltz. Robert had a German education in round dances; he had been the favored partner of many a fair Parisian dame. Of course he danced well, and he knew exactly how to support his partner and make *her* dance well. Agnes felt herself borne onward by that firm, strong arm, her steps quickened faster and faster, till she scarcely felt the floor beneath her feet. She moved by his volition, not her own. Everybody stopped to watch the couple; it was the very poetry of motion—both so young, so handsome, and moving with one will! There

was a buzz of admiration which met the ear of Dr. Leonard as he made his way through the crowd.

"What is it, Murray?" asked he of that gentleman, who was standing among the spectators.

"Miss Graham's dancing and her cousin's," was the reply.

The good doctor put on his spectacles. "She's a fairy changeling, that girl, I do believe," said he; "nothing mortal could be so light and graceful."

"It depends a great deal on the partner," remarked Mr. Murray. "Dr. Selman dances admirably—one can see the German teaching there! See how firmly, yet how modestly he supports her! None of the awkward bending and languishing of American affectation. But I understood Miss Graham never danced round dances."

"I don't suppose she would, except with Robert. They are cousins, and brought up like brother and sister, you know," replied the doctor. Seeing Robert lead Agnes to a seat, he crossed the room and stood before them.

"So you two have found each other out?"

"Oh yes!" said Agnes; "we could not fail to recognize each other."

"Miss Graham," said Will Mathews, who joined them, "can you manage in any way to adopt me as a cousin, so as to dance round dances too? I wish you would persuade Mrs. Elmsworth or Mrs. Selman to take some steps in the matter."

Agnes smiled, and referred him to her aunts, promising to be governed by their action in the affair.

"Well! if I am to be so cruelly treated on this important point—so vital to my future happiness—will you refuse, in the mean time, to exercise your influence over Dr. Selman, and require him to sing for us? I can answer for the quality of the music, unless he has spoiled his voice eating frogs in Paris."

"Robert, I'm sure, will oblige you, Mr. Mathews," said Agnes, turning to her cousin.

"I will sing for you, Agnes!"

They all adjourned to the parlor. Robert seated himself at the piano, and began the prelude to the song in Beatrice di Tenda: "Oh, Divin Agnese!"

Robert's voice was nearly as fine as Agnes's; both had inherited the glorious gift. Agnes listened with delight. Robert had sung with Mario—he knew how to sing. Will Mathews, a cormorant of good music, put his hands together, and begged piteously for "more."

"Agnes! can you sing 'Torna mia di me che m'ami'?"

"Yes, Robert."

"Let us sing that, then, for Will, together!"

He played a few bars of the accompani-

ment, and the magnificent voices of the cousins rose together upon the air. The crowd was perfectly still—scarcely a breath heard until the last note died away, then a burst of unanimous applause arose from the assembled company. Robert rose from the piano stool, and placing his hand upon his heart, with inimitable grace, made a low stage bow to the audience. This provoked a general laugh. The band struck up for another dance, and the night wore on. Robert renewed his acquaintance with Miss Clara Bell, and all of his old friends among the ladies and gentlemen; danced with all the girls, as far as he could, always contriving to be Agnes's *vis-à-vis*; claimed all the round dances with her; was pronounced "delightful," "charming," by all the ladies, and "a first-rate clever fellow" by the young men. He got home as the day was breaking, and threw himself into his bed; charmed with N—; tired of dancing, and, he feared, desperately in love with Agnes Graham. He could not disguise the fact from himself. He knew how mad, how hopeless such a passion was! what strong barriers stood between them; he strove, reasoned, argued with himself. His brain reeled—every pulse of his heart throbbed towards her. Remembrance—every association, thronged to add a link to the sweet chain that bound him.

"Miserable that I am!" exclaimed he; "why was I allowed to be in ignorance of her growth in loveliness? Perhaps, had I not been so surprised, I would not suffer as I must now. Had I been familiar with that lovely face, I might still have felt as I used to towards her, when she was my dear little sister. The die is cast—it is no use to struggle! I never felt in a woman's presence as I do in hers; and she is *mine—mine*—I know it. I can make her love me! I always had wonderful influence over her, and it is not weakened. How her step caught the rhythm of mine in those dances! how her voice harmonized, and how quickly she felt and followed my emphasis and mode of rendering that duet. Her character was always a strange one; while it was insensible to the influence of the generality of people, it was wax to receive and marble to retain what I chose to write there. Thank God! I loved her too much ever to abuse my power, but the power was *mine*, and *still is!* I saw that to-night. Oh, Agnes! Agnes! if you were but the lowest and poorest girl in the land, and not my cousin, and a *Davenant*, how happy I should be to-night. Misery is all I can see in the future for us both; but I *love you*, and you *shall* love me! I will live in the present! I will look into those beautiful eyes; touch your hand; rejoice in the sunshine of your presence, and leave the future to itself." And Robert's last thought was of the bracelet containing his likeness, which perhaps, at that

very moment, was lost in the mass of dark braids, as Agnes, pillowed her head upon her white arm in her maiden dreams. He knew she was thinking of him, and so he fell asleep thinking of her.

CHAPTER IX.

It was late, the morning after Mrs. Mathews's ball, before the doctor and Robert made their appearance in the breakfast-room. Mrs. Selman and the Judge had taken their meal at the usual time, and she sat with her work, awaiting the coming of the revellers, to give them their breakfast. The doctor came in grumbling and shaking his head over "the folly of people's turning night into day; giving everybody headaches, and especially such old fools as himself, who allowed themselves to be cajoled by such a silly little girl as Agnes." And then he "contrived all parties to the deuce." Robert laughed at him, protesting "that the doctor was the gayest man at the party," and that his countenance was radiant with pride and satisfaction every time he looked at "the silly little girl" he was now abusing! Robert declared himself in charming health and spirits. He had "enjoyed the ball immensely; saw all his old sweethearts; they were prettier than ever." He gave his mother an amusing description of his attempt to be incog.; of his recognizing Agnes in handing a bracelet to a young lady as she passed by him. He thought her very pretty indeed! Her nose had *not grown longer*. Elizabeth Hudson was beautiful! Emily Adams very bright and fascinating! Clara Bell as handsome as ever! So he rattled on, like the lapwing which flies in every direction, leading the pursuer away from her nest. Mrs. Selman was quite satisfied with his account. She was surprised, however, that he did not find Agnes something more than "very pretty;" but, added she, "it is probably our partiality which makes us rank her beauty so highly."

Dr. Leonard scouted indignantly at the lukewarm expression, "*very pretty*." "She is the most beautiful woman I ever saw—save one." The doctor's voice fell as he uttered these last words.

"Her voice is superb!" quietly answered Robert to this onslaught—helping himself to another muffin. "I am really delighted with my—little sister." Robert felt a pang of contempt for himself as he uttered this last phrase; but he had argued himself into a fixed resolve, and he dared not let his master see how much he admired Agnes, and how dear she was to him already! His only hope of success lay in careful concealment of his real feelings for the present towards Agnes.

"Mamma," said he, waving away the hot batter-cakes, which Jim, by some private understanding with the cook, kept pouring in a perpetual flow upon his plate, "when do you think those girls will waken up to-day at Uncle Elmsworth's? I should like to pay Aunt Emmeline a visit, and see those fair stars by daylight!"

"Certainly not before noon," replied his mother.

"Is there a horse in the stable I can ride?"

"Yes! but you had better go out and select one for yourself," said Mrs. Selman.

"Ef you please, Mars Robert, dere is dat young Arabium mar, dat I been breaking for you myself for dese six months," put in Jim, as he stood with his waiter under his arm, behind Robert's chair.

"It's a four year old Lexington colt, Jim calls Arabian," said Mrs. Selman, smiling.

"Just as good—if not better, Jim; but let us go and look at the 'Arabium'!"

"Doctor, will you go?"

"Yes; but I shall drive over in the buggy. I saw that beast Jim calls the 'Arabium' pitch him over her head twice last week. And the only breaking she had any knowledge of was that of breaking people's heads or bones!"

"Deed! Mars Doctor, dat was de fault of de bridle, not of the Arabium—she never could stand a curb no how—and I jist tried her wid one dat day. She is gentle as a lamb wid a snaffle!"

"Never mind, Jim! if you can get a bridle on her, I'll ride her! Mamma, I have not had a decent horse since I left here!"

"Well! be careful, my son. James goes with you, and he'll set all bones Stella may break. I know you are a good rider."

"Yes," said the doctor, "I must say 'good-bye' to Agnes. I *must* go home to-morrow. I left my patients in my partner's hands. He is very sensible, but young and inexperienced. It is really time for me to return! I shall stay to-day on your account, Robert; but to-morrow I must go!"

"Two weeks for Agnes, and one day for me! Is that the ratio of your regard, doctor?"

"Nonsense! Robert; you are a strong man, and don't require so much looking after."

The visit to Mrs. Elmsworth was duly paid. The "Arabium," after trying a variety of experiments to unseat her rider, quietly succumbed and cantered along charmingly by the side of the doctor's buggy—Jim, who was acting as charioteer, calling occasionally on the doctor, with a broad grin of delight, to admire the tractability of the steed and the grace of the rider. The "star's" rays were a little pallid at first, but Agnes's color, which came and went with

every emotion, grew so vivid at the entrance of her cousin and the doctor, that neither perceived any lack of brilliancy about her. Brunettes never do show fatigue as much as blondes. Agnes had an artist's eye for color, and she had suspected this visit would be made to-day; so she had spent a few minutes longer at her toilette than was customary with her. Her glossy black hair, smoothly folded around the small head; her dark eyes, to which fatigue only gave an expression of soft languor that was an added charm; her brilliant bloom; the red, smiling, half-parted lips; the little white hands peering from the heavy folds of the large, falling sleeves; the delicate wrists, encircled with the fine lace edging of the snowy muslin undersleeve; her well-chosen morning dress of mazarine blue, lined and turned up with crimson, open to the feet, so that one got occasional glimpses of the tips of embroidered slippers, dainty enough for Titania, beneath the fresh, white ruffled underskirt; the dress gathered simply with a large cord and tassels about her slender waist; the white chemisette gleaming between the folds of her loose bodice, rising close up around her neck: these made as pretty a picture as any man would care to look at. So Robert thought. The hours passed in such chat as is usual on such occasions, gossiping over the events of the previous night. Little incidents of travel and European life, forced from Robert by his aunt's questions; badinage with the girls; gay allusions to childish times with Agnes, the time passed so quickly, that the dressing bell for dinner was rung before they realized the flight of the hours. The gentlemen were obliged to decline Mrs. Elmsworth's repeated invitations to stay to dinner, as they had promised Mrs. Selman to return to that meal. The doctor told his darling "good-bye," and kissed her forehead. Robert felt very much inclined to follow his example, but as he bent forward in saying "good-morning," the beautiful eyes were raised with such a frank, innocent look—his heart failed him—he could not do it. He kissed his Aunt Emmeline instead, who warmly returned his caress.

"Robert was such an affectionate fellow," she said. "Not changed at all in his warm heart!"

Day after day found Robert with his cousin; while her guests were with her, it was only natural it should be so. Mr. Elmsworth liked his house to be gay—he had a great deal of petty vanity, and was highly gratified to have Agnes admired, and his house a favorite rendezvous for all the fashionables of N—. He would do anything for pride and ostentation. So Robert spent half his days with his cousin, and it became a matter of course that he should ride—walk—escort Agnes to parties—to

accompany her as continually as if she were "the little sister" he playfully called her.

The night before Dr. Leonard took his departure for home, he asked Mrs. Selman, as they happened to be sitting alone, together, "whether she had ever related her family history to Robert?"

"Yes," replied she; "before he went to Europe, I took him to Davenant Hall, and told him all. I thought it best to do so! Better that the story should come from my lips than any other!"

The doctor nodded in acquiescence. "It was right, and Agnes—ought she not to know it?"

"James, I have been cowardly about Agnes. Her temperament is so different from Robert's. She is so morbidly sensitive, so tenacious of any impression, more inclined to brooding and melancholy, and then more seriously interested. You know her mother," Mrs. Selman paused.

The doctor replied hastily: "I know Eleanor! Yet she ought to know. It would be a fearful shock if she should accidentally discover it, and there are always malicious people to retail such matters."

"I mean to tell her, James, but I must choose my opportunity. I cannot tell that sad story except at Davenant Hall."

"I am glad that Robert knows," said the doctor; "it is a relief to my mind."

CHAPTER X.

Yes, Robert knew, but his knowledge made no difference in his determination to win Agnes, at any rate to win her affections if they were not already his. Dr. Robert Selman was "a very fine young man," moral, well-mannered, well-born, and wealthy; "a perfect gentleman," the world said, and the world was nearly right. He was a son of whom any parents might be proud. His parents were proud of him. Robert was very fond of them, particularly of his mother, whom he admired and honored as few sons do a mother. Mrs. Selman was a woman who never failed to command respect and admiration wherever she appeared, and those who knew her best honored her most. Naturally of a passionate, impetuous temper, strong self-will shown even yet in the haughty curve of her lip, and queenly bearing of her erect, stately form, these faults had been so modified by sorrow and true piety that what were doubtless great defects originally in her noble nature, only served now to give force, decision, and self-reliance to her well-disciplined mind. Her charity, patience, and forbearance seemed inexhaustible. She seemed to look on all the petty sins and failings of other people as so many

indications of mortal disease, to be borne with and forgiven, or if punishment was required, it was only to be used as a surgeon would his probe for searching and cleaning a gangrenous wound. An unkind word or bit of scandal was never heard from her lips. It was absolute pain to her to listen to any evil gossip. She never despaired of the repentance of any offender. She not only forgave, but forgot. Stern and exacting of herself, she was merciful to others. Courteous and kind to all, none save those of her own family and household knew the ever-springing well of tenderness in her heart. Her hands were ever extended with peace and good-will, but her love was reserved for her own. "She did not wear her heart upon her sleeve for daws to peck at." There were some among her acquaintances who could tell of the proud, haughty, scornful, ambitious beauty, Eleanor Davenant, but those errors had been burnt out by the fire of suffering until, as Dr. Leonard said, "Eleanor Selman was as noble a woman now as God's sun shone upon." Robert inherited his mother's strong will and strong affections, though like his father in his more joyous temperament. He had been withdrawn at an early age from his mother's careful training. Owing to circumstances, he was sent early to school, away from home. His father, an eminent lawyer and keen politician, was prevented from giving his only son the supervision which such a nature needed. Judge Selman was often absent from home for months at a time on his official or political duties. So Robert was left very much to his own devices, and had yet to learn self-control and self-denial. But if he was wilful, passionate, and worldly, these faults were silver-coated, like some drugs. He was a man whom any woman not a Christian might and would love, for such a woman would not look deeper than the smooth, brilliant surface. Agnes Graham was good, upright, full of integrity and noble impulses; artistic nature, too, taught her veneration for holy things. It was a necessity of her nature to look up with reverence to superior excellence, whether human or divine. But Agnes Graham was really no more pious than her cousin Robert. She said her prayers night and morning, as she had been taught to do. She went to church every Sunday, and admired the service excessively. She sung sacred music with fervor and expression, but God was not yet to her what Mr. Danvers once said he should be, "her check in prosperity, her stay in adversity." Agnes depended on those earthly friends she loved for happiness, her aunts, her friends, above all, on Robert. There were niches in her heart where she set up her idols; there was no altar there for Christ.

Robert was well satisfied at the progress

he made in Agnes's favor. He had constant opportunities in their unrestrained intercourse of advancing his suit. Already Agnes's manner showed a change from the old sisterly frankness and free expression of thought and affection. There was a timidity, an ill-concealed shyness in her manner, the timorous shrinking of a wild fawn before its captor that pleased him. The clear glances of those beautiful eyes rarely met his now. The long lashes would droop o'er the crimsoning cheek, and if he managed to touch the little hand, it was trembling like an imprisoned bird. There were eyes, however, that Robert's feigned indifference to Agnes in general society did not deceive; the quick sight of a rival, whose feelings were as deep as Robert's own. A man of the world, and of keen penetration, who easily saw through the slight veil of cool regard which Robert used to hide the burning lava fountain of passion in his heart. Mr. Murray had met Agnes the previous year at the house of Mrs. Hudson, the widowed mother of Agnes's friend Elizabeth. Agnes made a visit to her old schoolmate. Mrs. Hudson's plantation lay upon the banks of one of those beautiful fresh water lakes which run like a string of pearls through the State of Louisiana. It was a very pretty place, but completely eclipsed by the princely domain of the adjoining neighbor, Mr. Alfred Murray. This gentleman was a great favorite with Mrs. Hudson, and Agnes heard him much talked of during the first days of her visit to Elizabeth. "Mr. Murray's house, his paintings, his statuary, his library, his plantation improvements, beautiful chapel for his servants' use, his charity, kindness, piety," were never ending themes for Mrs. Hudson. Agnes thought the good lady had some maternal wishes on this subject for Elizabeth, but on trying a little rillery, such as young girls will use towards each other, she was surprised at the serious manner in which Elizabeth took it.

"Oh, no, Agnes! He is my godfather, and then Mr. Murray will never marry!"

"Why?" asked Agnes.

"Well, it is a long story. He was once engaged to a young lady, his cousin, I believe; they had a quarrel about some foolish matter. He went off very suddenly to Europe, to the East. While he was gone, she rushed into society for excitement and forgetfulness. She was very delicate—took cold one night at a party—went into consumption and died. He never forgave himself for the difference between them. Mamma says when he received the news of her death he was very ill. He returned home an entirely changed man, sold all his race horses, retired from the world for years, devoted himself to good works, and built this church. Our house was the only

one he ever entered save his own. He had a friend, an English gentleman, who used to come and stay with him, but I forget his name; I'll ask mamma. It was before I was born all this occurred."

Mrs. Hudson entered the room just then with a note in her hand, and Elizabeth asked the question.

"The English friend of Mr. Murray? It was Graham. I wonder if he was a relative of yours, Agnes?"

"I expect not; my father was an only son, and had no relatives in this country."

"I don't think this Mr. Graham was married," observed Mrs. Hudson thoughtfully; "at any rate he was Mr. Murray's dearest friend, and used to be with him a good deal. Now, I think of it, you look a little like him, Agnes—something about the eyes and brow. This gentleman was older than Mr. Murray, but he could not have been your father. I don't think that could be."

"I know very little about my father, Mrs. Hudson," said Agnes; "you know I have always lived with my mother's family—and I was very young when he died."

"Well, Mr. Murray will be here to-night, *in propria persona*, to take tea," said Mrs. Hudson. "He has just returned from a trip to the city, where he fulfilled some commissions for me, and has just written to say he was coming to-night."

It was with considerable curiosity that Agnes entered Mrs. Hudson's parlor that evening. It was mild and pleasant spring weather; the doors and windows were all open. Elizabeth had ordered chairs to be placed upon the wide, open gallery that ran round the house, as is customary with nearly all Southern plantation houses. From thence one had a fine view of the lake, which spread out like a huge mirror in front. The moonbeams fell in a silver, glittering stream, across the gently rippling water; and the soft breeze, sighing fitfully through the trees, rolled the small waves with a pleasant dash against the low banks. Mrs. Hudson, and her guest with Elizabeth, were already seated on the gallery, enjoying the calm, peaceful scene, when Agnes joined them. Mrs. Hudson introduced Mr. Murray. Agnes saw dimly a fine-looking man, who bowed gracefully as he was presented. The conversation became general. Mrs. Hudson had many questions to ask about her commissions. Elizabeth chattered away like a magpie. Agnes was rather silent, but listened with interest. Mr. Murray was so easy, so quiet, so gentlemanly and kind in his demeanor towards them, that she really felt drawn towards him. He addressed her several times in the course of their conversation, but Agnes thought he called her "Miss Grey." Mrs. Hudson spoke indistinctly when she made

the introduction, and as she and Elizabeth always addressed her as "Agnes," it was very probable that Mr. Murray had mistaken her name. Tea was announced, and the party adjourned to the dining-room where it was served. Mrs. Hudson requested Mr. Murray to take the foot of the table. "Elizabeth, you sit there by Mr. Murray; and Miss Graham will come here by me." Agnes's name, this time, was clearly enunciated. Mr. Murray looked up quickly at her. The bright lamp light shone full on her face. He took his seat without remark. The little bustle of serving tea began. Mr. Murray offered the ladies the dish of cold meat, which was placed before him, calling Agnes, distinctly, "Miss Graham." Once or twice Agnes felt his eyes fixed earnestly upon her, but she attributed it to the associations brought up by the similarity of her name to that of his friend's. Tea over, Elizabeth insisted on returning to the gallery and the moonlight. So Mr. Murray was provided with a cigar, and the group formed as before. Elizabeth rose, and slipping through the glass door into the parlor, came back with a guitar, which she laid in Agnes's lap, with a request for some music.

"Some old, antique song, Agnes," said Mrs. Hudson.

Agnes tuned the instrument, and sang one of Moore's ever beautiful ballads. It suited well the scene and hour. Mr. Murray threw away his cigar, and listened, looking out upon the lake, his arm resting on the banister which inclosed the gallery. He made no comment when the song was finished. Mrs. Hudson asked for song after song, all of her old favorites. Agnes was obliging—she liked to gratify Mrs. Hudson, and she liked those old ballads herself. So, "Bonny Doon," "Mary, when the wild wind blows," "Twilight Dews," and all those lovely old songs were poured forth by her magnificent voice with the deepest feeling. Mr. Murray was motionless. Agnes handed back the guitar after she had complied with all of Mrs. Hudson's requisitions. Elizabeth took it, and went to replace it in its case. A servant called Mrs. Hudson off for some household matter. Mr. Murray turned towards Agnes then and spoke. "It has been years, Miss Graham, since I heard music like that, and then it was Malibran who sang. At that time I had a friend with me who enjoyed her singing as much as I did. He was an Englishman—it was in England I heard her. His name was Edward Graham. He came to this country, and married a Miss Davenant. He did not survive many years after his marriage, his wife died, and he soon followed her. I was in Europe at the time of his death, but I know he left a daughter. Can it be possible that you are that daughter? It may be fancy, but I think I see a strong resem-

blance to my lost friend in your countenance. He was very dear to me." Mr. Murray's voice lowered with emotion.

"My father's name was Edward Graham; my mother's Agnes Davenant," replied Agnes.

Mr. Murray rose and extended his hand to her. "Then I have a right to your friendship." Agnes frankly put her hand in his. He pressed it, and raised it to his lips.

"You cannot remember your father very distinctly, Miss Graham?"

"I remember his appearance," replied Agnes, "and his tenderness; but of his mind and his character I know little. My mother's relatives, with whom I have lived since his death, knew him but slightly. My mother spent very little time with her sisters after her marriage. My father's business did not permit him to accompany her often on her visits to her family, who were most tenderly attached to her. They liked my father, but I don't think they knew much about him. I have often wished I could learn more of him—but I had no one to ask."

"I can give all the information you desire," said Mr. Murray; "or, better still, will let you learn from his own lips and hand, what he was in character, and what he *was* to me. I have letters from him through a long series of years, and a few lines, the last he ever wrote, from his dying hand. His was the noblest, purest spirit I have ever met among men." He paused, then said: "I will bring you some of his letters to read."

Agnes thanked him warmly. "Did you ever see my mother?"

"Yes, several times: she was very lovely; but you are like your father. I saw *you*, too, a little curly-haired child of three years, who refused absolutely to be bribed to leave papa's knee, even with bon-bons that I bought on purpose. Your German nurse was quite shocked at your conduct, and remonstrated, but you shook your head, and chattered back, as fast as she did, in that uncouth tongue. Not a smile could I win, and a kiss was not to be thought of. The little head was thrust in papa's bosom at the slightest attempt at familiarity. Graham was very much amused at your perverse shyness. I wasted a whole morning trying to coax you into making friends. At last that coveted honor was attained by the exhibition of a huge wax doll, dressed like Victoria at her coronation, that I happened to come across, and which struck my fancy. You sat on my knee and agreed to be kissed 'one time,' in consideration of the present."

"Was it you who gave me my splendid Victoria doll? I have the crown she wore yet, Mr. Murray, but I never could make out

the gentleman's name who gave it to me from Meta's pronunciation of it."

"Mrs. Hudson," said Mr. Murray to the lady, as she joined them again, "I find Miss Graham and myself to be very old friends."

"Yes," added Agnes, smiling, "friends of fourteen years' standing."

With such a beginning, conversation progressed finely. When Mr. Murray said "good-night," Agnes felt as much at home with him as Elizabeth, and extended her hand as frankly in parting.

"Miss Graham, my god-daughter here says I am to come to-morrow evening with my boat, and take you all out on the lake. Have you any objection to the arrangement?"

"Not the least; I should enjoy it greatly," replied Agnes, "with Mrs. Hudson's permission understood of course," turning to the lady.

"I have no objection, provided you don't stay out too late, the night dews are so heavy at this season."

"Can't that difficulty be obviated by shawls and a slight awning?" inquired Mr. Murray.

"My dear godfather, no awning, I implore. I had rather take an umbrella," exclaimed Elizabeth. "Shawls and nubes, mamma."

Nobody ever denied Elizabeth anything in that house. So the matter was settled.

CHAPTER XI.

THE young ladies were agreeably surprised, the next morning, by the arrival of the brother of their friend Emily Adams, whose father's residence was about twenty miles distant from Mrs. Hudson's. This young man was a devoted admirer of Elizabeth, and often made visits "to see Mrs. Hudson." He came now as the bearer of dispatches from his sister to the young ladies, informing them of her intention to spend a few days with them very shortly, and insisting that both Agnes and Elizabeth should come to make her a visit before the former's return to N—. Tom Adams was a manly, handsome fellow, with bright, brown eyes, a "splendid moustache," and dark hair, curling tightly in a mat of tiny ringlets all over his head. Tom's hair was the pest of his life. There's no telling how many combs he broke annually, trying to get it to lie straighter and flatter. The amount of bear's oil and pomatum he consumed was awful. It took him nearly an hour every morning (especially at Mrs. Hudson's, where grand toilets were in vogue, on account of Elizabeth's blue eyes) to get his hair out of a tangle. It was

funny to witness that part of Tom's toilet. He was always obliged to remember the proverb, "*Pestina lente*," in the matter of his coiffure, for if he was in a hurry, he only got red in the face, and his hair in hard knots. "Pish," "pshaw," and "confound," were often on Tom's lips, and sometimes, I am afraid, Tom swore. And, after all, Tom said "his head looked as if it hadn't been combed, after he had spent an hour on it." If Tom had only known that Elizabeth admired the handsome head, with its short, close curls, he would have been freed from his one unhappiness. But Elizabeth did not know how long it took Tom to comb his head—and poor Tom *did*. A light-hearted, strong, noble, generous young fellow was Tom Adams. He could ride any horse, swim the Mississippi, sail, row, wrestle with any young man in the country, and withal was not entirely ignorant of "his humanities," full of fun and frolic, pure, upright, and honest. Little Elizabeth was not far wrong when she smiled on brave young Tom Adams. Tom literally adored Elizabeth. He said "she was an angel—nothing less—too good and beautiful for any mortal man." And yet, Tom was so inconsistent as to intend to monopolize and appropriate this celestial being, if it were possible. Tom had never seen Agnes before. He had heard his sister extol her perfections so highly, that he approached her with no little awe. He was greatly relieved to find this paragon of her sex as simple and unaffected as Elizabeth herself. Tom generally came provided with an extra number of combs, and some clothes, in order to remain a day or so when he visited "Rosedale," as Mrs. Hudson's plantation was very inappropriately called. There were plenty of roses, but nothing like an acclivity or declivity to be seen for miles, except the banks sloping down to the lake edge. It was first a dead level plain, covered with luxuriant vegetation, and bounded by tall, stately forests, like nearly all "swamp" plantations. Agnes soon found that it would be as well for her to absorb herself in an interesting book, or to sit at the piano and play long fantasias, or sonatas, which her companions doubtless may have heard, but certainly did not heed. Elizabeth was engaged in an elaborate piece of embroidery—a sofa covering for her mother. There was worsted to be assorted and wound. Tom had a quick eye for color, and was the patientest of skein-holders; indeed, Tom would have been metamorphosed into a reel for Elizabeth's convenience. Agnes found it necessary to write some letters after dinner, and retired to her chamber for that laudable purpose.

Just before sunset she returned to the parlor. Mrs. Hudson was sitting on the gallery, superintending the work of the

half-dozen little darkies, each armed with a cane broom, who pretended to be busily engaged in sweeping the brick-paved walks throughout the front yard. These ingenious little drones found out an entirely new and original mode of attaining the desired cleanliness. They had stationed themselves at intervals along the walks, and swept most vigorously, one against the other. There was an immense activity, but Agnes was amused to see how little progress in sweeping was made by the hypocritical little wretches. She stood near Mrs. Hudson, laughing heartily at that lady's perturbation and despair over the small results of so much effort.

"You, Lisa! why don't you sweep clear down the walk? Why do you heap that trash back over the place Sophy has just swept clean?"

"I gwine to, I gwine to sweep it—but you see, mistis, dat ar Sophy she won't sweep to her own side."

"Now, mistis, don't you believe dat ar Lisa—she keep a sweeping agin me, and I can't make no way no how."

The combatants glowered indignantly at each other. Mrs. Hudson threw down her knitting, and marching down the steps, seized a broom from Sophy, and showed them how to manage; but she was hardly reseated before another duello of angry looks and words would begin in a different quarter. How it would have ended it is impossible to say, if Jane, the colored housekeeper, Mrs. Hudson's factotum, had not been passing the theatre of petty war just then, and going up to the belligerents, applied her knuckles vigorously to the hard, woolly little heads, which topical castigation seemed to have a wonderfully stimulating effect upon the small brains, and the walks were soon cleanly swept.

As Agnes passed through the parlor, she saw Tom and Elizabeth very much engaged in disentangling a remarkably troublesome skein of purple wool. Tom was holding it, and volunteering his advice as to the best mode of getting it straight. Elizabeth proposed cutting the knots "*à l'Alexandre*," but Tom protested vehemently against wasting the wool in that manner. "Suppose Elizabeth should hold it, and let him try his hand?" The exchange was made. The soft wool passed over Elizabeth's taper fingers, and Tom bent down his curly head and set diligently to work.

His attention, however, was terribly divided between the wool and Elizabeth's pink fingers, and the occasional touch of her long, golden ringlets, that sometimes brushed his brow as they both bent over the skein. Tom's hands trembled in his eagerness over the knots. It was a harder task than the asserting of the three barrels of mingled skeins that the pretty princess in

the fairy tale had to lay in separate piles, or lose her life. Poor Tom, alas! had no good fairy friend to make all straight with a magic touch of her wand. His dilemma was to be solved solely by human skill and forbearance. He could have gotten on very well but for those golden ringlets and provokingly tempting little finger tips. Tom felt inclined to bite them, as one does a baby's. At last human nature yielded to temptation. Tom seized the little, undefended hands in both of his, and pressing them together, first covered them, worsted and all, with passionate kisses. Elizabeth turned very red, and sprang to her feet. Tom dropped her hands and stood before her in the most penitent attitude, saying deprecatingly:—

"Indeed I *could* not help it!"

Just at that critical moment Agnes called out from the gallery to Elizabeth "that her godfather was coming with his boat."

Elizabeth muttered something about shawls and hubes, and hastened out of the room without casting a pardoning glance on the repentant Tom. That young hypocrite, as soon as the door closed on Elizabeth's retreating form, lost his expression of penitence, and assumed one of extreme self-content and satisfaction. He put his hand to his brow, and would have run his fingers through his hair, but he couldn't; so he only ran them in it, and tried to push the close rings off his forehead. He walked up to the long mirror set in between the windows of the room, and took a careful survey of himself.

"Not so bad, if it wasn't for those confounded curls," said he, *sotto voce*.

Seeing the tangled skein of wool still lying on the floor, where it had fallen at the time of the effervescence of his admiration of Elizabeth's waxen hands, Tom picked it up, rolled it up tightly in a little round ball, and stuck it in his pocket. Whether he had any idea of taking up worsted work as an occupation, was not apparent; perhaps he only meant to keep it from being trodden under foot and wasted.

Tom joined the party at the gallery. Mr. Murray had just arrived. He was in the act of handing to Agnes a small basket in which he had brought two exquisite bouquets for Elizabeth and herself from his conservatory. He greeted Tom Adams warmly. He liked the manly young fellow. Elizabeth returned with an armful of shawls and Agnes's nabe. She had tied her own brilliant blue one around her head and neck. Was it from a little secret coquetry? If so, the desired effect was certainly attained, for everybody thought nothing could be prettier than that sweet face, and those drooping tresses framed in the modest scarf. Tom thought so, and so did Mr. Murray, until Agnes carelessly threw her scarf of crimson over her shining hair.

"It was the ruby and the pearl," Mr. Murray thought then.

Tom possessed himself of Elizabeth's shawl, and folded it carefully around her shoulders. Mr. Murray would have followed his example with Agnes's wrappings, but that young woman, taking hers from Elizabeth, had already flung it around herself. The flowers were committed to Mrs. Hudson's keeping, and the quartette started for the boat, which lay rocking at the shore. Tom helped Elizabeth down the bank, but Agnes, folding her shawl about her and catching up her skirts daintily, ran down without assistance, and stepped into the pretty softly-cushioned skiff. It was a large boat of the kind, and had places for three rowers. There were two neatly dressed negro men in the boat, who pulled it. Agnes was seated on the side bench near the stern, and Mr. Murray took the rope of the rudder, in order to steer the little craft. Of course Tom and Elizabeth were expected to occupy the seats opposite Agnes. But Tom proposed to Elizabeth to take the vacant rower's seat, and pull an oar themselves. He was a cunning fellow. Mr. Murray smiled at this position was decided upon. His eye met Agnes's, and both laughed merrily.

"Rastlose liebe," said he. ("Restless love.")

They were soon under weigh. Mr. Murray turned the prow of the boat towards the setting sun. He was sinking fast; there were banks of clouds about him which were resplendent with gorgeous color. The lake extended before them for miles, then, bending in a sudden curve, disappeared behind the thick woods, around which it swept, shaped as a huge horse-shoe. It was twenty miles long, though not more than a mile in width—narrow, like all these lakes, which were doubtless once the bed of the mighty, inconstant Father of Waters. At this season of "high waters," the banks sloped greenly to the water's edge, and the tiny wavelets sported and played among the green rushes, or drew out the long, slender-pointed threads of Bermuda grass, like sea-weed. The shield-like leaves of the Monoka-nut rose and fell with the ripples, and the round water-drops rolled like varying opals over their disks. The woods were thick on one side, and a fringe of feathery, pyramidal willows, dropping their golden catkins, stood like terraces of soft green plumes against the sky, blazing with brilliant crimson and gold. On the other side, one saw the white-washed negro cabins, and great gin-houses, grouped into small villages around the simple residences of the planters, peeping through the clustering evergreens and clumps of ornamental trees. A variety of wild water-fowl were cooling themselves in the clear water. Divers and

cotton-heads, cormorants in large flocks, and blue heron standing on one leg, fishing for their supper, off the projecting logs; and great white cranes sailing over them with long, serpent-like necks outstretched and vibrating; little swallows were skimming over the surface of the water, and every now and then a large fish leaped up and fell with a splash back again into his native element. Agnes leaned back on her cushions, and enjoyed the fair scene in silence—the splendid clouds, the perfect harmony of color, the crimson, purple and gold so graduated, so mingled, repeated again and again, till they faded into soft gray, and that into the clear dazzling blue.

"She thought how Hiawatha
Sailed into the fiery sunset,
Sailed into the purple vapors,
Sailed into the dusk of evening."

Her lips moved unconsciously as she murmured the words to herself. Mr. Murray spoke:—

"Won't you repeat that louder, Miss Graham?"

Agnes started.

"I was not conscious of speaking."

"Yes," replied he, smiling, "you were murmuring some lines from Hiawatha. Won't you repeat them?"

Agnes obeyed, without affectation, beginning:—

"Slowly o'er the shimmering landscape
Fell the evening's dark and coolness;"

repeating to the end of the poem.

"I never thought those lines so beautiful before," observed Mr. Murray, thoughtfully.

"I think the whole poem most lovely," replied Agnes; "but I think it has a far better effect to hear it read or recited than if one reads it to one's self. But my partiality for books often depends on association. Hiawatha was read to me, when it first appeared, by my cousin, who is an admirable reader, and who had great influence in forming my tastes in poetry."

"I thought Mr. Elmsworth had no children," remarked Mr. Murray.

"He has one little daughter, three years old," replied Agnes; "but I spoke of my cousin, Mr. Robert Selman, now in Paris, with whom I was brought up."

Agnes spoke quietly and simply of Robert, and Mr. Murray, without knowing why, felt pleased.

"Miss Graham," said he, "I brought a package of your father's letters, which I will give you to read when we return to Rosedale. I have preserved them in separate packages, each containing those received in one year, and I will bring them to you in succession. These are the first letters I ever received from him."

Agnes thanked him, and Mr. Murray resumed:—

"I met your father accidentally. I was travelling in the East—had made a tour through Palestine and Turkey, and returned to Smyrna to take ship to Alexandria. I wanted to go into Egypt, with the intention of penetrating into Abyssinia. On reaching Smyrna I found letters awaiting me from home, containing domestic intelligence of a most afflicting nature to me. The agitation and distress I experienced, aided by the exposure I had endured, brought on one of those violent fevers to which strangers are often victims in that climate. I was very ill. My courier had formed an acquaintance with that of an English gentleman, who had been pursuing nearly the same route I had. This gentleman, hearing through Antonio of my severe illness, came to see me, and finding me so ill, remained with me and nursed me like a brother for three weeks. It was your father. The acquaintance thus begun, from feelings of gratitude on my part, and of the interest one takes in a person one has obliged, on his part, soon ripened into intimacy. I learned to admire and love Edward Graham more than any other man in the world. We made the tour of Egypt together, and returned to England. Graham's health was delicate. England was too cold for him. He was ordered by his physicians to a warmer climate. I persuaded him to return with me to Louisiana. He consented, and spent a winter with me. The climate suited him. He had no relatives—no ties in England. He purchased a home in New Orleans, and invested his means there. He met your mother, who was on a visit to a mutual friend, one winter, in that city; Graham fell in love with her, and married her. We kept up our friendship and corresponded until his death. You will see by his letters how much I owe to him. He was the truest friend! I was a gay, careless, worldly, sceptical man when I met Edward Graham. In him I was forced to respect a gentleman of the highest type, a noble scholar and a devout Christian. He led me, too, to the only source of true happiness—the only consolation of sorrow—to the infallible Guide to Eternal Life—to the feet of Christ! If I ever stand a redeemed and pardoned sinner before the judgment seat of God, it is to Edward Graham, through God's Providence, I owe it."

Mr. Murray's voice became hoarse with emotion as he spoke.

"You will see all this in his letters, and when you honor me with a visit, which Mrs. Hudson has promised in your name—you are all to dine with me to-morrow—I will show you your father's apartment, his favorite walks and haunts, while he was

with me. The church which you will attend on Sunday was built after his designs."

Agnes listened with tender interest to Mr. Murray's story. Her changing countenance showed how deeply she felt his kindness.

The sun was down now. The silver moon and her attendant star shone purely and brightly above them. Mr. Murray turned the boat back towards Rosedale. Elizabeth called on Agnes for some music. She had smuggled the guitar on board, and it was handed over from the prow, where it had lain *perdu*, by some of the oarsmen. Agnes took it, and looking at Tom and Elizabeth, sang "Rastlose Liebe." Elizabeth's pink cheeks took a deeper hue. Tom did not understand German. Then she sang a gay barcarole of Schubert's, of which the measure danced like the waves. Tom begged for "When stars are in the quiet skies;" then, several old songs of the same order. Mr. Murray seemed perfectly content to listen to anything Agnes chose to sing. The prow of the boat ran up to the landing-place as the last song ended. The little party were soon assembled around Mrs. Hudson's hospitable supper-table.

CHAPTER XII.

When the matter of the anticipated dinner at Mr. Murray's was discussed after his departure that night, Tom Adams declared the impossibility of his remaining to participate in the pleasure, but a glance from Elizabeth, in which he was conceited enough to fancy he saw an expression of disappointment, and the remonstrances of Mrs. Hudson and Agnes, led to a reconsideration of the point in question, and a little private conversation with Mrs. Hudson, in which one could only distinguish the words "to the washerwoman," seeming to remove all objections, Tom graciously consented to remain. It was scarcely noon, rather an early hour to go to a dining party, when the family from Rosedale alighted from their carriages before Mr. Murray's hall door, in which he stood, ready to receive them. Southern people keep early hours, and they visit really to enjoy a friend's society, not merely to eat his dinner. Like all agricultural people, they are simple in their habits. The ladies were conducted to an apartment and invited to lay aside their bonnets and mantles by an elderly negro woman, who officiated as housekeeper, whom Elizabeth greeted as "Aunt Amy." Mr. Murray and Tom waited in the hall for the ladies' return. Old Amy begged Mrs. Hudson to go with her into the dining-room.

to see "if everything was right" in the culinary department. Mrs. Hudson went off with the old housekeeper. Tom of course monopolized Elizabeth, who undertook to show him some new pictures Mr. Murray had recently received. Mr. Murray offered his arm to Agnes, welcoming her most gracefully to his house. She reminded him of his promise to let her see her father's room, and the walks and places he used to like about the grounds. Elizabeth and Tom were standing before the new pictures, discussing them apparently with great interest. Mr. Murray told them where he was going with Agnes, and walking before her, led the way. He passed through several suites of noble apartments—parlors—sitting and billiard-rooms—a large room, fitted up with an organ, with seats and kneeling benches around, and a small prayer-desk in the centre. A large prayer-book lay open on the desk. This was evidently used as a domestic chapel.

"Who plays the organ?" asked Agnes.

"My chaplain, whom you will meet at dinner. It is a *sine quâ non* with me that my chaplain should be somewhat of a musician, for I use the choral service with the servants. They prefer it. They are all so fond of singing, you know, as a race."

"But you have a chapel besides this?"

"Yes, a church, designed by your father, that is only used on Sundays, and days of public worship. Elizabeth or some one of the young ladies plays then. The church was built on a corner of the plantation, so as to be separated from it when necessary. At my death, it goes to the diocese with an endowment. It is used for my servants and all the whites in the neighborhood at present. There is a rectory attached to it, and some glebe land. I keep it in repair—but Mr. Caldwell lives with me."

"You must use a great deal of what is called Ritualism!" answered Agnes, looking around the chapel. "This is very rich in ornament!"

"I do," replied Mr. Murray, "but all within rubrical limits. Mr. Caldwell finds, as I have long since discovered, that a full, reverent, splendid ritual is most attractive and correspondingly beneficial to the poor ignorant negroes. I like it best myself. It is a delight to me to break Mary's box of precious ointment perpetually over the feet of my Divine Lord. My best must be given to the service and worship of Christ, Miss Graham; never my least, coldest, and poorest offerings. We use all the splendor we can everywhere. My silver and gold are *His*!"

Mr. Murray bowed his head and made the sign of the cross as he passed in front of the altar. Agnes imitatively bowed her head, scarcely conscious of her almost involuntary homage.

"You must see the full glory of our sanctuary on Sunday, Miss Graham, and remember your father taught me all this. He was a most devout Anglican churchman."

They passed from this into a very large room fitted up with immense cases of dark rosewood; these were filled with books. The walls were literally lined with them. The two deep bay windows of this room commanded fine views of the lake on one side; and a pretty flower garden on the other. The roses were in full bloom; the beds of verberna masses of brilliant color; and the air which came in at the open windows was heavy with the fragrance of yellow jasmine, pinks, and hyacinths. The floor was of inlaid wood, with a square Turkey carpet covering the centre, and beneath every chair or lounge was placed a Persian rug. Pleasant lounges, easy chairs, small writing-tables, every appliance of comfort or luxury, was scattered through this favorite apartment. Stands of pipes and cigars over the mantelpiece showed Mr. Murray indulged, after the fashion of his country, in the fragrant weed. Agnes exclaimed admiringly at the beautiful view and pretty garden. Mr. Murray opened a door partly concealed between the book-cases, and invited Agnes to enter the room her father used to occupy:

"It has never been occupied since he left it, Miss Graham."

It was a large handsome room, luxuriously fitted up, though the coverings of the furniture were faded. Its windows commanded the same views as those of the library. An empty cigar-case, embroidered with the initials "E. G.," lay upon a small table with a few books. Agnes went up to the table and took the case in her hands. The tears fell fast from her eyes; her father was brought back so vividly to her recollection. She took up the books; they were religious works. Among them George Herbert's poems and Wilson's "Sacra Privata." The other books were in Latin. Agnes opened one and began to read it.

"Do you read Latin, Miss Graham?"

"Yes. I learned it with Robert."

"Miss Graham, those books were left on that table by your father, but if you would like to have them, I beg you will do me the favor to accept them."

Agnes thanked him; and, finding some pencil marks in the "Sacra Privata" and the "Herbert," said she would "like to have them." Mr. Murray took the books up, together with the cigar-case, and led the way back into the library. There he opened a cabinet and showed Agnes the packages of her father's letters, each tied and numbered. He told her she was welcome to read them all. They went into the parlors, where they found Mrs. Hudson established with her knitting, and Tom and

Elizabeth seated before a huge portfolio of engravings which they were examining. Near Mrs. Hudson sat a gentleman in clerical dress, who was introduced to Agnes as "Mr. Caldwell."

Mr. Murray was a charming host; Mr. Caldwell sensible and well informed; and they were all surprised when the venerable butler made his appearance with the announcement that "dinner was served." Mrs. Hudson would not believe it was four o'clock until her watch assured her of the fact. Mr. Murray offered his arm to Mrs. Hudson, Mr. Caldwell escorted Agnes, and Elizabeth, with her ever-faithful Tom, brought up the rear. The dinner was in keeping with the house, quiet, handsome, and well-appointed. After coffee was served, according to Southern custom, in the parlor, after dinner, Mr. Murray proposed a walk in the grounds. He led them through the beautiful gardens, the conservatory, hot and green-houses, gathering all the rarest flowers, and filling a small basket he carried for that purpose; then he took them into a narrow path leading through a woods, kept clean of undergrowth, which bordered on the lake, half-concealing the house and grounds. Agnes asked Mr. Murray the name of his place, "Ailec."

"Ah! the ancient name of Dundee! 'the beautiful!' Well, it is very appropriate here!"

"My grandfather Murray, who was Scotch, named it," observed Mr. Murray.

They had walked forward until the little path terminated in a small pavilion built directly out over the lake, and commanding a very extensive view. There were rustic seats disposed here, of which they availed themselves, a little weary with their long ramble through the grounds.

"Here, Miss Graham," said Mr. Murray, "this was a favorite haunt. Graham would bring a book and spend hours here."

They sat silently looking out on the scene until the declining sun warned Mrs. Hudson that it was time to retrace their steps, and return to Rosedale. Mr. Murray handed the basket of flowers to Agnes as he aided the ladies into their carriage, and they were soon on their way homeward.

Tom Adams went back home the next day, after arranging with the girls as to the time of his sister's visit, when Agnes was to return with Emily, previous to her going back to N——. Mr. Danvers was to come to take her back to Mrs. Elmsworth's.

Mr. Murray rode over every day to Mrs. Hudson's, sometimes to bring Agnes a package of letters, flowers for the two girls, and, after Emily came, there were rides on horseback, expeditions in the boat, fishing and rowing. Mrs. Hudson and Elizabeth began to rally Agnes about "the impression she had made upon their neighbor."

Agnes only laughed, and said "Mr. Murray was only her good friend," and continued as frank and cordial in her treatment of him as ever. Mr. Murray himself would have preferred less ease and freedom from embarrassment on the part of his old friend's daughter. He was compelled to acknowledge to himself that his happiness was beginning to depend greatly upon gaining an interest in her affections. There was much disparity of age, but still he was not too old to love or to marry. He had every thing in his favor. He was still handsome and agreeable; so he dared to hope, trusting to time and devotion to touch the heart of this beautiful young girl. Agnes never attempted the least coquetry. She liked Mr. Murray very much indeed; she was really attached to him. He was the friend of her dead father. "But love—that was another thing! She did not love anybody but her relations and Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers." So she talked freely to Elizabeth, who had warmly espoused her god-father's cause, and was urging his claims upon Agnes's admiration.

Mr. Murray was all Elizabeth said; had every virtue, was handsome, very attractive; but Agnes did not want to marry anybody. There was plenty of time, and if she should not marry, she would keep house for her "old beaux," Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers, that is, if her aunts got tired of having an old maid about them.

As she talked, she sat sliding her broad gold bracelet with its ruby clasp up and down her white arm. Agnes returned to N——. Mr. Murray soon followed her. He was open in his admiration of her; made no attempt to conceal it; and it was soon generally known that the millionaire, Alfred Murray, was ready to lay his vast estate and his heart at the feet of Miss Graham. So matters stood when Robert Selman came home. Then Mr. Murray saw Agnes's dark eyes soften and hide their gleams under their long lashes; the fair cheeks glow and pale at Robert's will; the sweet voice grow lower and sweeter when she answered him. He read the burning passion in Robert's glances; the restrained ardor in his low expressive tones when he talked with Agnes; and he saw too that Agnes grew more radiantly beautiful, her whole being awake and blossomed in the sunshine of this love. There was a life, a joyousness about her he had never seen before. The sweet playfulness of an innocent happy heart at peace with itself and the world. And Mr. Murray loved her more for the new beauties born of her love for Robert. Again and again he resolved to tear himself away from her and quit it. But still he lingered. He knew the history of the Davenants, and so he stayed on.

"Oh! Robert," said Agnes, one evening when they were all assembled together in Mrs.

Selman's pleasant library—Mr. Murray, having been invited to tea, was with them—"Robert, what was that legend I heard you chanting this afternoon before that pretty German picture you brought Aunt Emmeline? the picture of the knight riding along holding a casket while he gazes so sternly up towards the castle on the mountain above him so gay with lights? That's a beautiful picture—really Rembrandtish in the management of light and shade."

Robert smiled.

"Perhaps you won't like the legend, Agnes; but give me a pencil and paper, and you shall have a rough translation of the German legend."

Robert was provided with the pencil and paper. Drawing a chair one side of the circle, and partly out of it, he wrote rapidly for half an hour, oblivious of the conversation murmuring around him.

"There, Agnes!" he said at last, tossing the paper to her, "now see what your dulcet voice can make of my rough rendering into English."

Agnes caught the paper; glanced at the heading, then at the cousin, who sat shading his face with his hand as he half-leaned on the table. "Can't you read it?" he asked lightly.

"Oh, yes!" replied Agnes, and began to read immediately.

THE BRIDAL ORNAMENTS OF RUBIES.

(A Legend of Brittany.)

FROM THE GERMAN OF LOUISE VON FLOENNIEN.

PART I.

In Brittany assembles full many a gallant knight,
Far o'er the sea to wander, harnessed in steel so
bright;

The trumpet's loudly sounding, the crowd is full
of glee,

While many hundred sails wave a welcome to the
sea.

To one of these gay knights the trumpet sounds
a knell;

As if stricken with a spear, keen anguish on him
fell.

Still lingering on his ear, the bells ring out so wide.
His wedding morn! He shudders! "Lost! Adieu,
my sweetest bride!"

He speaks, "Awake, my love! knowest thou that
joy is gone?"

Not e'en to save my soul, this parting can I shun.
Thy lover must sail to-day were it e'en his soul to
cost,

For he with sword and armor must join the war-
rior host!"

Oh! sudden to him springs in grief that woman
fair;

Around her shoulders white falls a veil of raven
hair.

Her tender arms she clasps in anguish round his
knee:

"Oh trust thou not the false winds! trust not the
falsely sea!"

"Cease, woman! thy 'plaining makes my manly
heart to burn;

Yet still my spirit whispers that I shall safe return.

Oh if my slender white Doe I find but true to me,
I tremble not for false winds, I fear not false sea!"

She sits upon his knee; her tears stream free and fast,
Like dew-drops from the rose when summer wind has past;
The rose is but more fragrant whene'er the zephyr stills,
And pearls upon the seashore cast oft the wave that kills.

He whispered with a soft kiss, "When here again I stand,
I'll bring thee *crimson roses* from out the eastern land;
In thy bridal jewels shall most brilliant rubies glow;
And to win them shall the life blood of many pagans flow."

Her arms around him clinging, she lies upon his breast;
She holds him weeping, sobbing, her heart upon his rests:
"Oh, darling! we must part; see there the morning light!"
"The moonlight sleeps upon the hill; 'tis not the sun so bright!"

"No! no! the shadows vanish; farewell, sweetest love, to thee!"
"Oh trust thou not the false winds, trust not the falser sea!"
He has torn himself away, he springs upon his steed;
Soon is he gone beyond her sight, he gallops at full speed.

What is it from the castle wall that croaks in bitter tone?
The knight looks up and shudders, and ravens o'er him fly.
"The waves and the winds they seize full man, a life;
But false as the wind and wave, still falser is thy wife."

PART II.

Upon St. John's day said, weeping, the fair bride,
"Last night I saw in dreams his sinking ship in ocean wide;
In one hand he held his sword, his armor was blood-red;
My lover is forever lost; my bridegroom's with the dead."

Soon, soon the fair dame cast aside all signs of woe and grief,
To sorrow bade farewell, and found from mourning garb relief.
On Christmas day she stood once more as bride adorned,
And tender round her lover's neck her white arms fast she wound.

Sudden throughout the land what gladdening rumors flee?
All rush so joyful to the strand and gaze out upon the sea!
For many hundred sails flap in the morning wind so mild,
And many a greeting signal waves "Oh, welcome, wife and child!"

Then speeds upon his gallant steed the pilgrim through the night;
There streams from out his castle halls a brilliant nuptial light!

The clang of harps now rushes forth in waves of harmony;
The knight stops short, and listens: "What feast can there now be?"

The guests sit round the table, great joy does all enfold;
But see, beneath the wax-lights, what form now enters bold,
Treads now up to the fair dame, who reigns there at the feast?

"Dame, I am a poor pilgrim, and gladly here would rest."

"Oh, rest thee, rest thee, pilgrim; sit at our bridal board!
We will gladly, gladly serve thee—I and my noble Lord."

When the first gay dance was over, said the lady bright,
"What ails thee, poor wanderer? Thou seemest sad to-night."

"It matters not to thee, lady; thou beam'st in joy so bright!"
Then fled she from his sorrow's shade in gayest dance away,
And when the second dance was o'er, still spoke the lady bright,
"What ails thee, poor wanderer? Thou seemest sad to-night."

"Oh! nothing ails me, lady; but on my heart's a stone."
Laughing light, away to dance again she's flown.
After this third dance, she comes back smiling still:
"Now say, dear wanderer, if dance with me thou wilt?"

He casts his arm about her, springs in the circle gay;
And in her ear so softly he these few words did say:
"Oh, trust thou not the false winds! trust not the falser sea!"
She feels her senses swooning in sudden misery.

His left arm close enfolds the sweetest, falsest life.
Vainly from him struggles, in death's last strength, his wife.
Ah! see upon her bride-clothes there gleams the rubies red;
His dagger's in her heart; his heart is worse than dead.

Within the chapel windows the morning sun streams mild;
Crowned with the glittering rubies, gleams Madonna and her child;
But out upon the sea he sails to foreign land,
Where never man his injuries or grief can understand.

The comments were varied as the audience upon Robert's legend. Agnes alone said nothing.

As they separated for the night, Robert whispered, "Agnes, shall I give you that picture?"

"No; I like neither picture nor legend."
Robert looked at her keenly; her eye fell and her cheek flushed under the gaze. "Then he quoted these words from Chateaubriand's 'Atala':—

"Si un homme revenoit à la lumière quelques années après sa mort, je doute qu'il fut reçu avec joie par ceux-là même qui ont donné le plus de larmes à sa mémoire: tant on forme vite d'autres liaisons, tant on prend facilement d'autres habitudes, tant l'inconstance est naturelle à l'homme, tant notre vie est peu de chose même dans le cœur de nos amis."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE time had now arrived for Judge Selman to return to the Capital, to resume his seat in Congress. It was his last term. When this ended, he promised his wife to retire from political life and live for home and her. He was anxious that his wife should accompany him. Mrs. Selman expected to remain a month at Davenport Hall, to attend her plantation affairs, before she joined her husband. Robert was to return to take her to the Capital. He did not know how to oppose his parent's wishes without betraying his real motive for desiring to remain in N——. He determined, however, when he returned for his mother, to prevail on her to take Agnes with her to the gay Capital. He knew Mrs. Elmsworth would never oppose such an arrangement if it pleased Agnes and his mother.

It was late one afternoon when Robert hurriedly entered his aunt's drawing-room, rang the bell, and asked for Agnes. She soon came in. Robert was walking restlessly up and down the room, evidently much disturbed. Agnes put her hand on his arm.

"What is it, Robert?"
Robert took both of her hands in his, looked in her face, so pale with apprehension, and, suddenly, with a passionate exclamation of endearment, threw his arms around her and pressed her to his heart, covering her face with quick, ardent kisses. Agnes hid her face in her hands. Gently withdrawing herself from his embrace, she again asked "what troubled him?"

Putting his arm about her he led her to a sofa, then, taking her hand in his, he said:—

"Agnes, my darling, sweetest Agnes, I must leave you to-night. My father has just received letters which demand his immediate presence at the Capital, and we leave this by the steamer at midnight."

Agnes made no reply, but laid her head on his shoulder, and he felt the little hand he held close convulsively on his. Robert pressed his lips on her brow, and continued:

"Agnes, it has not required words to tell what every pulsation of our hearts has told us, that we love each other not as cousins love. But, my darling, beloved one, I cannot leave you without listening to the sweet

confession from your lips; without pledging my life and love to you." Robert paused. "My precious one, I know our path will be stormy; I know none of our friends will approve our love. They will oppose; all will oppose us, Agnes, all. We are cousins, and there are family reasons which they will think should interfere. But, Agnes, we must conquer all this. I cannot, will not give you up. No, if I have to forsake home, friends, and country. You are my life. Do you understand, Agnes? You must be true to me, to yourself."

Agnes drew herself from his encircling arms and knelt down before him, putting both of her hands in his, and raising her eyes full and steadily to his face. "Robert," she said, "my Robert, when I first came to this house, a desolate little orphan, weeping to be among strangers, you left your amusements, took me in your arms, kissed away my tears, and I fell asleep upon your breast. It was my refuge ever after, Robert's arms, Robert's heart. Since that day, I know now, I have had no hope, no life, no future apart from yours. I have been told that a woman should never confess to any man how dearly she could love him. But, Robert, I trust you; the love and confidence I feel for you have grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength. When I cease to love you, my Robert, the breath of life will cease in my breast; the heart which throbs only for you will be icy in death."

There was but one way to answer this. Robert lifted her in his arms again to her place by his side.

"My noble, beloved Agnes, I accept the trust. My mother goes to Davenport Hall, Agnes; she will probably take you with her. Remember this hour, Agnes. Remember, my life's hope is in you. I must go now. I must say 'good-bye' to Aunt Emmeline; but first, Agnes, let us sing once more together the duet we sang when I came home from Europe."

Robert went to the piano and opened it. It was growing dusky in the room, but the fire burnt high in the grate. "Put your hand on my shoulder, dearest," Agnes obeyed as she stood beside him, and their voices rose in one stream of melody, "Torna mia di me che m'ami." The cousins were so engaged with their singing, and absorbed by their own emotions, that they did not hear the door-bell ring, nor the servant usher a gentleman into the adjoining apartment, which communicated by sliding doors now partly open. The gentleman signed to the servant not to disturb the singers, and seated himself softly to listen. The light from the fire shone brilliantly on the lovers, and Mr. Murray, for it was he, saw the tender, caressing attitude in which Agnes stood, one arm encircling Robert's neck. Her sleeve had fallen back, and the gold bracelet,

with its ruby clasp, glittered in the firelight. The duet ended, Robert put his arm around Agnes and embraced her passionately.

"God forever bless my precious one, my heart's darling. Now call Aunt Emmeline and let me go."

Agnes quitted the room. Robert rose and walked to the fire. He stood there, leaning his hand upon the mantelpiece, looking down into the glowing flames. Mrs. Elmsworth came in—full of questions and surprise at the sudden departure of her nephew. Mr. Murray took advantage of the slight bustle occasioned by her entrance, stole softly from the room, seized his hat which lay upon a table in the hall, and escaped from the house without having been observed. He had walked out to Mr. Elmsworth's—it was only a mile from the city. He hurried out of the gate and back towards his hotel. He met on the already lighted streets several acquaintances, who cordially saluted him. Mr. Murray raised his hat mechanically in return. He was stunned, paralyzed. Never had he felt the intensity of his love for Agnes so much as now, when he knew, certainly knew he had lost her. One gentleman who met him exclaimed, to a friend walking with him, "Good heavens! what can be the matter with Murray? He must be ill; he looks like death!" They turned and looked after him, but he had disappeared around the corner of the street. His only thought was to reach his own room before his strength failed him. He gained his apartment and threw himself on the bed. Covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud: "Agnes, Agnes! lost to me forever! how I have—how I do—how I *would* have loved you!"

He lay there wrestling with his heart a long time. At last he rose, and kneeling by the side of the bed prayed to God to enable him to bear this trial as a Christian should. After his prayer he felt calmer, quieter, able to think. He sat with his arm upon the table, leaning his head upon his hand motionless for more than an hour; his whole life rushed back upon his memory; his impetuous youth—his early love—his hasty temper, which led to the parting then; his friendship for Edward Graham; the great, strong love which awoke in his heart for his friend's daughter. He was glad to feel that Agnes had never deceived him—never tried to attract his admiration; never showed anything in her treatment of him but such friendly regard as the tie between them warranted. He could still place her image beside the memory of her father. She was fully worthy of his esteem—of the love of a true man. And Mr. Murray felt proud as he thought thus. That Agnes should love her cousin was very natural. He should have been prepared

for it. He could not help acknowledging Robert seemed worthy of it, and was certainly calculated to inspire it. Robert was a little selfish and wilful, but those were faults of youth, and would scarcely be noticed by any who loved him.

"No! he had no one but *himself* to blame for his present suffering. And yet, who could see and know Agnes Graham as he knew her, and *not* love her?" Then he recalled her grace—her accomplished mind—her high principle—her dazzling beauty—until he was forced to spring from his chair and traverse his apartment with restless steps.

Nearly all night the occupants of the room below heard those footsteps overhead; but towards morning Alfred Murray had decided what was right to do, threw himself upon his bed and slept peacefully.

Agnes Graham awoke at midnight, heard the whistle of the boat and its hoarse puffing as it quitted the wharf at N—. She pressed her bracelet to her lips, and prayed for him who was dearer to her than all the world beside—who now paced the deck of the boat, looking back upon N— until distance shut it from his gaze.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next day at noon a servant from the hotel rang the bell at Mr. Elmsworth's door, and handed in a small package addressed to "Miss Agnes Graham." The closely-sealed parcel was carried to her. She was sitting in her own apartment, holding a book in which she had made apparently little progress in reading, as it still lay open at the first page of the preface. Agnes took the package and dismissed the servant. She opened it. A jewel-case and a letter were its contents. Agnes touched the spring of the case—the lid flew open and the rays of the light flashed back from a superb set of diamonds—necklace, bracelets, pin, and ear-rings—even combs for the hair. They were magnificent—brilliant of the most costly description. Agnes closed the case and took up the letter. She broke the seal and looked at the signature of "Alfred Murray." The letter was evidently written in haste; some words were almost illegible, and here and there were blurred lines which looked as if a tear-drop might have fallen upon them.

"Miss Graham—Agnes," the letter began, "before you receive this, I shall have quitted N—, probably forever. Convinced that no possible hope remains to me of winning your affections, I will not torture myself nor distress you by the useless exhibition of a love that you cannot reciprocate. I would not willingly lose what I

prize most highly—your friendship and esteem. It is all that is left to me! That I should love you, Agnes, is no fault of mine, nor of yours. Noble young girl! Worthy daughter of Edward Graham! You have never wilfully deceived me by word or look, and it is a proud, though a sad satisfaction to me, Agnes, that the only woman I ever really loved is all that I deemed her—now, as ever, the realization of my ideal of womanhood! I was an involuntary witness of the parting between yourself and your cousin last night. I heard you singing as I entered the front door, and, forbidding the servant to announce me, took a seat in the front drawing-room to listen to the music. Forgive me, Agnes, that I thus intruded upon you! I heard, saw nothing—but the song—and the last embrace. Agnes Graham! you know how I love you; but yet I pray God to bless you in the lot you have chosen. That you could so choose is not unnatural, is perhaps right!—better! I do not complain—I have no right—but I must fly from you—from myself. I leave N—to-morrow morning for Ail-ec, to arrange my affairs; the next steamer for Europe sails in a few days. I write to-night to take passage on her. Agnes! my life has been very sad! an only child, and always lonely. When I grew to manhood, I was intimately associated with a young girl—a distant relative of my mother's. Helen Johnson was very lovely in appearance—I thought equally lovely in mind and nature. We were engaged to each other. It was a match very acceptable to my mother, who was then my only surviving parent. Helen was living with my mother at the time, being an orphan. After she had completed her education at the convent, my mother brought her home. It was not at Ail-ec, but at a plantation belonging to my mother, who was a Louisianaise. I have since disposed of the ill-fated place. I would have loved Helen very much, but soon discovered her to be both vain and imprudent, her tastes were light and frivolous—there was little sympathy between us. Helen professed great affection for me, but she would laugh, flirt with any or everybody. She had an absorbing passion for admiration. Again and again I remonstrated; Helen would mock at my jealousy, pout and get angry; sometimes she would weep and promise amendment. I wanted to love her, Agnes! My heart ached for companionship; so I would listen to her, and comfort myself with thoughts of her youth and inexperience. But, on the first temptation, Helen's good resolutions were given to the winds, and she would go on as before. These perpetual contentions, and on a point involving principle, at least in my eyes, destroyed all the esteem and confidence I had for her; and at last I resolved to give her

up altogether. We had a stormy scene—Helen had been behaving very foolishly. When I told her of my determination, she answered as haughtily as I spoke—and we parted. I sought my mother. That evening I took a steamer to New Orleans; two days after was on my way to Europe. Some months after I reached the Continent, I received from Helen an humble, contrite, imploring letter. I had no confidence in her! she had deceived me so often! I wrote back severely, and re-enclosed the letter to her. God forgive me! I might have been kinder, though I had ceased to love her. Helen was so lovely, so young! I did not have the patience I ought to have had. Helen was very gay after I left—I suppose, poor child, to hide wounded pride, if no deeper feelings. My mother was fond of her; though she blamed her seriously, she thought me harsh and severe towards Helen. When the poor child received my unkind letter, she became perfectly desperate. I believe now that she did love me, Agnes! that is, in her own way. She had a light, variable nature—was a creature of impulse, and had learned no self-control; but I did not think so then. I believed her to be influenced, as far as I was concerned, by worldly motives. Helen was poor, and I was rich. She had been a little unwell from cold taken at a ball, and had spent a couple of days, in consequence, in her own room. My mother gave her my letter at night; Helen's maid came screaming with horror to my mother next morning. Helen lay dead in her bed. On the table was my letter, re-enclosed and addressed to me; her own was torn into a thousand pieces, and scattered over the floor. Upon the hearth lay an empty vial, marked 'laudanum.' My mother broke the seal of the letter to me. On the back of my own letter to Helen was written these words, 'I cannot live under your contempt, and so I die!' The mad girl had destroyed herself. It was hushed up. Helen was known to have been ill; people said she died from the effects of cold.

"Agnes, when the sad tidings reached me at Smyrna, I should have died but for your father. I have never thought of love for a woman since—until I met you, Agnes. But the dream is, *must* be over. Farewell! When I conquer myself and am strong enough to meet you—the wife of another—I may see again the daughter of my old friend. You will accept these jewels, and wear them sometimes for the sake of your father, and of your friend."

"ALFRED MURRAY."

Agnes wept long and bitterly over this letter; she prayed that Mr. Murray might yet meet some one better than herself, whom he could love, and be loved in return. She took the case of jewels and put it care-

fully away—the letter she burned. Her maid came in to tell her that her aunts wished to see her; she went into Mrs. Elmsworth's chamber, where the sisters were sitting. Mrs. Selman had little "Mimi" in her lap. The child was playing with a pretty doll her aunt had just brought her. Mrs. Selman held out her hand: "Agnes, will you go and keep me company at Davenant Hall for a few weeks? I shall go to-morrow, and will be very lonely there if you will not go."

Agnes felt a cold thrill run over her—a feeling of superstitious dread, that she could scarcely avoid exhibiting. Robert had mentioned this visit as a thing to be dreaded, but there was no way of escape for her; her aunt was awaiting her reply. With an effort she recollected herself, and, thanking her aunt for desiring her society, said she would go. After all preliminaries had been arranged for their departure, Mrs. Selman took leave. Agnes went to her room, and, getting out the case of jewels, returned to Mrs. Elmsworth; she opened the casket and laid it before her aunt. Mrs. Elmsworth exclaimed with surprise and admiration.

Agnes said, "Mr. Murray sent them to me this morning as a parting gift. He has gone away from N—, and will not return. Ought I to receive such a gift? He sends it, he says, to the *daughter of his old friend*."

"Agnes, I do not see how you can refuse it, under the circumstances—if it be, as I suppose, that you have rejected the giver?" Agnes was silent, but the tears dropped from her eyes.

Mrs. Elmsworth continued, laying her hand affectionately upon Agnes's arm:—

"My child, I cannot but regret that you thought it best to send Mr. Murray away. I had hoped he might have found more favor in your sight; but you must decide for yourself in such an important matter, involving the happiness of your whole future life. God help the woman who is mistaken in the choice of a husband!"

Mrs. Elmsworth sighed deeply.

Agnes threw herself down by her aunt, and buried her face in her lap, weeping violently.

"Oh, Aunt Emmeline! I do like Mr. Murray very, very much, and I am so very sorry, but it is not my fault if I cannot love him!"

"No, my dear," responded her aunt, "it is not! A young girl's heart is a strange problem to read, my Agnes. Love will not be forced, and God forbid you should marry without feeling it for your husband."

Agnes still continued weeping. She was very hysterical, and it was a great relief to have what girls call "a good cry." She was very sorry about Mr. Murray; she was anxious and worried about Robert's going

away, and she was really, though no coward, afraid of the proposed visit, with Mrs. Selman, to the home of her ancestors. Mrs. Elmsworth smoothed the head of her sobbing niece with her hand, and tried to comfort her. The little "Mimi" came running in with her doll in her arms, and seeing her dear "Annis," as she called her, so distressed, came up, and putting a little arm around her neck, "Don't cry, Annis, *don't cry*! Mamma, don't let Annis cry! she shall have my new doll." Finding Annis still comfortless, Mimi laid the doll on the floor, and began to cry too, so that Agnes had to wipe her eyes and try to console the sympathetic little thing. Then she returned to her own room to give the necessary orders to her maid about packing her trunks for the dreaded expedition, taking Mimi with her, smiling and happy in the recovered light of "Annis's" countenance, and eager to exhibit her precious new doll to "Jane," Agnes's maid.

CHAPTER XV.

"AGNES! the boat whoops for our landing!" called Mrs. Selman to her niece, soon after daybreak, the day after their departure from N—. Agnes sprang up from her narrow berth and made a hurried toilet. When she issued from her stateroom, she found the boat already landed, and the captain, with Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers, standing around her aunt. The sleepy maids, her aunt's and her own, came out, with their ladies' dressing boxes. Agnes's friends gave her a cordial greeting. The captain offered his arm to Mrs. Selman, and Agnes walked behind, between her two "old beaux." Dr. Leonard looked scrutinizingly at her.

"What are you doing with those pale cheeks, and dark rings around your eyes? too much dissipation lately? No! then something is wrong. There has been no sleep in those eyes! What's the matter?"

Agnes tried to laugh, and declared there was nothing the matter. She had not slept much last night, but was well! quite well!

"Well! with your pulse a hundred, I'll be bound. Nonsense, child; you can't impose on me!"

Mr. Danvers took her hand anxiously: "My dear! you would not conceal it from us if you were ill!"

"Indeed! I am not ill! only—the truth is, I believe I am a little frightened about this visit to my ancestral home—very foolish of me."

"Ah, some one has been telling you ghost stories, I suppose," said Dr. Leonard, turning away as if to hide a passing emotion.

"My child," said Mr. Danvers, "in ancient

times, ghosts were exorcised by making the sign of the cross on one's breast. The old spell holds good even now; only the sign must be made in one's heart instead of on the exterior."

Agnes had no time to reply. They were standing before the carriage door. It was the most stately equipage she had ever seen. In N—, her aunt's carriage was handsome, but perfectly plain—and her servants always dressed in plain black clothes. But this carriage, painted a dark green, was glittering with silver headings, and on the panels were emblazoned the arms of the Davenants—a rising sun, with the motto "Altior." The coachman and footmen, one of whom was mounted, were in a rich livery of green and gold. Four magnificent horses drew the carriage. There were a number of people grouped about the landing, who had been awaiting the boat's arrival. Some of them Agnes saw, from their dress and equipages, were the proprietors of the adjacent estates. They also received attention from the captain of the packet. They all bowed courteously to Mrs. Selman, and several of them advanced and shook hands with her, and were introduced to Agnes. Mrs. Selman and her niece were soon seated in the carriage. The doctor and Mr. Danvers said they were driving their own buggy and would follow. The footmen sprang up behind, the mounted man galloped on before to open the gates. The coachman touched his horses with his whip, and they whirled off to their destination. They had several miles to ride. Mrs. Selman pointed out to Agnes the handsome residences of the different planters, as they rolled rapidly by them. The road wound along the banks of a small river or "bayou," that gradually widened into a broad expanse of water like a lake, which continued, Mrs. Selman said, for twelve miles in front of the Davenant estate, and then contracted again into its original proportions.

After riding near an hour, the carriage was suddenly turned through a massive iron gate into a kind of park, filled with noble forest trees, the long bunches of gray Spanish moss giving a venerable look even to the young verdant live oaks, as the white beard of old age would to a youthful face. There were herds of red deer and fine cattle cropping the green winter grass. A few deer had assembled into a group at the sound of the carriage wheels, and stood with their heads high in the air, snuffing the intruders; as the carriage approached nearer, they tossed their antlers defiantly and sprang off with great leaps into the recesses of the woods.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Agnes.

Her aunt smiled. "My grandfather was English, you know, and was of course obliged to have some kind of park."

"How large is this?"

"Not more than two hundred acres, which surrounds the house and grounds in a belt, separating them from the fields and plantation buildings."

They neared the smaller inclosure which surrounded the house and gardens, separating them from the park. The wide gate flew open, the coachmen drew his horses up before the hall door. A number of servants were crowded there to welcome their mistress; at their head a respectable-looking white woman, with a neat cap and apron, and a large bunch of keys hanging at her side. The footmen threw down the carriage steps and stood one on each side until the ladies descended. Mrs. Selman spoke kindly to her waiting domestics, shook hands with the housekeeper, and entered the hall, followed by Agnes. Mrs. Clark, the housekeeper, preceded them, talking as she went.

"Have you breakfasted, madam? Not yet; breakfast shall be ready directly; there is fire in the sitting and breakfast rooms, in your own chamber and the portico rooms, for the young lady, as you ordered. Mrs. Graham's daughter, did you say, madam? She does not favor her mother, though. She must look like her father! None of the Davenants have eyes as black as hers!"

The good woman, who was evidently a favored confidential personage, from her manner towards Mrs. Selman, ushered them through the hall and up the wide staircase, which ascended to the second story of the house. Davenant Hall was built of brick brought from England in the French colonial days. It was a stately house, built with four fronts, nearly three stories high, with a roof falling four ways. Around each story ran wide galleries, except that off each corner was built out a room, which made the galleries into porticos, let in each side of the house, thus making eight rooms on each floor; while the attic was divided into numerous small chambers, used for servants' and lumber rooms. The staircase stood in a recess, taken out between the sitting and breakfast rooms. One of the portico rooms, next the ordinary sitting room, was fitted up as a library, the opposite one as a large pantry to the breakfast room. On the other side of the hall, which was thirty feet wide, very lofty, and had a large fireplace at one end, were the state apartments, the drawing room, dining and billiard rooms; and next the drawing, another portico room. The rooms on the second floor were divided in the same manner. Mrs. Selman's apartments were over the sitting and breakfast rooms. Agnes followed her aunt up the noble staircase to the door of her room. Mrs. Clark threw it open, courtesied and left them. All

the rooms were large. This was furnished with an immense four-post bedstead of mahogany, with hangings of green silk edged with yellow fringe. The walls were hung to match, and the heavy curtains, at the windows, had the same combinations of colors. The furniture was all massive, and grotesquely carved; a toilet table of green satin, covered with handsome lace, and supporting a large mirror in a gilded frame, showed the antique taste which presided over its arrangements. All the toilet bottles and boxes were of silver. A lounge of green damask was drawn up near the blazing wood fire. The mantel-piece was very singular. It was of elaborately carved wood, the panelling running up to the ceiling. In the midst of this was inserted a pretty picture of the blessed Virgin and infant Saviour. Mrs. Selman saw Agnes looking at the picture.

"Your great grandmother was a Romanist," said she; "this room was fitted up for her. All of the Davenants in this country were born in this room, Agnes, except yourself."

The door into the portico room adjoining was open; it was Mrs. Selman's dressing-room; one corner had been partitioned off, and looked like a closet. Mrs. Selman went through this door, and called Agnes. It was a small oratory, an altar covered with crimson velvet, a kneeling cushion before it. Upon the altar stood two large gilded candlesticks, with triple branches: above it rose a gilded cross, and on the altar lay a large prayer-book and a Bible.

"This was the oratory, and my mother's," remarked Mrs. Selman. "I removed the crucifix and instituted the cross, and the prayer-book for the missal!"

"Ah! it was from this you took your idea of having an oratory, Aunt Eleanor?"

"Yes, my dear, I found such great comfort here, that I resolved never to be without such a place of retirement and devotion."

They walked back through Mrs. Selman's apartment to a door on the opposite side of her room; it opened into a large, cheerful, well-lighted room, though the same character of stateliness pervaded its fittings. There were five small beds or cribs here, four hung with white dimity, the fifth with rose-colored silk; the high mantel carved like that of the other room, the panelling extending above and inclosing a picture of Christ blessing little children.

"The nursery," said Mrs. Selman; "that is Robert's crib," pointing to the one hung with rose color. Opening a door at the extremity of this apartment, she entered the portico room. This was hung with fluted hangings of white muslin over pink silk; there were long, plate glass mirrors set in between the windows; the mantel was of satin-wood, highly carved and gilded; the

picture it inclosed was the Angel of Annunciation, holding a spray of lilies. The graceful tent bedstead, with carvings of lilies and roses, and the chairs and centre-table of satinwood were elaborately gilded; the toilet stand of pink silk, covered with puffs of muslin and rich lace, festooned with pink rosettes; all of its appendages were of silver, like Mrs. Selman's, only more graceful in form and fashion; and the brackets at each side of the dressing mirror had long glass pendants. The mirror itself was framed in wood, carved in wreaths of gilded roses, supported by cupids. A thick Persian carpet covered the centre of the floor. On each side of the mantle stood an exquisite vase of white marble, now filled with flowers from the greenhouses. The room was as bright and fragrant as possible.

"This was always the apartment of the young ladies of Davenant," said Mrs. Selman. "We all occupied it in succession, on leaving the nursery, until we married; therefore I had it arranged for you, as it was for each of us; and now, my dear, let me welcome you to the home of your ancestors."

Mrs. Selman kissed her niece and left her to prepare for breakfast. Agnes's maid, Jane, came in with her "young lady's" dressing-box, followed by a man-servant with her trunk. He set it in the place pointed out by Jane, and bowing, respectfully withdrew. Agnes seated herself in a chair before the fire, while Jane shook out the long braids of her hair, and began to put it in its usual state of glossy neatness, which had not been accomplished to Jane's satisfaction in the hasty toilet on the steambath.

"I tell you what, Miss Agnes," said the Abigail, "this here is a most splendid house! It beats Miss Emmeline's all to pieces. As I was a comin' along—I jist peeped in the parlor—my gracious! but it's pretty. All over gold and glass. I reckon your gran-sire was a mighty rich man! Wasn't he?"

"I believe he was, Jane; but don't you pull my hair."

Jane was looking around the room admiringly, with the whites of her jet black eyes exhibited over the splendor around her; but recalled her wandering attention when thus admonished by her "Missie."

"Well, Miss Agnes, what does that picture mean over the mantelpiece?"

Agnes explained. Jane dropped the tresses she was braiding and walked in front to take a good view. "And dat's the Archangel Gabriel, what we sing about? Well, I never! And how did they get his picture, Missie?"

Agnes laughed, and explained that it was a veritable portrait.

Jane was greatly disappointed to hear this; but gathered up again the dishevelled tresses, and proceeded rapidly with her light task, talking all the time as she did so; like most young ladies' maids, Jane was well spoiled. Agnes heard the rumbling sound of her voice, but she was accustomed to that usual accompaniment of her toilet, so she did not listen, until Jane exclaimed:—

"I tell you what, Missie, that ar toilet-table is mighty fine with lace and bows; but tain't got no drawers; where am I to put your muslins and little things?"

Agnes roused from her reverie, and looked about until she espied a set of drawers in an old-fashioned bureau set back in the corner. She pointed it out to Jane.

"Dat ar a bureau! I thought it warn't nothin' but a secretash!"

Agnes went to the bureau and pulled out the drawers to convince her that it was not a secretary. The drawers were empty, except the last, which stuck and required considerable strength to open. In it lay a delicately embroidered handkerchief; it was worn and full of holes; the initials A. D. worked in one corner; a slip of faded blue riband, and the empty back of an old letter, directed in a strong, manly handwriting to "Miss Alice Davenant!" The handwriting was Dr. Leonard's. Agnes touched these things with awe, and closed the drawer reverently. Jane discovered a large closet for hanging things in, behind the bed, and expressed herself content with the arrangements generally.

Agnes was soon ready, and finding that another door in her apartment opened into the hall, she went out that way, so as not to disturb her aunt by passing through her apartments. She walked to the end of the hall, and out upon the portico adjoining her room. It commanded a view of the back yard and the offices. A wing extended from the house, beginning evidently at her own apartment. It was of two stories only, so its roof was lower than that of the main building, showing it to be an addition after the house was completed. A gallery ran along the front of both stories. The lower rooms, Agnes saw, were used for pantries and store-rooms. The servants were at work in them, and she saw Mrs. Clark passing to and fro with her keys in her hand. The second floor, a little below the bed of the portico on which she stood, had close green Venetian blinds all the way along the gallery, making it impervious to external vision. Agnes supposed they were servants' rooms. Turning, she retraced her steps through the hall. The doors of the opposite rooms were all open, in order to air them. Agnes peeped in as she passed. They were only "handsome guests' rooms." Agnes laughed at herself for her silly fears

of this handsome old place, and ran down the staircase to the sitting-room, where she saw, through the fairly open door, Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers, who were sitting before the bright fire. She went in; they gave her a low easy chair, and she soon plunged into a stream of talk. She looked around her with curiosity; still the same prevailing colors, green and gold; the furniture of the light spider-legged kind, so fashionable a century ago. Some pictures hung, or rather were set in the walls. Over the fireplace was a picture she took at first for Robert, a boy with his water-dog by his side; but a second glance showed her it was not intended for, though wonderfully like her cousin. The dress of the boy was very old-fashioned—a large collar and ruffles of point lace, coat and knee-breeches of crimson velvet, with diamond buckles on the shoes; the coat made with long lapels, covered with gold embroidery, showed that the picture was older than Robert's day. The face, too, was graver and sadder than Robert's; the brow higher, the eyes more pensive and serious. At one side was a portrait of her Uncle Selman—a modern picture; opposite this, a superb full length of Mrs. Selman, in her bridal dress of lace and satin. How beautiful she was! Beyond this was another, half length, in which she recognized the sweet face of her Aunt Emmeline. As a pendant to this last, a lovely picture of a young girl reading; the profile only visible. Dr. Leonard followed her inquisitive glances.

"Your mother at fifteen, Agnes! and that," pointing to the picture of the boy and his dog, "that is your grand-uncle, who died very young, a hundred years ago!"

"It is a very pretty picture. It is very like Robert," replied Agnes.

"Robert is a real Davenant," observed the doctor.

Mrs. Selman joined them, and they all adjourned to the breakfast-room. The same state and ceremony there. The servants in livery. The gray-headed butler at the beaufet, which was loaded with gold and silver plate. The China service was of the most exquisite kind, and every piece marked with the Davenant arms. After breakfast, Mrs. Selman proposed to show Agnes the state apartments. So Mrs. Clark was summoned with the keys, and they all started on the exploration, Agnes whispering to Dr. Leonard her maid Jane's opinion of the "splendid" parlor, at which he was much amused. Jane was right, though, as Agnes acknowledged; the room was panelled in French style, with plate glass, and from the centre hung brilliant chandeliers glittering with glass pendants, as did also the gilded brackets for wax lights, fastened at intervals along the walls between the panellings; the furniture was of green

velvet, with gold fringes, and the wood-work of the chairs, sofas, tables, and mantel was blazing with gilding. Set over the mantel was a shield containing the Davenant arms. Agnes had never seen anything so gorgeous as this miniature Versailles-like chamber; the green velvet coverings were somewhat faded by time, but the gilding was bright and untarnished, as if done yesterday. From this they went into the grand dining-room, panelled with oak, the windows of stained glass, the centre quarry bearing the arms of the family. Above the mantel was a portrait of the founder of the family in America, Philip St. George Davenant; opposite hung his wife's portrait, a beautiful dark-haired woman, in the superb dress of a French marquise, with lace and crimson roses in her hair, her snowy arms folded one above the other; one hand holding a sultana fan. Agnes stood long before these two pictures. At the foot of the room was the portrait of her grandfather, Arthur Davenant, nephew and son-in-law of Philip St. George. They were a handsome race, with their large gray eyes and black lashes, their straight black brows and raven hair, their haughty chiselled features, and air of high breeding and lofty pride. A billiard-room adjoined this dining-room, the billiard table being a recent addition of Judge Selman's to all this stately antiquity. Returning through the drawing-room, Mrs. Selman selected a key from Mrs. Clark's bunch, and put it in a keyhole which Agnes had not observed—for the door was panelled, like the rest of the room, with plate glass. The key grated in the lock. Mrs. Selman had to use both hands to turn it in the wards; the door flew open suddenly. Agnes entered a room, dark, sepulchral in appearance; a faint musty odor seemed to pervade it; the light struggled dimly through the closed windows, hung with heavy curtains of black cloth. Indeed one could not have seen anything but for the light which streamed in from the drawing-room. Over the tops of the windows nodded tufts of black ostrich plumes, stirred by the slight breeze from the open door. In the middle of the floor, mounted on low black pedestals, was a long narrow slab of white marble; it was raised only a few feet from the floor; over this was suspended from the ceiling a canopy of black velvet, studded with golden suns. The canopy was topped like the windows, with ostrich plumes; at the head and foot of the marble slab, raised on black marble pedestals, stood massive silver candelabra of twelve lights each. At the end of the room was an altar covered with black velvet; a huge ivory cross stood upon it, and candlesticks of silver. The floor of the room was inlaid with mosaic work of black and white marble; the chimney-place was closed, and over the mantel rose a hatchment.

Agnes shuddered, and felt chilled with the depressing gloom.

"This," said Mrs. Selman, "is where every Davenant has lain in state for three days after death."*

She unlocked a double door at the side, and pointed to a broad carriage drive, dark with the gloom of the huge cedar and cypress trees which bordered it on both sides. "This road," she continued, "leads to the churchyard, a mile distant, in which stands the vault of the family. My grandmother retained her French custom of the exposition of the remains of her dead, and had this room fitted up for the purpose."

Agnes was glad to get out of the sepulchral apartment into the cheerful sitting-room. Mrs. Selman left them to attend to the numerous calls on her attention.

"Aunt Eleanor is devoted to this place," observed Agnes to her companions; "why does she keep more state and ceremony here than in N—?"

"The Davenants always lived in that style, and Eleanor would not change it for any consideration," replied the doctor.

"She feels like 'Rob Roy' when he set his foot on the heather," remarked Mr. Danvers.

"But though she lives handsomely in N—, she never has any state about her establishment," persisted Agnes.

"Eleanor regards it as a matter of duty here, and of reverence for the memory of those who began it," said Mr. Danvers. "She does not look upon it as we do. The curse of the Davenants was pride!"

"They look proud enough, something sad about them too, in those pictures. Do you know they remind me of Prometheus chained—at least my idea of his defiant, sad expression, especially Philip St. George? But they all have it; even that pretty toy over the mantelpiece! But I must confess this stately style is very agreeable to me," continued Agnes, laughing; "I was very foolish to be afraid of this noble old house!"

The gentlemen made no reply, but asked Agnes to come and make tea for them that evening, at the rectory, and see their bachelor establishment. Agnes agreed to come if her aunt would permit, and her friends bade her good-morning, and went off to prepare for the promised visit.

Agnes was charmed with the snug rectory and its cheerful rooms, when she

* Sometimes, in walking through the streets of New Orleans, one may see stuck up on a corner a placard, inviting persons to attend the exposition of the body of such or such person. Generally this occurs only among the poorer and foreign class of people. I have gone into the small boutiques, or homes of the people, and on entering through a door hung with black and white drapery with fringes, I have found myself in the presence of the dead, who lay extended on the table, in full every-day costume, even to the shoes and gloves; candles burning, and the relatives seated in solemn watch about the room.

came according to promise that evening. Mrs. Selman sent her in the carriage and four, though it was but a mile, and Agnes wanted to walk there before dark, and make one of her friends see her home after tea.

"No, my dear," said her aunt; "the daughters of Davenant always go here according to family custom."

"I tell you what, as Jane says," said Agnes confidentially to her friends that evening, "I think some of the Davenant customs are rather foolish."

"Don't tell Eleanor so if you do," laughed the doctor.

CHAPTER XVI.

AGNES was delighted so far with her visit to the hall. All the proprietors of the neighboring estates, with their families, called upon her aunt and herself. Agnes found them, like all Southern planters of gentle blood, cultivated, simple, unostentatious, agreeable people. There were a number of young persons among them, so Agnes was invited out to dinner and evening parties. She was young and gay enough to enjoy these, though she wished heartily for Robert's companionship. Her aunt and one or other of her friends always accompanied her. The French drop of blood in her veins danced along like quicksilver and tingled in her little feet, even at the sound of the "fiddles" of the negro violinists, the ringing bells of tambourines, the "bones" and the triangles of which their orchestra was usually composed. There was certainly more noise than music in their bands. Often, too, she herself volunteered to be musician for the dancers; and the merry round dances, the Lancers and the *Impériale*, the rushing *Tempête*, would ring out beneath her skilful fingers like peals of mirthful laughter. Agnes was also allowed to go freely to the rectory. Sometimes she would steal off under pretence of a walk, and make a visit without the ceremony of the coach and four and the liveried attendants, Jane being her sole escort. Her aunt permitted her to go sometimes for the whole day. On such occasions Agnes took possession of the keys of the pantry and store-room, and borrowing a check apron from old Catiche, the cook, who seemed to share her master's indulgent fondness for their young favorite, she would go into the kitchen and make all kinds of dishes and desserts. Her friends were charmed with all she did. It was always, in their eyes, "wisest, virtuous, discreetest, best." Agnes was nothing but a playful child when with them. All thoughts of young lady deportment were banished for the time being. Dr. Leonard declared "she must learn more economical

ways if she intended making herself permanent housekeeper, else she would break them in eggs and sugar."

However extravagant Agnes was in her domestic economy, it was undeniable that, whenever Dr. Leonard came in from his visitations, and Mr. Danvers could steal a moment from his books and clerical duties, if Agnes happened to be in the pantry concocting pies or cakes, they were to be found there too—and generally both of the elderly gentlemen could have been caught seated upright, very awkwardly, with large napkins pinned bib-fashion around their necks, beating eggs or shelling almonds, or paring apples and oranges, as the dessert happened to be arranged in Agnes's fancy.

Agnes said she always gave her *Uncle James*—for in her fondness she called the two gentlemen "uncle"—the yolks of eggs and the sugar to stir together, because he liked difficulties, and to beat stubborn things. He was naturally belligerent—while her gentle Uncle George "only had the lighter tasks of beating up the whites of the eggs and picking currants, etc. etc."

The three were just as merry and happy as people could be in their little pantry. The old men loved Agnes so much, her presence was a perpetual joy to them.

Dr. Leonard had a genius for mechanical inventions, and Mr. Danvers was very fond of agricultural chemistry. So the one had his amateur blacksmith shop, and the other his laboratory adjoining the library of the rectory, and in very dangerous proximity to each other, where each pursued his favorite crotchets in perfect harmony and sympathy, within hail of each other's voices, in all their leisure hours. Sometimes gentle Mr. Danvers would call out in faint tones from under the protecting medium of his glass mask to the doctor, who would be striking hereulean blows with his great hammer on his red-hot bar of steel.

"Just hold on a minute now, will you, Leonard, while I am stirring up this detonating powder? else you'll blow us all up by the concussion of your vulcanic arm."

"Contrive it to the deuce," the doctor would mutter, *sotto voce*; "just as I was getting this spring into shape"—but then louder, *alto voce*: "Go ahead, Danvers; I am in a state of complete equilibrium now, which philosophers say is—rest!"

These idiosyncrasies of her friends were never ceasing sources of interest and delight to Agnes, though sometimes she would stop outside of the glass door of the laboratory, and laugh at the queer appearance of gentle, thin Mr. Danvers, looking like a blue, green, or sulphurous yellow phantom darting around in the fumes of his smoking crucible; or on finding Dr. Leonard with his coat off and smith's apron on, his face all blackened with smut, working away

like a Cyclops over his anvil. The doctor had invented some valuable machines, viz: a new steam press, which was too expensive for ordinary use; and a new method of compressing coal for steamboats; but he gave this drawing and the explanations of this latter invention to a man to examine, who was so pleased with it that he took it on to Washington City, got a patent for it in his own name, and made a fortune out of it—leaving Dr. Leonard without any hope of redress, and no consolation except that of “contriving” the robber to the usual custody, to which he generally consigned whatever he did not like—personal or impersonal.

But the doctor's torpedo boat was his great triumph. He had constructed a beautiful little model of that which ornamented a bracket in the rectory library, and Agnes had completely won his heart by making a painting of the boat as if attacking an imaginary enemy. The vanquished vessel was sinking rapidly from a tremendous hole under the water-line in her keel. Agnes had made a capital likeness of the doctor in petto, standing sublimely rejoicing on the deck of his torpedo boat with folded arms watching the submersion of the enemy. Agnes threatened to paint Mr. Danvers as one of the assistants on the torpedo boat. But he remonstrated. “No, my dear, no! not even in imagination, my dear, would I like to harm any one of God's creatures. I had rather you did not, Agnes.”

So Agnes did not. But she believed in Dr. Leonard's boat, and in Mr. Danvers' chemistry, and in the personal goodness of them both—and they adored her and taught her all they knew of chemistry and mechanism.

But old Catiche, the fat old mulattress who cooked for the rectory, did not approve at all, either of the recreations of “her” two “gentlemen,” or of Agnes being instructed in chemistry or blacksmithing. Very frequently, when she would see Agnes approaching the house, coming gayly along the road through the park, humming a merry tune as an accompaniment to her sweet maiden fancies, old Catiche would nod her head mysteriously, groan and sigh: “Poor creetur; poor young creetur; I 'as seed too often the ‘end of all perfection.’”

Old Catiche had lived long with the Davenants, and had picked up a certain number of fine biblical expressions and sentences in the clergyman's service, which she often used sententiously, if not very appropriately. She was exceedingly indulged by her masters, had several subordinates in her province, and rarely did any greater labor than to direct the younger ones in the kitchen. She was so unwieldy with flesh that she was disinclined to any exertion;

generally sat picking beans and peas, or doing such light tasks, while she fulminated her orders from her capacious rocking-chair by the fireside. Her principal care in life was her grandson Jerry, who, being the only valet-de-chambre to the two gentlemen, had it in his power to torment his “granny” very considerably. Jerry was a lad of sixteen, a bright mulatto, who parted his woolly hair on one side—oiled it well, and then plaited or wrapped it round in innumerable short tails with white thread to keep it out straight and “make it grow,” which gave his coiffure rather a speckled, cobwebby aspect. Jerry was always dressed in the height of fashion, and wore his master's cravats and socks and pocket-handkerchiefs as often as he pleased. The rest of their clothes were too large, or he would also have helped himself to them; but Jerry lived in hopes of growing “big” enough some day to make use of all the articles of apparel that he preferred to his own abundantly furnished wardrobe. Old Catiche would get furiously angry at Jerry when he would exhibit himself in one of the doctor's new cravats, or when she spied a corner of Mr. Danvers' handkerchief, delicately scented, hanging out of Jerry's pocket. On such occasions the volubility of her reproaches would sometimes abash Jerry, but he would expostulate:—

“La, granny, it don't hurt nothin'! *They* never misses nothin'! I don't take nothin'—I only wears 'em and washes 'em, and puts 'em back in the drawers. I just *borrow* 'em!”

“Jerry! you is an ungrateful nigger; never 'll come to no good, no how,” retorted his grandam. “Why don't you go 'long now, and tote the water for the bath tubs? You know they'll be wanted presently. There's Miss Agnes comin', and Dr. Leonard is all kivered with smoke and soot in the shop, and Mr. Danvers he do make a fright of hisself in that 'ere larotory with all them clays, and dirt, and guano, and tonatin gases, and pile o' bones in the corner, smellin' like an old graveyard! Of all the ojonest smells I ever seed (unconscious *zeugma* on old Catiche's part) he do bang the bugs for collectin' in that there 'partment! An' a gentleman what likes plenty cologne on his handkerchief, too.”

“Deed he does, then,” replied Jerry, drawing out his “*borrowed*” pocket-handkerchief, and shaking loose the perfumed folds right under his granny's nose.

“There, now, you dun been in the doctor's parfume, you Jerry.”

“An' if it is, there's plenty in the bottle, an' the doctor he tells me, ‘Jerry, put out fresh linen, and perfume my bankercher when you sees Miss Agnes comin’; and when I fixes hisn, I fixes mine also, out of respect for Miss Agnes.’”

“An’,” sneered his granny with a contemptuous sniff of her nostrils, “you is a great nigger for talkin’, anyhow. Go 'long, fix your baths. I dun know what Miss Eleanor gone and brung that poor purty creetur to this 'ere old house for, no how! There ain't no good in it, nor never wasn't, an' so much projeekin' with dirt and hammerin', too! 'Nuff to set a body crazy, anyhow.”

Jerry took himself off, making a trumpet of his nose, singing one of the negro Baptist hymns as he went:—

“Way down under the water
I'm ready and a willin' to go;
I got good 'ligion in my soul,
I'm ready and a willin' to go.
I want to go to Heaven right early in the mornin',

Early in the mornin',
Early in the mornin',
I want to go to Heaven right early in the mornin'.
I'm ready and willin' to go.”

“Jest listen now to Jerry. If he ain't the most insufferable boy that ever did live, I do believe,” grumbled out old Catiche, “goin' on imicking the sisters and brothers in the church in that owdacious way.” Jerry changed his tune now, and took up verse after verse of the different negro hymns, sniffing them out in true canting style, sure his “granny” was listening.

“Oh, come 'long, brother, come 'long—
Come 'long to the promised land;
Brother Daniel was a prayin'
Two or three times a day;
King Jesus, hoist the window
To hear Brother Daniel pray;
Oh come 'long, mourner, come 'long.

Blow, Gabriel, blow your horn,
I have the lights again;
Come deaf, come dumb,
I have the lights of kingdom come;
I was deaf and I was dumb,
I have the lights again.

Shoutin', go 'round shoutin', go 'round
Shoutin', go round the walls of Zion;
Sister, don't you feel determined
To walk 'round the walls of Zion?

I'm on my road to promised land,
You are on your road to h—ll;
Lord, aint dat 'nuff to grieve me,
Grievin' 'bout judgment day?
De horses white, de garments bright,
I'm on my road to God.

Some are rich and some are poor—
But I'm de poorest of 'em all;
Good Lord, I'm but a ramblin' soul
Fighting my way to God.

Holy—holy—my Lord,
New born again,
Here's your rote, come try it on,
New born again.

My mother is gone—
To leave all behind;

Lord, I wish I was there!
To wing and wing with the angels,
To play on the golden harp,
And I wish I was there!”*

Jerry sang in a stentorian voice these curious hymns to peculiar, wild, half plaintive tunes, accompanying himself occasionally with clappings of his hands, and stamping time with his boot heels, imitating the “happy” state of “the Bredderin.” “Granny,” called out a girl in the party to Catiche, “is Jerry done got religion? Is he done got *through*?”

“Oh! Lord, Lord,” groaned Catiche, “the sass of these children is too much! No, Lelitte! you knows Jerry an't done got no religion. He an't got nuthin' but impudence; you better 'tend to fryin' that chicken for the gumbo, an' let Jerry alone.”

“Now, granny,” shouted Jerry, “I gwine to preach you one o' Uncle George's sermons; you like 'em better than master's.”

Jerry vociferated in a monotone the sermon of his granny's favorite preacher, to her intense disgust:—

“Sisters and brothers: I come among you to-day to 'spostulate with you. You all been thinkin' all this time it was the woman who brought sin an' trouble in this 'ere world. Now, my friends an' companions, you are all mistaken about that; 'twas Adam, not Eve, that brought all the trouble into the world. The Lord made the garden, an' He put Adam in it; and He showed Adam all the trees, an' as they was a walkin' around, they come to a most beautiful tree, right in the middle of the garden, an' the Lord says, ‘Adam, you see dat ar apple tree? dat is the tree of good and evil; you may eat all the other fruit in the garden; but don't you tetch that tree; else you shall surely die.’ Then the Lord made Eve, an' put her in dar to keep company with Adam; but the Lord never told her nuthin' about the tree; 'twas Adam what told Eve about it. An' one-day Adam walked out all around the garden lookin' at the good things the Lord had given him, an' he never tuk Eve with him—but he lef her at home—you see, my frien's, you ought not to leave your wives at home—an' Eve got tired of stayin' there by herself; so she thought she'd take a walk too—an' Eve was a walkin' in the lower part o' the garden, an' the devil he come to the gate, an' he looked in an' saw Eve, an' she was a mity purty woman—but the gate was locked, so he could not get in; so he asked Eve to open the gate, just a little ways. Look out, women, *your* time's a comin'! She opened the gate just a little ways—an' the devil slipped in. He walked

*These hymns and sermons are written down literally from the negroes's lips, as they were said and sung in their meetings. They are not fictitious, nor exaggerated, but simple transcriptions.

on up the middle path in the garden—an' twined hisself around the tree—an' begun a whistlin' his party music. Don't you know how you women, when you hear the fiddles a playin' music, an' gets your slipshod slippers an' flyin' ribbons, dancin' your souls into hell? An' the devil says, 'Eve, these are the best apples in the garden; why don't you eat some? If you eat these 'ere apples, you'll know good from bad.' Now Eve knew good, but she did not know bad—an' she wanted to know all things—so she ate the apple—an' then she ran an' hid herself. Adam he went all round the garden a callin' an' a lookin' for Eve—but Eve she would not say nuthin', for she knew she had done what she had no bizneis. At last Adam found her—an' he said, 'Eve, what have you been a doin'?' She said, 'Adam, here's an apple, just taste it, it is the best apple you ever tasted.' An' Adam said, 'No, the Lord forbid me to eat that fruit—He said if I did I would die.' An' she said, 'No, if you don't eat this 'ere apple, you don't love me as I love you.' You see, my hearers, she thought Adam was a thinkin' about some other woman disrespectful of her; an' so you see 'twas the man brought the sin in the world, an' not the woman; an' we'll all a go together at last, all you women, an' all you men; an' don't you want to go there, where they all wears fine white linen clothes, an' does nuthin' but play on the golden harp an' sing? Come, all you women what's lost your frien's an' your little children. Don't you want to see 'em no more? They'll all be there—flyin' 'round the Lord Jesus like the hummin' birds around the sweet blossoms. Ole George'll be there feedin' in flowery fields on spicy buds."

"I say, Granny," and Jerry poked his head in at the window, "did you never hear Miss Agnes play on her golden harp? She done get one now in this 'ere world without waiting for t'other."

Catiche groaned, shook her head over Jerry's frivolity, but kept an indignant silence until her hopeful grandson took himself off once more; then, muttering to herself, she said, "*Harp of gold!* yes, she is not the first of the Davenants that played on a harp of gold. There's harps standin' without strings up in the attic there at the hall that I used to hear soundin' under white fingers' as Miss Agnes, an' I has seed *them* all scarred and bleeding too, I has! Oh the pity! the pity."

The time passed swiftly away. The day appointed for Mrs. Selman's joining her husband approached. She had determined to take Agnes with her; so it was necessary the latter should return to N—— to see her Aunt Emmeline and her dressmaker, and get ready for the winter in the gay capital. Mrs. Selman gave a grand dinner

party two days previous to that on which Agnes was to leave for N——. The drawing-room and dining-rooms were brilliantly lighted; the vases filled with rare exotics; the rooms were splendid; the entertainment perfect in all its arrangements. Mrs. Selman's exquisite tact and courtesy relieved the stateliness and ceremony she always kept up at the Hall. Her guests soon felt themselves at ease, and gave themselves up to enjoyment. It had been many years since an entertainment had been given at the Hall, so the young people looked with curiosity at the superb apartment, and the quantity of gold and silver plate under which the buffets groaned. Agnes herself was struck with the beauty and splendor of the drawing-room—the mirrors reflecting the lights in the glittering chandeliers and brackets, the vases of flowers, the gay groups of guests, with wonderful effect. It was an atmosphere of light, bloom, and beauty, but she could not avoid a shudder as she thought of the funeral chamber adjoining. She whispered to Mr. Danvers that she "was sure the Davenants were of Egyptian origin."

"Why?" demanded the gentleman.

"Because," said Agnes, pointing to the end of the room, where lay the secret door, "they always have a skeleton at their feasts."

The guests departed at a late hour, charmed with the courtesy of Mrs. Selman, the beauty of her niece, and the splendors of the Hall.

The next morning, after they had breakfasted, Mrs. Selman told her niece there was still a portion of the house she had not seen which she must visit before she left. She rose from the table, and going to one of the massive cabinets, which stood in the usual sitting-room, she took out a bunch of keys, and motioned to Agnes to follow her. She walked through the side hall beyond the portico room, and turning to the right, Agnes saw a door, which, being unlocked, gave entrance to a small narrow passage, from which a short staircase ascended to the rooms above. Mrs. Selman mounted the staircase, Agnes following. They stood in the gallery, with the closed Venetian blinds. Three doors opened upon this gallery out of as many apartments. Mrs. Selman unlocked the first door and went in. It was a plainly furnished bed-chamber. She did not pause here, but went on into the next room, through a door cut in the partition between them. She walked forward, and unclasping the window shutters, threw them wide open. The sunshine streamed in. This room was beautifully furnished in the style of the drawing-room, with plate glass, and furniture of green velvet and gold fringe. A chandelier hung from the ceiling. The sofas, lounges, and

chairs were of the most luxurious description. An upright piano stood in one corner. A guitar, with a long faded blue ribbon, lay upon it; a pile of music, unbound and discolored with age, on a stand by it. Upon the gilded centre-table stood an alabaster vase for flowers. On a small side-table was a light embroidery frame, with a faded piece of unfinished work, the rusty needle still sticking in the half completed flower; also a large paint-box, drawing pencils, and a small easel, with a painter's palette and brushes, stood at one side. At the side of this apartment ran a kind of balcony, inclosed with glass, making a miniature greenhouse, but there were no flowers there now; an empty gilded bird-cage hung from the glass roof. On the opposite wall there were two large flat cases which seemed to be pictured, closed with tight wooden doors, like shrines; the whole case seemed to be made of ebony. In an oval wreath of inlaid brass leaves, which extended across the centre of the closed doors of each picture, were two texts. On one was this:—

"I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou, Lord, didst it."

On the other picture:—

"He giveth his beloved sleep."

Beneath both these pictures stretched an illuminated text on zinc:—

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

On the top of each picture was a date; on one, 1848, on the other, 1839.

Mrs. Selman stopped a few minutes for Agnes to observe all these things; then, going up to the vase, she shook it; it was immovably fastened to the table, and the table to the floor. So it was with all the furniture—not a single piece, save the painting materials, the guitar, and the slight embroidery frame, could be moved. She made Agnes notice that every window, though fitted up with the handsomest glass and richest curtains, was made secure with a strong iron grating (though the bars were gilded); so was the outside of the little greenhouse; and there was a door of the same material which Mrs. Selman drew out from the wall, which completely closed the entrance into the greenhouse, and could be securely fastened with a strong lock. Every possible precaution had been taken to make those apartments secure. The last room adjoining this was a bed-room fitted up precisely like the portico-room which Agnes was occupying, except that the hangings here were of pink and white satin, instead of muslin and silk. Everything was handsomer than in Agnes's apartment. Out of this, corresponding with the greenhouse in the next room, was a small dressing-room with a white marble bath-tub and every convenience. These apartments had

evidently been furnished with the utmost care and the most lavish expenditure. Mrs. Selman returned to the little drawing-room, and signed to Agnes to sit down upon the sofa near the centre-table. She went up to the two large pictures, and, touching a spring at the bottom of each, the ebony doors flew open and exposed the paintings. They were full-length portraits. One of a lady about middle age, dressed in maroon-colored velvet, with a quantity of lace and jewels about her. She was seated in a large arm-chair, one foot resting upon a velvet-cushioned footstool, and her rich robe fell about her as gracefully and imperially as that of Agrippina in her famous statue in the Capitol. One fair arm rested upon the arm of the gilded chair, the other lay upon her lap, holding the laced handkerchief and Spanish fan. Her raven hair was combed simply over the ears, knotted high on the back of the head like a coronet, from the top of which the ends fell over in innumerable glossy ringlets low on her neck behind. There was a small flat curl on each temple; pearl-shaped ear-rings of pearl drooped from each tiny ear-tip. The face, like all the other Davenants, for one saw at a glance the strong family likeness, the large gray eye with its jet-black lashes, the proudly arched brow, the haughty curved lip, the chiselled features, all betokened she was one of the blood. But there was an expression in the handsome face almost repulsive. The eye was fierce in its startling brightness—the mouth, for all its redness, so disdainful. Pride, self-will marked every feature. The picture bore, however, a strong resemblance to Mrs. Selman, which struck Agnes instantly, and reminded her of the miniature she had attempted to paint so many years before, and which Dr. Leonard had taken away from her.

The other picture was entirely different; it was the loveliest young girl one could ever imagine. She was represented in the act of descending the front steps from the portico of the hall, the park stretched away in the distance; a light mantilla of black lace was thrown over her head; it was gathered together and held tightly with one hand over her breast; the other hand lay upon the balustrade; her face was turned towards the spectator. Such a face! Agnes held her breath to look at it. Never had she seen anything so bright and lovely. The golden child-like curls shone through the darkening veil of lace; the sweet, blue eyes, the transparent complexion, the rosy mouth, the angelic expression! Agnes broke the silence:—

"It is a study for an angel!"

"She was without exception the loveliest creature I ever looked upon," said her aunt. "I have seen one face something like it! It was the child Christ, of Carlo Dolce!"

Mrs. Selman sat silently looking upon the picture, with her hands tightly clasped together; then, turning to Agnes, said:—

CHAPTER XVII.

"You see before you, Agnes, the portraits of my mother and youngest sister. The story I have to relate, my dear, is very sad; but it is fitting you should hear it from my lips rather than from strangers, for our misfortunes are no secret, and the world is very cruel sometimes. The ancestor who founded the family in America, you know, was Philip St. George Davenant. He was the youngest son of that noble English family, one of the oldest and proudest in England. He was a captain in the British army, and had served with some distinction. Tradition says, in his early youth and manhood, he had been very gay, wild, and dissipated. The stain of blood was on his hand, I know, for I have read letters of his speaking of the falling of his dearest friend in a duel which my grandfather was forced to fight. It was a mysterious affair. My grandfather, evidently, from his own expressions, resisted his friend's challenge to the last point; but, forced to yield, he coolly and calmly shot his misguided, irritated friend. I do not think he ever forgave himself for this act, though too proud to acknowledge it. From what I could gather from the correspondence, the seconds offered to arrange the affair after the first interchange of shots, but my grandfather refused to allow it. At the second fire, his friend fell dead. Captain Davenant's regiment was ordered to Jamaica: It was found necessary to communicate with the English colony of Virginia, and he was sent on the errand. On his return, after fulfilling his mission, stopping a few days in New Orleans, he met, at an entertainment given in his honor by an acquaintance, with the beautiful Agnes Lascelles, the only daughter and heiress of the wealthiest planter in Attakapas. She had but recently returned from Paris, where she had been educated, as was the custom in those days among the better class of French *émigrés*. She was the toast and reigning beauty of the season. You have seen her portrait in the dining-room. It is said to be a faithful likeness. Captain Davenant fell in love with the charming Creole. He was handsome, accomplished, a soldier, and a gentleman. The wooing was a short and a successful one. He went to Jamaica, resigned his commission, returned to Louisiana, and married Agnes. He then procured the grant of these lands, and removing his wife's vast property from the Attakapas after the decease of her father, he built this house, and it became

the family residence. The furniture was all brought from Paris. Captain and Mrs. Davenant were blessed with every luxury that wealth could give. They had a fair young daughter; but it was a grief to both that they had no son. At last, even this boon was granted them, and their cup of happiness seemed to be full. Captain Davenant, though courteous and refined, was regarded as proud and haughty by his neighbors, most of them kindly French people. He was very English in his ways; associated but little with any of them; lived in great state; entertained splendidly when he did attempt it, which was very rarely. He was respected, but not liked. His wife, however, was a universal favorite; highly accomplished, and full of French vivacity, tempered by the softness and graceful ease which seem to be the inherent possession of the women of the South. She was exceedingly beloved. Captain Davenant never alluded to his early life and misfortunes, even to his wife—people said with good cause. He had been recklessly dissipated and dissolute after the duel I spoke of; however that might have been, no possible blame could attach to his life now. He never left his home except when business absolutely compelled it—was passionately devoted to his wife and children, especially to the boy, who was named for his father. Mrs. Davenant was a Romanist; her husband, of course, like nearly all noble Englishmen, was outwardly a member of the Church of England. According to agreement, the girl was to be brought up in the mother's faith; the boy in the father's. Captain Davenant built the church and rectory, and procured the services of a chaplain, who came out from England to him. The family was prosperous, when the son, the centre of their hopes, sickened and died. Then the funeral chamber was prepared, and the marble vault built in the churchyard. Captain Davenant grieved deeply for his son; he became moody, silent, dejected. Nothing interested, nothing moved him. He sank into settled melancholy, which deepened into insanity. These rooms were built for his use. He tried several times to commit suicide, and at last succeeded in escaping the vigilance of his attendants, and was found drowned by the lake shore early one winter's morning. His daughter, my mother, grew up very handsome, and she was very rich. She married her cousin, who came out from England on a visit to his relatives, Arthur Davenant; you have seen his picture. There were four sisters of us. I was the eldest; then Emmeline, Agnes, and Alice. Our noble old grandmother lived to an advanced age, and died respected by all. It is no vanity in me to say now that my sisters, as well as myself, were very handsome women. Our

dowries, it was well known, would be large, so we had no lack of admirers. I was just grown—Emmeline two years younger, when our father began to show symptoms of insanity—it was in the blood! He too came to occupy these rooms. His mania took a strange form—he refused to eat; said all the food brought to him 'tasted of blood;' he would have none of it. In the midst of abundance, he literally starved himself to death! It was terrible."

Mrs. Selman shuddered at the remembrance, then, recovering herself, proceeded: "It was after my father's death I met with Robert Selman, a young lawyer from Virginia. We loved each other—we were married. At my mother's request, we continued to live with her. Robert managed her business affairs for her. Emmeline married Charles Elmsworth. We did not like the match, but Emmeline, for the first and last time in her life, was wilful! Not wishing to dwell too long on this sad story, I must hasten over all unnecessary particulars. My mother's mind began to show that she had inherited the fearful malady, which seemed to be part of the heritage of the Davenants. She, too, was brought to these sad chambers, which I had then fitted up in the style you now see, except that the bed-chamber was a *fac-simile* of the one I occupy, which had been hers, that she might notice no change. Mrs. Clarke was her constant attendant, and occupied the room into which we entered first. Mrs. Clarke was the daughter of a gardener who had died on the place, and my mother had taken the young orphan about her own person. So Mrs. Clarke was very devoted to her. About this time our rector died, and Robert, my husband, wrote to an old school-mate to come and take the situation. We needed a physician, also, for constant attendance; so Mr. Danvers and Dr. Leonard, friends of my husband's boyhood, came to us, and have remained ever since, the truest and most faithful of friends. My poor mother lived five years in her darkened state of mind. Judge Selman had become absorbed in political life. I devoted myself to my poor mother, my infant son, and my two young sisters. Agnes married Edward Graham; my beautiful, exquisite sister Alice only remained with me. There had sprung up an attachment between Dr. Leonard and Alice. I was pleased, as I had the highest regard for my husband's friend, and such a marriage would keep Alice near me. About this time my mother died. She had always retained her attachment to her mother's faith, but never put any constraint on any of us, in consideration of her father and husband. Emmeline, Agnes, and myself preferred our father's branch of the church, but Alice clung tenaciously to her mother's. She was full of imagination and poetic excitability, and she liked the ceremonious pomp

of the Church of Rome. Dr. Leonard perfectly adored Alice. I never saw a man so passionately devoted as he was to Alice—but she was so lovely. I used to look upon her with wonder, sometimes, that God had made any earthly creature so beautiful; her disposition was so sweet and bright—she was the embodiment of sunshine; her voice was like a skylark's, so clear and flexible—not deep and full like yours. I had prepared a magnificent trousseau for Alice; I gave it to a poor girl afterwards. The day was fixed for the wedding. Dr. Leonard was so happy. They were to go to Europe on a tour, immediately after the wedding, while their house was building on an adjoining estate we had purchased for Alice. By my father's will, made in early life, the Davenant estate was not to be divided, but I was to take it, and pay my sisters their portions in money. We were full of joyful preparation, when, two weeks previous to the wedding, Alice was taken ill. She had fever. Dr. Leonard attended her. She grew worse and worse, at last delirious. Her life was saved by his skill, but her reason never returned. We tried everything; change of scene; travel; consulted every eminent physician; but in vain. We returned to Davenant Hall, and my angelic sister, my darling Alice, was placed in these apartments, which she never quitted till she was carried down to the funeral chamber, dead." Mrs. Selman was weeping bitterly; Agnes sat looking at her with wide, staring eyes, full of wild horror.

Mrs. Selman wiped away her tears, and continued in a trembling voice:—

"We had hope. Sometimes there were occasional gleams of reason, when she would recognize us, and would busy herself with the plants and music, embroidery or her pencil. Alice was very gifted. Then she would speak of her approaching marriage, receive Dr. Leonard with the utmost tenderness, and seem as happy as her bird, which sang all day in his gilded cage; but these favorable spells would pass away and leave her mind darker than before. It was piteous to see Dr. Leonard with her; his love only seemed deepened by her affliction. He was always, he still is devoted to Alice's memory. It grew fearful! We were sometimes obliged to use constraint with her! But James never suffered any hand but his own to fasten this upon those soft, childish limbs." Mrs. Selman opened a drawer in the table and drew out a strait-jacket.

"It was at this time I sent my son away to school; I could not bear to sadden his young days with the knowledge of such sorrow. Robert knew, of course, that his Aunt Alice was sick and confined to her apartments, but he never knew what her disease was until, just before he went to Europe, I told him what I now am telling

you. Your mother, crushed with grief at Alice's misfortune and the loss of two children younger than yourself, died; but she was delirious six months before her death. Your father did not long survive her. You were sent to Emmeline. Alice lived eight years after her death. Judge Selman, weary of this place, where we had suffered so much, bought our residence in N—, and we removed there to live. For a long time, the weight of sorrow, mingled with fear, hung over my soul—the terrible fear that the fate of those so dearly loved might be my own. But I have learned to think calmly now—to accept any fate at God's hands and be content. It is better to be insane than to sin. God takes away all responsibility from the poor distraught creatures—they can sin no more than the dead—they are safe in his pavilion—so many years of mortal life which need no reckoning, and eternity is near and so bright. So I have learned to say for myself, and all I love, 'His will be done.'

Mrs. Selman covered her face with her hands. Agnes did not speak. She had clasped her arms on the table, and bowed her head upon them while listening to the story. She lifted up her face, now so pale and ghastly that Mrs. Selman almost shrieked to behold it.

"Aunt Eleanor," she said, "so the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation! and I am one of them! I and Robert!" The last word was uttered in a shriek. Agnes started up from her seat and fell senseless at her aunt's feet.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mrs. SELMAN rushed to the head of the staircase, and called loudly for assistance; the servants heard her agonized cries, and ran in a body to her aid. Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers were just entering the hall door. They followed the lead of the frightened domestics, and soon reached the scene of wretchedness. Mrs. Selman was on her knees by her unconscious niece, chafing her hands, almost blinded by the tears pouring from her eyes. Dr. Leonard saw in a moment the true state of affairs. Pushing the servants to one side, he raised the head and shoulders of the insensible girl, directing Mr. Danvers to lift her feet; so they carried her carefully and steadily until they laid her on her own bed. The usual restoratives were then used, but without success.

"Bring me some leeches and a hot mustard foot-bath," ordered the doctor. They were brought and applied. As the leeches drew the blood from her temples, Agnes

sighed and opened her eyes, but only to close them again, and relapse into unconsciousness.

"The brain has received a fearful shock," said the doctor, anxiously.

Mrs. Selman groaned, and quitting the room, hastened to her own apartment. "Sophy, quick—my drops." The maid sprang to a table, seized a small vial, poured out some of its contents in a wineglass, and put it to her mistress's trembling lips. The odor of hartshorn filled the room. Mrs. Selman had sunk into an arm-chair, and sat gasping for breath; her hand was pressed tightly upon her heart, and quick convulsive tremors shook her like throes of pain. The medicine revived her, she tried to rise, but fell back weak and helpless.

"Sophy," she whispered, "ask Dr. Leonard to come here for a moment." Sophy ran for him; he was standing with Mr. Danvers, outside of Agnes's door. Mrs. Clarke and Jane were undressing her and putting on her night-clothes, by the doctor's order. He came instantly to Mrs. Selman.

"James," she whispered feebly, "one of my old attacks—a bad one!"

He took her hand and felt her pulse.

"Eleanor, you must go to bed instantly, and try to compose yourself. Whatever comes, God overrules all. Be content. He is wiser than any of us."

"I know, I know, but, oh! James, it is hard, very hard to bear!"

The doctor took out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes.

"Eleanor, how often have you had these attacks?"

"Not severely since Alice died."

"Well, you must go to bed now, and take the medicine prepared for you; as soon as you can, let George come in and read to you. He is your best earthly physician. I have told you before, Eleanor, your life depended upon your own self-control, as far as it depends on human power. With your disease, human science is powerless. You are necessary to your husband—to your son. You must control yourself to live for them."

The doctor fixed the medicine, and calling Sophy to attend her mistress, went out. In a short time he returned, Mr. Danvers accompanying him. Mrs. Selman was propped up on pillows in bed, quieted, but still laboring for breath, the coverlet vibrating from the violent palpitation of her heart. Mr. Danvers sat down by the side of the bed, and taking out his pocket Bible began to read such psalms as he thought most consolatory and soothing to her. Mrs. Selman listened, with her eyes closed; occasionally her lips moved as if she were repeating David's affecting petitions. She grew calmer gradually. From time to time, Mr. Danvers put the medicine the doctor

had prepared to her lips. Her breathing became softer and more regular—she fell asleep. Mr. Danvers rose and stole gently out of the room, signing to Sophy to watch her sleeping mistress.

Agnes had been roused to consciousness, but was soon seized with burning fever and delirium. They carefully closed all the doors between her room and Mrs. Selman's, for her ravings and wild shrieks of laughter were terrible to listen to. Dr. Leonard sat by her bedside, sometimes compelled to use his whole strength to keep her in it. Mr. Danvers sat at the foot, leaning his head upon his hand, and looking with sad anxiety upon the darling child of their hearts. They had sent all the servants out of the room except Mr. Clark and Jane. Agnes raved of all she had seen and heard—the funeral chamber—her ancestors—her Aunt Alice so beautiful and so unfortunate. Then she would talk about Robert—go over their parting, and sing, "Torna mia;"—then, checking herself, "hush, hush, he is my cousin; it is sin, sin, and Aunt Eleanor is so angry." Then she would imagine they were all in heaven with the angels. "No harm to love Robert now!" and she would sing snatches of hymns and sacred music. Hour after hour, these watchers sat by the moaning girl, and there was no change for the better. Dr. Leonard had telegraphed Judge Selman and his son and Mrs. Elmsworth to come to the hall. Mrs. Elmsworth arrived the next evening. She was of great use and comfort to her sister; for Agnes she could do but little, as she, with all the wilfulness of delirium, refused to taste anything except from the hands of Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers. She seemed partially to recognize them—no one else. On the third day a change came over Agnes; she no longer spoke wildly, nor tossed restlessly in her bed. She fell into a heavy stupor, which alarmed Mrs. Elmsworth greatly; but Dr. Leonard considered it favorable. "If I can only make her sleep," he said, "it will all come right;" and he gave her both anodynes and stimulants to sustain her, sitting by her, with his watch in his hand, administering the medicines at regular intervals. Not a sound was heard in that vast household; all knew that upon that sleep hung Agnes's life. Mrs. Selman was able to sit up in an easy chair by the fire, in her own room. Her sister, with little Mimi in her lap, sat near her. The door suddenly opened, and Judge Selman, pale with anxiety and travel, entered, followed by his son; Mrs. Selman was folded tenderly in her husband's embrace.

"Thank God, I find you better, my poor wife! my Eleanor! You must have suffered greatly, from the appearance of your pale face?"

Mrs. Selman leaned her head against her

husband's bosom without speaking. Her clinging arms spoke to him louder than words how much comfort he brought her by his coming. Robert kissed his mother almost mechanically. There was a wild expression of agony in his eyes. His face was haggard and wan with misery.

"Mother," he said hoarsely, "where is Agnes? Have you killed her with that accursed story?"

Mrs. Selman raised her hands deprecatingly, and leaned back almost convulsed in her chair. Judge Selman seized his son's arm.

"Boy, would you kill your mother?"

Robert looked at his mother's face, and with a cry threw himself at her feet.

"Mother! mother! forgive me! I believe I am mad. I don't know myself. Mother, have pity on us! For God's sake do not part us! Don't take Agnes from me. Mother, I cannot, will not live without Agnes. Father! mother! have pity! Do not make me curse the day I was born!"

Mrs. Elmsworth sat weeping. Mimi began sobbing, frightened at the agitation of her elders. Judge Selman groaned aloud in agony of spirit. Mrs. Selman lay with her hands tightly clasped; her pallid lips moved; she opened her eyes.

"Robert, my son, my only son, God's will be accomplished. I will not strive against it. Gain your father's consent; take mine!" She laid her hand upon her son's head as he bowed at her feet. Judge Selman laid his hand over hers as it rested on Robert's head.

"My son, I cannot say God bless you in such a marriage; but I do say, God help you and us all! Agnes is very dear to us." Judge Selman saw that his wife was nearly exhausted with emotion. He lifted her up in his arms and laid her upon a couch. Robert leaned over and kissed her gratefully; seized his father's hand and pressed it to his lips, and hurried out of the room into his own chamber. He threw himself in a chair and endeavored to conquer his agitation before he sought Agnes. Dr. Leonard knocked at his door and entered. The good physician pressed his hands warmly. His heart was too full of sympathy to reproach Robert then—in his eyes it was a venial sin to love Agnes, though he regarded such an attachment between the cousins as a great misfortune. Robert asked after Agnes. "She is better, I hope—I know! I left her sleeping at last—a tranquil, health-giving sleep. If she can but sleep long enough. It has been a fearful struggle for life. But I trust the danger is past. She must be kept perfectly quiet, though; not a word that can excite her, or I cannot answer for the consequences."

Robert told him what had occurred between his parents and himself.

The doctor shook his head. "The difficulty will be with Agnes herself, I think, Robert. I have studied her character closely from childhood. So tender a conscience, so clear a sense of duty, and so unflinching a resolve to follow it when ascertained, I have never seen in such a young creature as she is. Agnes is made of the material which made the martyrs in the dungeons and at the stake!"

Robert smiled proudly. "I don't fear it. Agnes has always loved me; she has always yielded to my will."

"Never in a point of principle, Robert; however, the question now is of her recovering. I must go back to her."

"May I go with you?" asked Robert.

"If you will be perfectly calm and quiet. She is greatly changed in appearance since her illness."

Robert followed the doctor's gentle steps. They stood by Agnes's bed. She was still sleeping; but so very pale and emaciated, tears fell from Robert's eyes as he looked upon her. A white cloth filled with powdered ice lay upon her forehead; her lips were parched and blistered with fever. The little hands which lay helplessly upon the coverlet were almost as white and nearly transparent. Upon her arm Robert saw the bracelet with its ruby clasp.

"She would not let us take that off," whispered the doctor; "she screamed so violently whenever we attempted it, that we were obliged to let it alone. I am sure it fretted her poor arm to keep it on."

The maid, Jane, was watching by the bedside; the gentlemen crept out of the room with stealthy steps; and Agnes slept.

CHAPTER XIX.

Two weeks of the ceaseless care and all the little activities necessitated by sickness in a household were over. Mrs. Selman was able to descend the staircase, leaning on her husband's arm, to the more cheerful sitting-room. Agnes was sitting up in her own apartment, her friends admitted at intervals to talk with her. She was very, very weak, and Dr. Leonard forbade the mention of anything that could excite her. She had never reverted to the events which had preceded her illness. She expressed no surprise at seeing Mrs. Elmsworth, Judge Selman, or Robert; she knew her Aunt Eleanor had been very ill, as well as she herself, and it was natural they should have been sent for. She was kind, tender, affectionate as usual; received Robert's devoted attentions with grateful

smiles, never rejecting them, even in the presence of his parents or any of her friends. Dr. Leonard said one day to Mr. Danvers:—

"Do you think Agnes remembers?"

"Yes, and has made her resolve."

"To accept the consent of Judge and Mrs. Selman?"

Mr. Danvers did not reply. Dr. Leonard looked in his face and understood his thought.

Another week. Agnes was brought down in her uncle's arms, and laid upon the lounge in the sitting-room. Peace seemed to breathe upon the family circle. Agnes was the centre of their anxieties, of all their thoughts. Judge and Mrs. Selman lavished the tenderest attentions upon her. Robert was very happy. They all understood, without words, that Agnes was to be received as the daughter of the house, as Robert's future wife. At times, when she was alone, Mrs. Selman thought, with deep affliction, of the terrible heritage which would be doubly transmitted through such marriage; but she had placed the matter in God's hands, and was content to abide His will. The father, too, had bitter thoughts, which he crushed in his own heart, or only breathed in his wife's ear, fearing to disturb his son's happiness, or wound the heart of the young girl so dear to them all. The intercourse between Agnes and her cousin was that of acknowledged lovers.

Towards the end of the third week Agnes had been able to walk on the portico, in front of the house, leaning on Robert's arm. She felt wearied after walking, and lay down upon the sofa to rest a while. The family were all assembled in the pleasant social room. The afternoon sun was shining warmly through the windows, lighting up the portraits, and gleaming on their gilded frames. Agnes's eyes were fixed on the picture of her mother; Robert sat on a low stool by her side, holding one of her hands; his mother and aunt in their easy chairs around the fire. The ladies were busy with their needles. Dr. Leonard was showing Mimi the colored plates in a picture book he had bought for her. Judge Selman and Mr. Danvers were each absorbed in a newspaper. Mrs. Elmsworth broke the silence:—

"Agnes, you must make out your list of commissions for me to-night. I must go home to-morrow in the packet."

Agnes said calmly: "I shall go with you, Aunt Emmeline."

The newspapers were laid down; the busy needles ceased to fly through the work; Mimi's picture-book was suddenly shut up.

Robert said: "What do you mean, Agnes? Must you go yourself to superintend the

toilet arrangements? Can't you trust Aunt Emmeline?"

Agnes raised herself up, clasped her arms around Robert's neck, and laid her head fondly on his.

"I mean, my beloved, that I must go with Aunt Emmeline; that I cannot go to the capital."

Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers exchanged glances. Not a word was uttered.

"Agnes," said Robert, "do you not understand that my parents have withdrawn all opposition, and consent to our marriage?"

Agnes rose from the sofa, and, going to her aunt, knelt before her, taking her hand and kissing it fondly.

"I know it, my darling Aunt Eleanor!"

She turned to her uncle, and threw her arms around him; he clasped her to his breast, and called her "his dear daughter."

"Thanks, thanks!" murmured Agnes. Turning to Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers, she said, solemnly, fixing her eyes full upon them:—

"Do you, a physician of the body, do you, God's messenger, say this marriage is lawful and right? Can you honestly pray God's blessing upon it?"

Dr. Leonard walked away to the window; Mr. Danvers was silent. Agnes looked at them steadily:—

"It is enough!" She went back to Robert, who looked at her wonderingly, not daring to understand her meaning. Again she put her arms around his neck; she took his face in her hands, and kissed him again and again.

"Robert, my Robert!" she said, "do you not see that we cannot marry without sin? That it is the finger of God which has put an impassable barrier between us which mortal hand can never break down? I have loved you all my life; love you now dearer than ever; yet, Robert, we *must* part!" Robert interrupted her with a passionate exclamation. She put her hand over his lips: "Hush," she said, "listen to me; when I was recovering from that struggle for life, Robert—saved against my own will—for I wished, I prayed to die—I hoped never again to rise from that bed; I was desperate; I thought it better to die than to leave you, Robert! I thought of these things over and over again, by day and by night. I saw you had gained your parents' unwilling consent. Love for you, love for me made them act against their better judgment. The voice of God spoke plainly in my own heart, and I vowed, if God would give me strength, never to become your wife. I took this oath upon my mother's Bible: It is right, Robert, right!"

Robert bowed his head upon her knees; he was weeping like a child. There were

no dry eyes save those of Agnes's. She spoke again, faintly, as if weary:—

"It is almost severing the chords of life to leave you, Robert, my Robert! God bless you forevermore!" She drew her hands from Robert's grasp, lifted his head from her lap, kissed it tenderly. Her eyes were glassy, almost like those of a dying person. She turned to Mr. Danvers, holding out her arms like a wearied child, "Please take me to my room!"

Mr. Danvers took her up in his arms; his heart sank when he felt how light she was, scarcely more than a child's weight. Motioning Dr. Leonard to follow, he carried her, as a father would his child, to her own room, and laid her down upon her bed. She did not speak, but turned her face to the wall. He bent over, and, laying his hand upon her head, said:—

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord cause his face to shine upon thee and give thee peace!"

Dr. Leonard put a glass of stimulant to her lips. "Thanks," she whispered, "faithful friends."

They called Jane, and left Agnes alone with God and her own thoughts.

Robert had gone to his own room; his father was with him. Mrs. Selman and her sister sat weeping bitterly in the deserted sitting-room. "She is right," said Mr. Selman to them.

"Yes, she is right!" but still they wept.

The next day Agnes went to N—— with Mrs. Elmsworth. "Contrive it to the deuce," said Dr. Leonard; "we ought to have foreseen and prevented all this!"

CHAPTER XX.

A week after, Judge and Mrs. Selman, with their son, were in the capital. Robert withdrew himself entirely from society; his time seemed to be principally devoted to his mother, whose health continued to be very precarious, and he aided his father in writing, and resumed his own professional reading. Agnes's name never passed his lips, though his mother always handed him her sister's letters to read, in which she was always mentioned. Mrs. Elmsworth was much troubled; "Agnes's health did not improve," she took all tonics that were prescribed for her; rode, walked as she was ordered, but she grew no stronger. She talked, smiling sometimes, exerted herself when with her aunt, but was listless, indifferent when alone. She would take a book and sit for hours; but the page would probably not be turned, or, if it was, she could give no account of what she had read; her eyes would glide over the words, her

mind receiving no impression from them. Often she would lie on her couch for hours, her hands clasped upon her breast, vague sensations of pain and sadness passing through her mind. The world wearied; the sunshine glared upon her; birds, singing, flowers, music jarred upon her morbidly strained nerves; nothing interested her; she was sick—sick at heart. No human physician could heal her soul, or pour balm into her wounds, and the "Great Physician" Agnes knew not yet. Of the past she dared not think. The bitter remembrance of lost happiness would cross her memory sometimes, and she would clench her hands and draw her breath hissing through her teeth, or else she would have shrieked aloud. She could not look her sadness in the face—no one *can* but a Christian! Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers came to see her, urged by Mrs. Elmsworth's solicitations; she was really alarmed about her niece. But Agnes met them as usual, would exert herself while they were with her, talk and smile—never laugh. The girlish light-heartedness was gone. She never acknowledged that she was ill. "Nothing ailed her." An allusion to the past she could not bear. A casual mention of Robert's name would make her almost moan. She avoided all that he and she had loved—music was put away altogether. She would sew for little Mimi; that alone seemed an agreeable occupation to her. The merry little child interested her; but Mimi interested everybody, she was such a lovely little thing.

Mr. Elmsworth returned home one day, and told his wife of some cases of diphtheria which had occurred in town. Dr. Leonard, who was on a visit to Agnes at the time, advised Mrs. Elmsworth not to permit any communication with the town, and, above all, to keep Mimi out of it. "It is a dangerous disease for children," he said.

The mother's eye turned anxiously on her darling, so glowing with health and beauty. She said: "If there was danger of infection, perhaps they had better go out in the country for a little while."

"There are more cases in the country than in the town," replied Mrs. Elmsworth. "No place is secure from the disease."

"You'll be as secure here as anywhere," observed the doctor; "only it is well to use precautions."

The conversation made Mrs. Elmsworth very uneasy; she could not shake off her anxiety; Mimi was never trusted out of her sight. The fearful disease spread rapidly in town; families of six and eight children were swept off in a week, and many a home left desolate.

One night Dr. Leonard was suddenly roused from deep sleep by hearing some one knocking at his door, and calling repeatedly, "Dr. Leonard, Dr. Leonard!"

He sprang up, threw on his clothes, and opened the door. Agnes stood before it; a dressing-gown thrown hastily over her white night-dress, her bare feet thrust into slippers, her long hair half fallen down her back, a candle in her hand, her face as white as marble.

"Dr. Leonard, quick! come quick! Mimi is ill."

She hastened on before him, and led him to the nursery. There, in her little crib, lay the suffering child; her agonized mother bending over her; the father leaned against the mantel-piece; the negro nurse, "old Liddy," or "Mammy," as Mimi called her, had put a kettle of water on the fire, and was wringing some flannels in hot water and vinegar. The doctor walked up to the crib and took the child's hand in his; the little pulse throbbed terribly. He looked into the child's face; his countenance fell; his worst fears were realized; it was a malignant case of diphtheria. He ordered immediately the strongest remedies, and applied them with his own hands. Calling Mr. Elmsworth out of the room, he requested him to send for the most skillful physician in N—; "he could not take the responsibility of the case alone." A messenger was dispatched; the physician came. He and Dr. Leonard held a consultation. The two medical men returned to the little crib. Mrs. Elmsworth looked in their faces, as if her life hung upon the verdict to be read there. They tried every remedy; nothing was left undone. But the fiat had gone forth; the little flower-bud was to unfold its petals only in paradise. As the gray struggling light of dawn broke through the window, the sentence was seen written upon the innocent brow. God had sent his angel to bring her to himself. The mother felt it. The father, unwilling to witness the struggles of the departing life of his only child, quitted the room, and shut himself up in his own apartment. Agnes knelt awe-stricken by the crib. She had never witnessed a human death before. She was too young when her parents died to remember theirs. A slight shiver passed over her from time to time as she watched the dying child.

Mrs. Elmsworth sat at the head of the crib, holding her child's hand; not a tear in her frozen eyes. She was motionless, as if cut out of stone. The old nurse sat by the fire, tears streaming down her wrinkled black face; her hands clasped, and her whole body rocking slowly backwards and forwards, in her deep grief.

The physician from N— left the room, after whispering to Dr. Leonard "there was no further use for him." Dr. Leonard stood near the crib, his arms folded; and his eyes fixed on the little sufferer. The child lay with its eyes closed, respiration growing

hoarser and hoarser; suddenly the little eyes opened; she uttered a low plaintive cry; with it her soul passed away—little Mimi was with the saints in paradise. The cry of the child was echoed by another, so wild, so heart-broken, that it made the listeners quail to hear it. It was the cry of the bereaved mother. Mrs. Elmsworth fell senseless by the side of her child's crib; when they picked her up, a small stream of blood gushed from her mouth; they carried her to her room; the doctor used means to stop the hemorrhage from the lungs; at last he succeeded. Agnes returned to the nursery; "Mammy" had taken up her "baby" and had dressed it in the pure white robes meet for the sleep of the innocent one. Motioning to Agnes to follow her, she carried the little one to another apartment, the usual state guest chamber; telling Agnes to sit down, she laid the little child in her arms, and returned to the nursery, whence she brought the crib. She spread a fair linen sheet upon it, placed a small pillow, and told Agnes to lay the child there.

"Now, honey, I'll get some flowers for you to lay over her!"

Mammy went off. Agnes sat with a strange sensation of mingled awe and dread; how small earth's trials seemed in comparison with this! How unutterably fearful the passing away of the spirit even of this innocent child! And she had tried to pray for death! She, so self-willed, and guilty in God's sight! Agnes shuddered; she buried her face in her hands, and knelt by the little crib. She prayed God to forgive her blind forgetfulness of him; her idolatry of one of his creatures; her impious repinings and bitter accusations against his justice and mercy! She prayed that Robert, too, might be brought to submit his will to God's—that if separated on earth they might be one in Christ. It was Agnes Graham's first real prayer, and it was answered in God's own time and in His own way. She heard a step by her side. Lifting up her head, she saw Mr. Elmsworth standing by the crib. He looked down upon his child—"Not one, not one left! and they call *this* goodness and mercy!" he laughed bitterly. Then a tender feeling seemed to come over him. Stooping down, he kissed the cold brow of the child; taking out his pocket-knife, he severed one golden curl from the bright ringlets that peeped from under the snowy cap "Mammy" had put on the little head, and left the room. "Mammy" brought her apron full of white hyacinths and pure white roses.

"Fix 'em, honey! you can do that better than me."

Agnes took the flowers from her and strewed them over the child, as upon an Easter altar. She placed some in the waxen hands, and laid some around the

beautiful face. She thought to make a sketch for her Aunt Emmeline of the sleeping child. Bringing her pencils, she soon made such a sketch as would suffice to paint from hereafter. Leaving "Mammy" to watch the "remains of her lost darling," she went back into her aunt's room. Dr. Leonard was still sitting there; the curtains were drawn around her aunt's bed; she lay perfectly still in her desolation.

"May God comfort her!" whispered the doctor; "none else can."

Agnes sat down silently. The wood-fire blazed and crackled on the hearth. The room was pervaded with the odor of burning sassafras logs, which happened to be the fuel. Agnes never in after years could smell the fragrance of that wood without a keen passing pang of sorrow and agony; an instant of bitter remembrance—a shudder—recalling her first acquaintance with death.

CHAPTER XXI.

Two months since Mimi died. Mrs. Elmsworth was still a prisoner in her room, her health completely shattered. The spring was very trying to her. The terrible month of March, which is so dreaded by those who have the sorrowful lot of watching by the sick bed of their beloved ones, was very severe on her. The sudden changes of weather, the blustering winds, the rapid transition of temperature, told sadly on her frail constitution. The constant hacking cough, the quick pulse, the hectic flush of fever, the low, chilly sensations, the weary, restless nights, said loudly to her friends that the gentle, amiable woman would not remain long separated from the darling whose death had grieved her sorely. Her physician advised a sea voyage, foreign travel—because they had nothing left but that to advise. And so, with the usual polite cruelty, they sent her off to be deprived of the comforts of home and to die among strangers. "At any rate, it would amuse her," they said, "the novelties of travel." Dr. Leonard advised against it. "Better stay at home where you are comfortable and have your friends with you, Emmeline. Contrive it to the deuce; don't go. Travel will be the worst thing you can do for yourself. And you can't go alone."

Mr. Elmsworth was weary of the monotony of a household "which was only a hospital," he said. So he was pleased with the idea. "Agnes would go. He could get a nurse for his wife, and a man to look after the luggage; it would do very well."

Agnes expressed herself willing to accompany her suffering aunt. The nurse

was found—one who came recommended by Mrs. Clark, the housekeeper at Davenant Hall. She was the widow of an English carpenter who died there while working for Judge Selman. Mrs. Clark spoke highly of her. She was never sea-sick, which was a very important point to be ascertained. Her name was Lucy—Mrs. Elizabeth Lucy; or "Betsey Lucy," as Mrs. Clark said. The man for the luggage was also procured; and the party was soon under way for New Orleans, their passage taken on a first-class steamer for Havre. A few days after the arrival of the Elmsworths in New Orleans, there entered the bar-room of the hotel a short, rather squarely-built man, dressed in a flashy style, though his clothes were somewhat seedy. There was a reckless look of dissipation in his furtive, restless black eyes that made him repulsive to better people. His straight, shining black hair fell carelessly over his forehead and ears, giving him a most sinister expression, and the crumpled linen visible beneath the gay vest and loosely-tied red cravat, with its gaudy brooch of imitation brilliants, was not attractive. The sagacious bar-keeper shook his head as the man, after asking some questions of the clerk, swaggered off with his hat cocked to one side, surveying the groups of men scattered around the room with bold, impudent looks, as he passed through them.

"That fellow is after no good. He is a gambler and black-leg, I'll swear. I wonder what he comes here to see that Italian count so often for?"

"The count is a very handsome gentleman; very different from this here," replied his assistant, setting the glass he was cleaning carefully down.

"I never believed much in foreigners who come here parading their titles," responded the bar-keeper.

"The count pays up regular. He has been here all winter, and I don't see anything amiss about him yet," said the assistant.

"He drinks good wine," said the bar-keeper; "and not too much of it; dresses like a gentleman; but for all I haven't any confidence in him. He is handsome, but has a cunning look out of his eyes. It is well he does pay up. I wouldn't trust him."

"He ain't stingy that there Count Serimy," said one of the waiters who was sitting not far off, waiting to answer any of the bells which hung in a row above his head.

"How do you know?" inquired the bar-keeper, squeezing a lemon into an iced punch he was preparing.

"Faith, an' didn't he give me a dollar jest for finding out the name of a putty young lady that lives in number six?"

"You had better keep your hands clean of such work as that, Mike, or Mr. Holt'll be after you."

"Sure an' there was no harm in axin' a civil question, an' me answerin' it. An' it wasn't the clerk giv me the informashun, but jest the young leddy's own servant-man. It never hurts a pretty girl's feelin's to have a handsome young nobleman ax her name and quality."

"Noble here, noble there; we ain't got no titles in this country; so don't be bringin' the Old World notions here, Mike," replied the bar-keeper. "You don't know whether he is a real count, after all. Plenty of them foreigners come here with titles that don't own 'em at home."

"Well, there's his bell, any how," said the waiter, as one of the higher row tinkled above him. "It is like it's for something to drink. It always is when that other feller's about." He hastened off to obey the summons.

In the mean time, the man who had awakened this discussion had ascended the staircases which conducted to the third story, and knocked at the door of the room he was seeking.

"Entrate! come in," called out a man's voice at the sound of the knock. "Ah! it is you, Fostieri?"

"Yes, it is I. Whom else did you expect to see?" demanded Fostieri, throwing his hat upon the table, and seating himself without invitation in a chair near the occupant of the apartment.

"Nessuno; no one but a servant I have been waiting for," replied the inmate of the chamber, a handsome man with strongly-marked Italian features, and a soft accent upon the English words he used. He was sitting in an easy chair, clothed in a bright-colored dressing-gown and slippers, as if suffering from slight indisposition. His neatly-brushed hat and coat lay upon a set of drawers that stood against the wall, with a clean towel thrown over them to protect them from the dust. His shining boots stood upon a chair in the corner. The room was fastidiously neat. Upon the table near him was spread out a handsomely furnished dressing-case; and a small opera-glass lay close at hand. Though the day was warm for March, he sat close by the fire. The room was lighted by two windows on each side of the fireplace, glazed to the floor, from which one commanded a view of the back yard of the hotel, or rather the small square court inclosed by the four sides of the building. This space was occupied principally by a huge gasometer. It was not necessary, however, to look so low as that for objects of interest, inasmuch as the window also afforded Asmodean glances into the apartments of the two opposite lower stories, of which the handsome Italian

CHAPTER XXII.

THE night before the sailing of the Louisiana, Fostieri and the count were sitting in the splendidly furnished ante-chamber of the gambling-house. Fostieri was speaking in Italian in a low voice:—

"So you sail to-morrow? You do not fear then any further process of justice?"

"No; there is positively no evidence that can be brought against me save yours and that of the croupier. You are safe; you cannot betray me without compromising yourself. You struck the first blow when he seized the loaded die. He is a bad friend that is foe to himself. The croupier is safe, too, in my power. He cannot escape with life from Isipica."

"Ah! the pig pays for the dog's trick. But still there is much to be gained here. You are too well known throughout the continent. Better be bird of the wood than bird in the cage."

The handsome Italian smiled scornfully, and replied with a proverb: "He who has met with snakes fears lizards. I fear nothing. I shall go back."

Fostieri responded in the same style: "He that hath a head of wax should not walk in the sun."

"And what will you do, Fostieri?" asked the count.

"I—I shall stay here and trust to fortune. I like this country; the climate is pleasant, like Italia."

"America is not like Europe; I should blow my brains out from melancholy!" exclaimed the count. "I should die here."

"And I shall live! there we differ!" said Fostieri, laughing. "Have you seen the 'Bella' lately?"

"Ah! you mean the young girl of the window? Yes, I have seen her; I have discovered about her. She is rich and single, and sails on the Louisiana."

"Per bacco! I wish I were you!" exclaimed Fostieri. "She is lovelier than the Madonna, or the Bella of Tiziano; and you have learned who she is now?"

"A piastre to the garçon of the hotel, and another to her own domestic, procured all the information I desired. I admire her greatly; I shall become acquainted with her on the ship."

"How? These Southern women are haughty."

"She has an uncle; I have seen him; he does not look wise; I shall soon know him—then the girl."

"Ah! you have resources," said Fostieri, looking at his companion with admiration.

The count laughed, and threw back his head as he said, "She is rich and beautiful; I am poor! I am weary of this Bohemienne

seemed disposed to avail himself, as more than once, during his desultory conversation with his visitor, he took up the lorgnette and put it to his eyes.

Fostieri, growing impatient at these somewhat uncivil interruptions, walked to the window and looked out to ascertain what so attracted his companion's attention. He extended his hand for the glass, as his gaze became fixed upon the window of the parlor in the first story opposite, where could be distinctly seen a lady in deep mourning reclining on a sofa drawn up in front of the fire, and sitting at a short distance from her, apparently reading aloud to her, was a young girl, whose beauty justified the long-drawn "ah" of Fostieri.

"Cospetto, you are right," said he, returning the lorgnette to its owner. "*E bella! bellissima!* She is worth looking at. And thus you have found amusement during your indisposition. She is the Bella of Tiziano, truly."

The younger man nodded, saying, "She arrived only two days since."

"But you are better now," said Fostieri. "Will you not come to-night to —?" naming a well-known gambling house. "Luck has been against me in your absence. I lost heavily last night. See!" He drew out his purse and counted the few small coin which remained in it.

"Take this, then," said the younger Italian, throwing him some gold pieces which he took from his porte-monnaie.

"*Vi ringrazio, il mio conte,*" replied the other, catching them in his hands. "I will take it as a loan, to be repaid with interest when fortune smiles. But you will come to-night?"

"Perhaps; if I feel well. But you are thirsty; will you have wine?"—ringing the bell as he spoke.

"*Certamente; most surely,*" replied Fostieri; "I am thirsty always, you know."

When the waiter came to answer the bell, the count ordered wine and glasses—which were soon brought, and eagerly seized by Fostieri. The count did not drink with him, but remarked, as Fostieri poured glass after glass down his throat:—

"You will never succeed at play; you drink too much. The head must be cool always—the hand steady."

"I cannot help it now; the thirst is a habit," replied Fostieri. "I have not your self-control, *il mio conte.*"

The count smiled, as the admission of superiority pleased him.

"No; you will soon go to the devil, *povero* Fostieri, when once I leave you."

"And you are still resolved to go?" inquired Fostieri.

"Without doubt."

life. I want to marry a woman with money. If I like this girl, I shall marry her."

Postieri smiled satirically. "You marry! Il Conte di Serimia turn saint? When the fox preaches, he's beware! What has become of the little Gabriella?"

The face of Serimia clouded, he answered shortly: "I know not, and care not."

"Ah, you think, 'Foolish is the sheep that confesses to the wolf!' Well, she was a pretty little thing; but one tires of the same face perpetually. Let us join the play."

The two men arose, and were soon lost in the crowd of eager players who were gathered around the faro-table in the adjoining room. They drew near the table covered with green cloth, upon which were embroidered, in red and black, the different suits at cards. The banker sat before this with his little rake and a pile of gold pieces lying in front of him. "Faites le jeu," he exclaimed. Serimia laid a piece of gold on the red: "Le jeu est faite." "Rouge." Serimia had won. And so he continued doubling, trebling his bets until the banker swept the pieces clear off the table, and announced that the game was closed for the night—Serimia had broken the bank.

The Louisiana steamed out of the river the next day, with her load of passengers. The voyage was like the generality of voyages; everybody unaccustomed to the motion being sick for a few days; and nearly everybody exceedingly well, and enjoying monstrous appetites for the rest of the voyage. Mrs. Elmsworth, like most consumptives, was not sea-sick, but spent the greater part of the time in her cabin, from weakness and from choice. She went sometimes on the deck, when the day was mild, leaning on Mrs. Lucy's strong arm, and the luggage-man carried her chair after her, in which she would recline. Her husband troubled himself but little about her.

It was a universal comment among the passengers how very neglectful he was to his wife. He considered that he had amply provided for her comforts in giving her attendants. She had money; if she wanted anything, the stewards would get it for her; Agnes was with her for company. And he found occupations and companionship more to his taste among the passengers with whom the vessel was crowded. Poor Agnes was not much of a companion for anybody. She suffered greatly from sea-sickness the first week. She had had so much illness and sorrow, her spirits were sunk very low. She had no energy to exert herself in any way. She had roused herself to meet the duties which fell upon her during her aunt's illness, immediately after Mimi's death. But here, prostrated by that most enervating of maladies—the *maladie du mer*—separated from nearly all she loved or trust-

ed in, except her poor aunt, it must be confessed she did not behave at all like a heroine, for the intervals of sickness were pretty much spent in what girls call "crying." The stewardess was very kind to her. It is probable Agnes would have lain there, in her narrow berth, to the end of the voyage, had it not been for her. Mrs. Elmsworth would come in as she passed Agnes's door, look at her, and jestingly condole with her. But Mrs. Todd scolded, and the scolding was best for Agnes. So, one bright day, Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Lucy, between them, coaxed and scolded Agnes into being dressed and going upon the deck, where her aunt was then sitting. Agnes did not think it possible for her to get up there alive; but anything was better than the dinning noise of those two women's tongues. So she swallowed the bowl of oatmeal gruel Mrs. Todd brought her, and started for the deck, with Mrs. Lucy supporting, and Mrs. Todd following her, with a camp-stool. None of the passengers had ever seen Agnes, and they looked with some little curiosity at the sudden apparition. Agnes was closely veiled, however, and there was little to admire in the bombazine dress, black hood, and crape veil. She was carefully landed by her aunt. Mrs. Elmsworth's sad, sweet face, gentle voice and manner, had already won her many little acts of kindness from the passengers, and she was conversing with a benevolent-looking lady when Agnes joined her. Agnes felt herself greatly revived by the fresh salt air, and not wishing to disturb her aunt's conversation, and not desiring an introduction to any one, she rose from her seat and walked aft the wheel-house, and stood leaning on the iron railing around the deck. Throwing back her veil, she drew in, with long breathings, the invigorating breeze. She blessed Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Lucy for their pertinacity.

It was like a new life. She saw a shoal of porpoises rolling and leaping around the vessel, and was interested in watching them. The sharp breeze made the color glow in her cheeks; the sight came back to her heavy eyes, and she almost smiled at the gambols of the ungainly creatures. Looking down below, attracted by a slight noise on the lower deck, she saw a party of gentlemen, some with cigars in their hands, who had just come from some retired spot where they had been enjoying what they called "a little game." Mr. Elmsworth was among them, and standing by him, leaning on the railing below, was a distinguished-looking man with whom he was eagerly conversing. Attracted by the lovely apparition above, several of the gentlemen expressed their admiration so loudly that Mr. Elmsworth and his companion turned to see what had evoked such raptu-

rous exclamations. It was just at this moment that Agnes perceived them. Blushing deeply at having exposed herself to such observation, she dropped her veil hastily over her face and hurried back to her aunt's side.

"By George! that's a pretty woman!" exclaimed one of the young men.

The gentleman talking with Mr. Elmsworth looked as if he fully concurred in this opinion.

"I wonder who she is?" continued the young man.

"She must have been sick. Nobody has seen her before."

"She has been sick," coolly observed Mr. Elmsworth, striking a match and lighting his cigar. "It is the first time she has left her cabin. I must go and speak to her as soon as I finish my cigar."

"Do you know her? What's her name?" eagerly inquired a half-dozen voices.

Mr. Elmsworth smiled. "I know her very well; she is Mrs. Elmsworth's niece. Her name is Graham."

"Married or single?"

"Single, eighteen, disengaged, and an heiress."

"Won't you introduce a fellow, Elmsworth?"

"That depends upon who the fellow is, and upon Miss Graham's pleasure," answered Mr. Elmsworth. "Like all heiresses, Miss Graham has always had a will of her own. But I can ask her."

He threw away his cigar and went on deck; bade Agnes good-morning; observed "she was looking very well to have been so sick;" and asked if he should introduce any gentlemen to her; several of his acquaintances desired to have the pleasure of knowing her.

Agnes said, "She did not desire any introductions to be made to her—especially not of any gentlemen, unless they would be of some use or source of gratification to her aunt."

So Mr. Elmsworth had to return to his friends with the reply that Miss Graham declined any introduction to herself for the present.

"Whew! stuck up," commented the young man who had so coveted the pleasure; "she's deuced handsome, at any rate, and can't prevent people seeing her sometimes."

The foreign gentleman who had lingered, awaiting Mr. Elmsworth's return with Agnes's answer, seemed amused at the unfeigned expression of disappointment in the young man's face and manner. He was silent, however, but, having smoked as much as he liked of his cigar, threw the fragment into the sea. Carelessly linking his arm in that of Mr. Elmsworth, he proposed a walk on deck. Mr. Elmsworth agreed, and they were soon promenading together on

the forward portion of the deck. Mr. Elmsworth had taken, to use his own expression, "a great fancy to his companion"—"Count Serimia" he called himself—an Italian, or rather Sicilian count, travelling in America for his own amusement. Certainly there was much in his exterior in his favor. He was rather below the medium height, well-made, and had that supple grace which most educated and well-nurtured Italians possess; that agility and smoothness of joint and muscle which belong to all of the feline race, and seem to accompany cat-like traits even in humanity. His figure was slender, but not effeminate; his eyes black and bright, though small; his nose slightly aquiline; his complexion clear, though almost olive in its tint, and was set off to the best advantage by a jet-black moustache and *impériale*; the rest of the oval face smooth; and his chin closely shaven. His black, silky hair lay in graceful waves upon the handsome, though rather narrow forehead. He was well dressed always, elegantly and simply, nothing showing what Mr. Carlyle calls a "dandiacal taste," but with well-fitting boots and neat gloves. Count Serimia looked like a gentleman; his manners were courteous and easy; when he chose to please, he was fascinating—and he had chosen to please Mr. Elmsworth. As irritable, self-willed, and domineering as Charlton Elmsworth was, no man was more easily flattered than he by a little attention from one whom he considered as distinguished or socially admired. He rather liked Agnes, because she was handsome, admired, and wealthy, and it gave him a sort of *éclat* to be the dragon of this nymph of the Hesperides. He had been attracted by the distinguished appearance of Serimia, and his liking was in no way lessened when he found the casual acquaintance with whom he had exchanged lights for cigars, and sometimes a word or two about the ship, or the weather, to be a real, live nobleman—even if only a Sicilian one. With all his blustering ways, Charlton Elmsworth, like all domestic tyrants and great braggarts, was a toady. So he and Count Serimia were rapidly becoming fast friends.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE count played cards, which Elmsworth liked also; but as in the beginning of their acquaintance he found he had secured "a pigeon" worth plucking, which feat he intended to perform after they arrived in Paris together—for he had found out all his companion had to tell—he allowed Elmsworth to win, as often as he liked, the small amounts to which the betting was confined on board ship. Elms-

worth thought him very unsuspecting and unworlly, and chuckled with all the joy of a small mind over his own superior wisdom and skill. It amused Serimia greatly, for his name was known in all the saloons and gambling-halls of Europe. He was as well known at Baden-Baden as the famous table of *rouge et noir*. Indeed, he was *too well* known, for which reason he had made a short trip to America until some ugly "slanders" and rumors died away connected with the ruin and murder at the gaming-table of a young Englishman of rank and wealth who had sought his fatal friendship. Serimia had, as we already know, stopped at the same hotel in New Orleans at which the Elmsworths had stayed during the few days that preceded their embarkation. He had accidentally seen Agnes sitting in their parlor, and had been struck with her extreme beauty. He had found out her name and Mr. Elmsworth's, with an exaggerated account of their wealth and position, as well as plans of the party, from their servant-man, by dint of bribes. The attendants were very respectable. His espionage and close inquiry had fully satisfied him of the truth of the accounts he had received. On these subjects, at the first convenient opportunity after leaving port, he had made advances towards acquaintanceship with Mr. Elmsworth. So far as that gentleman was concerned, he had entirely succeeded in his efforts to make himself pleasing, and he was too self-reliant and vain to doubt his ultimate success with the young lady who had so greatly attracted him. A rich and beautiful wife would be a great help to him, and here was one ready to his hand. If unsophisticated, and even rather unlearned, these were small objections. If he wearied of her, there was his little estate among the mountains in Sicily, retired and remote enough. He could send her there. He was the last of his race. He would like to perpetuate his ancient and once honorable name, though now stained and smirched by his own acts. In Europe, in spite of his rank (for Serimia, as we know, was truly noble by birth, though the poor remnant of his patrimony yielded but a small revenue; only a few hundred francs; enough to keep him from destitution when luck was against him, which it rarely ever was, Serimia being a fortunate as well as a cool, skilful gambler, and he never had been reduced to such straits as necessitated the parting with his little patrimony);—in spite of his noble birth, then, he could scarcely hope to marry as he wished at home; he was, as we said before, *too well known*. Agnes was to him now a treasure-trove; and so he had walked arm-in-arm upon the deck of the vessel with Mr. Elmsworth, whom he thoroughly read, and as thoroughly despised

for a vain, ostentatious, boastful, vulgar fellow; for ostentation, boasting, and arrogance are vulgar; and Serimia, though a gambler, and a depraved, unprincipled man, had good taste and good breeding enough to avoid and despise such low traits. After promenading some time, Serimia proposed descending to his state-room, where he said he had some fine wine he would like Elmsworth to taste. Elmsworth agreed—and they went down to the cabin. Serimia sent the steward for glasses and a corkscrew. Elmsworth amused himself in looking about him. Like all experienced travellers, Serimia had very little luggage with him; but he had a box of wines, and another of cigars, pipes and tobacco. His trunks, he said, were in the hold. Everything belonging to him was scrupulously neat and orderly. His dressing-case, with its plain exterior, lay open upon the small table. It was furnished beautifully with every convenience for a gentleman's toilet, and on the silver cover of each article was engraved Serimia's crest, and his initials "G. S." Elmsworth admired all his convenient arrangements. The corner of a riband projecting from a division in the case, Serimia pulled it out. It had a diamond star attached to it. "A Neapolitan order," said he carelessly; "the gift of King Ferdinand before his dethronement." There was another from King Louis, of Bavaria. Elmsworth was charmed to know a man who knew kings, and had received orders of honor from them. The steward came in with the glasses. The wine was uncorked, and pronounced excellent. Serimia said he had several bottles of it, and if Mr. Elmsworth would allow it, he would be glad to send a couple of bottles to Mrs. Elmsworth, who seemed to be in delicate health. Elmsworth thanked him; said his wife would be much obliged, he had no doubt, by such an attention from Count Serimia.

When they had finished their bottle, they returned to the deck. Mr. Elmsworth sought his wife and told her of Serimia's request that she would allow him to send her some fine wine. He had spoken of Serimia previously to his wife, and of the pleasure he derived from his society. Mrs. Elmsworth, glad to have her husband amused and kept in good humor, had observed Serimia closely, and was pleased with his appearance; she rejoiced that Mr. Elmsworth had selected one who seemed to be a gentleman as his constant associate. She was, therefore, very kindly disposed towards Serimia, and received very graciously her husband's proposal to present the count to her and to Agnes. Agnes asked her aunt to excuse her, and to permit her to retire to her state-room, she felt so reluctant to make any acquaintances. But Mrs. Elmsworth remonstrated against her

retiring, saying, "they would be obliged to make acquaintances sometimes in travelling—the gentleman was very polite, and it would not do to make Mr. Elmsworth angry." She entreated Agnes not to go. Agnes had risen to quit her seat, but, at her aunt's urgent request, she resumed her seat on the stool, and awaited the coming of her uncle and his unwelcome friend.

"After all, it did not matter," she argued with herself; "Count Serimia was nothing to her; she would probably never see him again when the voyage was ended; and, if he pleased her aunt, it was very well;" but she felt considerable annoyance at having such acquaintances forced upon her. She had little confidence in Mr. Elmsworth or in his penetration or consideration for any one but himself, so she was not disposed to like any one whom he attempted to patronize. It was, therefore, with a good deal of hauteur and stately courtesy that she bowed coldly in reply to Serimia's graceful, easy salutation, as her uncle introduced him. Mrs. Elmsworth shook hands with him, and thanked him for his attention in sending the wine to her. Agnes, after she had returned his bow, seemed to think she had done all that was expected of her, and, taking up the book which Mrs. Lucy had providentially brought along when they first mounted the deck, she began to read, leaving her aunt to converse with Count Serimia. Mrs. Lucy had gotten hold of a volume of Schiller, and, as Agnes took up the book, it opened at a book-mark—a strip of paper scribbled over and over with the name of Agnes in Robert's handwriting. Agnes's eyes fell upon Amelia's song in the garden, in the third act of the "Robbers":—

"Er ist hin—Vergebens, ach vergebens,
Stöhnet ihm der bange seufzer nach,
Er ist hin—und alle heft des lebens,
Wimmert hin in ein verlorenes ach."

The blood rushed to her cheek and brow, which as suddenly paled; she could hardly prevent screaming aloud with agony. The thought of Robert rushed over her in bitterest anguish. She forgot where she was; her aunt, uncle, Serimia, all were banished from her mind—her eyes were fixed on the sad words of the song. She dared not read more. She sat motionless—so still and pale, so absorbed in her own sorrowful remembrances that she did not hear her aunt speak to her:—

"Agnes, my dear, Count Serimia speaks to you."

Agnes looked at her aunt for an instant, with eyes in which evidently there was no comprehension of her meaning. Mrs. Elmsworth laid her hand gently upon her niece's arm, and repeated her words. At last comprehending her remark, Agnes turned courteously, and with dignity apolo-

gized to Count Serimia for her apparent lack of attention, and requested he would have the goodness to repeat his question.

Serimia was puzzled. This was a new sort of a woman from any he had met. He was somewhat piqued and annoyed, too, that Miss Graham had not considered him worthy of even a passing glance, or a moment's attention. It was not the treatment he usually received from her sex; and it only interested him the more in his pursuit of this Flying Daphne. He smiled graciously; he intended to be very amiable and kind in his manner, to cover the confusion so young a girl might have been supposed to feel after committing what he undoubtedly set down as an involuntary breach of politeness.

"She is shy! perhaps knows no better! Well, she is beautiful enough to pass anywhere, even if *une belle sauvage*!" Such thoughts had passed hastily through his brain as he saw Mrs. Elmsworth's efforts to make Agnes hear and understand. But he was utterly disconcerted to find his premeditated urbanity completely baffled by the cool, high-bred ease with which Agnes now responded to his conversation. This was no shy, timid girl; but a lofty, well-bred woman, who would adorn any court. Agnes endured the conversation as long as she thought necessary, for her aunt's sake; then rising, with a graceful, ceremonious bow to Count Serimia and a word to her aunt, she started to return to the cabin below. Count Serimia sprang forward to assist her in descending the steps, but she politely, though firmly, declined his proffered aid, and calling to Mrs. Lucy, who was sitting not far off amongst a bevy of nurses and ladies' maids, to attend to her, she retired. Serimia, considerably discomfited, bit his lip, as he looked after her retreating form, then he returned to Mrs. Elmsworth.

"Your niece, I hope, madam, is not indisposed?"

"No—at least—I think not," replied Mrs. Elmsworth; "but she has suffered very much from illness recently, and is easily fatigued." Serimia was compelled to soothe the wounds his vanity had received with this supposition. He led the conversation very skilfully to find out all he wanted to know of Agnes's past history and partialities. But Mrs. Elmsworth, though an amiable, unsuspecting woman, was no fool, nor gossip, to be "pumped" very readily. She knew Agnes would resent being talked about in any manner with a stranger. Besides, she had promised her sister, before leaving Davenant Hall, not to speak of Agnes's and Robert's unhappy love to any one, not even to her husband, as they regarded the affair as Agnes's own secret. So Count Serimia found himself unsatisfied

on many points on which he desired information. Agnes's indifference to him might arise from a preoccupied heart; he could find out if she was engaged from her uncle. In every other respect, his anticipations were more than realized. It was a most desirable "parti" for him. So he talked to Mrs. Elmsworth till he was weary, then gayly excusing himself left her, after having produced a very pleasing impression upon her mind. Agnes did not share her aunt's prepossessions. She did not like what she saw of Serimia. He seemed forward and presumptuous. So she was rarely seen on deck during the rest of the voyage. Whenever she did come, Serimia always made some excuse for approaching her and entering into conversation. He had become quite a favorite with her aunt. This was very distasteful to her; so that what was at first simply a feeling of indifference towards him in her mind grew rapidly into absolute dislike. Agnes Graham was too much of a Davenant not to know how to keep such persons as Serimia at a distance; so the count did not advance as he anticipated in her favor, and found he had made but little headway towards the goal of his desires when the vessel anchored at Havre. Count Serimia made himself, however, most useful to the inexperienced travellers in the suggestions and advice he gave Mrs. Elmsworth in all the petty vexations which encumber the passport system, and disembarkation in a foreign country. Agnes and her aunt were soon seated in the railroad car which was to convey them immediately to Paris, where their rooms were already engaged for them through the instrumentality of their factor in New Orleans. Agnes was not agreeably surprised on finding that Count Serimia had taken his seat in the same carriage with their party on the railroad from Havre to Paris. Neither did she like the close familiar intercourse which he seemed to have established between Mr. Elmsworth and himself, nor the easy way in which he managed to include Mrs. Elmsworth in this amiable intimacy, which he appeared nothing loth to extend to herself also—addressing her as "Mademoiselle Agnes," a style of naming her which annoyed her very much. She, however, had a quiet way of her own which effectually precluded any further familiarity; so, though Count Serimia could complain of nothing in her manner, or in the few remarks she condescended to make *en route*, he perfectly understood that, however agreeable he might be to Mr. or Mrs. Elmsworth, to Miss Graham he was nothing more than a travelling acquaintance; and that his assiduities and petty schemings had not advanced him one iota in her regard. She was certainly the most impracticable woman he had ever known, but as his hopes and vanity were

abased, so did his admiration rise. He liked to conquer difficulties. He possessed a bold, determined spirit, and his feelings were interested now. He was rapidly becoming deeply in love with Agnes, for one reason because she was so utterly indifferent to him: It was for a noble prize he was playing, and he resolved to play boldly. He instituted himself, then, as the friend of the family, accompanied them to their rooms, charged himself with their accommodation, made "a fuss" about getting up their luggage, ordered a fire instantly in Mrs. Elmsworth's apartment, had infinite compassion and sympathy for Mr. Elmsworth's helplessness and Mrs. Elmsworth's fatigue, and was about to order their dinner from the *carte* he held, which he had taken from the *garçon*, when Agnes quietly extended her hand for it, saying:—

"We need not trouble you any longer, Count Serimia, about these small matters. I speak French as readily as English, being a Louisianaise."

She spoke very courteously, and with a smile. Mrs. Elmsworth, as if suddenly struck with the sense of their selfishness in detaining the count so long from his own affairs, hastened to apologize, and Count Serimia found himself literally thanked and complimented out of the room. He set his teeth together, muttering to himself as he descended the staircase:—

"Haughty girl! I will not forget this!"

Mr. Elmsworth having, as he said, "fixed his wife and Agnes" comfortably in their apartments, considered he had discharged all the duties which devolved upon him, and therefore felt himself at liberty to pursue his own amusements, and to spend his time in a mode more congenial to him than that of watching in the sick chamber of a wife whom he now barely tolerated, certainly had long since ceased to have any affection for. Count Serimia was only too happy to accommodate and aid him in his search after amusement. One need not look long in Paris to find any that may happen to be desired. So Mr. Elmsworth was soon plunged into a stream of dissipation and wild living that he delighted to swim in.

Elmsworth was not naturally a brave man. Like all cowardly natures, he clung instinctively to the physically courageous. Serimia's boldness was a perpetual unconscious charm to his weaker temperament.

Elmsworth had very gently intimated the "wonderful resemblance" in the earliest period of his acquaintance with Count Serimia. Serimia saw it and acknowledged it just as soon as Mr. Elmsworth ventured to suggest it—a strong proof of "common sense," and "perspicuity of eye," and "judgment" on Serimia's part—which opinion Mr. Elmsworth expressed to his wife in the most extreme brevity of Lacedæ-

monian style. Emmeline was pleased too to hear that the Count recognized the likeness. She treasured up so carefully, poor absurd foolish woman, any ray of goodness in or favorable opinion of her husband. She kept in a blue satin satchel, perfumed with *peau d'espagne*, all the small billets and laconic Napoleonesque letters that he had ever written to her in her life. She delighted to re-read and kiss these treasures of thought, and of such terse, sententious wording, that Lycurgus himself might have imitated them enviously, in style. It is not the wisest of women who will sit the highest, may be, in the kingdom of heaven, after all! Also, Elmsworth told Serimia confidentially "how his father had died with the same disease the Emperor Napoleon the 1st succumbed at last to on the Island of St. Helena; and how he also "expected some day to perish from dyspepsia and cancer of the stomach!"

Serimia thought this very probable when he had once been an eye-witness to Elmsworth's gastronomic feats, both in quantity and quality. Serimia himself was gourmet, a disciple of Brill. "Cochon," he muttered under his silky, black moustache the first time he took Elmsworth out to dine at a most famous café on the Rue de Helder.

"You should not mix your wine, so, mon cher," Serimia said *alto voce* to Elmsworth.

Count Serimia managed to be often in Mrs. Elmsworth's saloon, where his cool, unexcited, elegant manner, and neat fastidious appearance formed an agreeable contrast to the heated, half-intoxicated, careless Charlton Elmsworth. He occasionally met Agnes here, only very rarely, and generally by accident, for Agnes had discovered his pertinacious resolve to make himself agreeable to her. She resented it as an impertinence, and withdrew herself as much as possible from any chance of a rencontre with him. Mrs. Elmsworth, too, with whom he had at first greatly ingratiated himself, began to suspect that there might be evil under all this specious kindness, and to fear that Count Serimia's influence over her husband was anything but a good one.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. ELMSWORTH generally spent his nights in what he called pleasure, and the days pretty much in sleeping. His wife saw but little of him, as they occupied separate apartments. The few moments which she did chance to see him, she could not but notice the effect of his orgies in his appearance, as well as the increasing irritability of his naturally bad temper. In spite of all his

ill-treatment and neglect of her, still, with that wonderful pertinacity of a woman's affections, Emmeline clung to her husband. She loved him through all, to the latest instant of her mortal life. She remonstrated, in her feeble way, with him, and implored him not to destroy his health, both physical and moral, in the polluted atmosphere in which the greater part of his hours were spent. But he only swore at her "for a meddling fool," and bade her "mind her own business, and leave him to take care of himself." She ventured to warn him against the fascinations of Serimia. Then his anger burst forth without restraint. He showered imprecations upon her, and upon Agnes for putting such notions in her head; he absolutely raved with fury, and seizing her by the arm he pushed her so rudely from him that she fell upon the floor, too weak to resist his force. She dragged herself up by the door and staggered out of his room. Agnes met her just as she had sunk into a chair outside of the door. The handkerchief she held to her mouth was crimson with blood. Agnes supported her aunt to her own apartment, and sent off immediately for a physician, and again for a week there were the darkened room, the stealthy step, the subdued voices, but Emmeline's hour had not yet come. She rose again from her bed, though weakened and prostrated from the attack. Her husband was really ashamed when he found the injury to her so severe that he had caused in his insane anger, and was consequently kinder, for him even attentive and considerate, during her illness. His half-muttered words of regret and apology to her were received with joy, and the thin, white hand placed upon his lips, stopping the words before the sentence was concluded—"it is all forgotten; it was an accident; you did not mean to hurt me, dear Charlton; but I am so weak; it was my fault."

"Emmeline," replied he, bending over and kissing her, "you are an angel."

Mr. Elmsworth's goodness though lasted only so long as his wife's life was in danger. His tempter came, Serimia invited and urged. As soon as Mrs. Elmsworth could sit up he was off again, plunging with renewed zest into his wild dissipation. He was getting on pretty fast. He had managed in a short time to get rid of nearly all the money he had ordered to be deposited to his credit at the banker's, and was beginning to be heavily indebted to Serimia. Mrs. Elmsworth soon found it did not do to ask her husband for money, even for trivial expenses—even to gratify the longings for fruit and flowers, which are the usual accompaniments of consumption. Agnes exhausted the small amount of pocket-money she had brought with her in supplying these little gratifications to the invalid, and was therefore obliged to have

recourse to her uncle, who was her guardian, for more. He had always been polite to Agnes, but on this occasion, not daring to refuse what was her own, and what she had a right to demand, he accompanied the gift of the draft she requested with a rude oath and exclamation about "extravagance of women." Agnes looked at him astonished. She knew her own income was large, and his, or rather her aunt's property, was of considerable extent.

Want of money was a new want to any of them. She made no reply, however, as his flushed face showed he was under the influence of liquor, but took the draft and thought over the matter considerably when alone. She was convinced that her uncle was gambling very deeply to have spent all his money, and a chill came over her as she looked the future in the face. Her own capital she knew was safe, but her income was in Mr. Elmsworth's hands as her guardian; yet she remembered now that Dr. Leonard had told her "that by her father's will, she was of age at eighteen, and would, if circumstances required it, assume entire control over herself and her property." He also told her to remember that her father died a British subject, and that she was entitled to the protection of the English ambassador, in case she needed it.

Mr. Elmsworth, having once thrown aside all restraint upon his temper before Agnes, became more and more unendurable, and Agnes and his poor wife always breathed freer when he was out of the house. Count Serimia, who now held the most potent influence over Elmsworth, viz., that of creditor, informed his dupe of his fervent admiration of Miss Graham, and proposed to return Elmsworth's notes cancelled on the day of his marriage with her. Elmsworth caught at the suggestion, and heartily agreed to aid, with all his power, in such an arrangement. Serimia complained that Agnes was so shy of him that she never gave him an opportunity of pressing his suit. This Elmsworth promised to obviate, if possible.

Henceforth poor Agnes was exposed to a series of petty persecutions and vexations, which to her were exquisite tortures. Love spoken from the lips of any man but Robert was odious to her, and from Serimia was absolutely insupportable. She no longer found a refuge in her own apartment, for if she entered to seclude herself during Serimia's visits, as soon as he was gone, Mr. Elmsworth would vent his ill-humor upon his innocent sick wife. He had found out the way to rule Agnes. She could not bear to see her helpless aunt suffer under her husband's cruel, bitter words. Such altercations always brought on a fit of nervous prostration upon the feeble woman. So Agnes was obliged to sacrifice her own comfort to secure a respite for the poor

woman, and she had to remain by her aunt's side during Serimia's visits. Agnes was learning life's lesson in a stern school. God always uses fire to purge his chosen vessels. When Agnes left N——, she had promised Mr. Danvers to read every day the lessons and Psalms according to the calendar in the prayer-book. She had done so whenever it was possible for her to do it, and she had learned to pray, too, with her heart as well as her lips. Agnes found much comfort in these religious duties. She found her refuge in Christ in all her infinitesimal annoyances in this wretched life. She read much in her father's two books, the "Sacra Privata" and "Herbert." It almost seemed to her at times as if it was a provision for her especial needs that her father's hand, so many years before, had traced the pencil lines and marginal notes which marked many passages in these books. And so, even in the midst of her every-day life, she had some serene, peaceful moments. Her poor aunt, too, was so helpless and dependent upon her, Agnes was glad she could do anything to comfort the heart-broken, sorrowful woman, who had ever shown her a mother's tenderness. Mrs. Lucy was a great help and consolation to them, she was so trustworthy and faithful. The "man for the luggage" had been discharged, Mr. Elmsworth intending to employ a courier as soon as he could make up his mind to leave Paris.

CHAPTER XXV.

ONE bright day, as Mrs. Elmsworth sat in her little parlor, she was surprised to receive a card, which was brought up from the porter's lodge, on which was the name, neatly engraved, of

"ALFRED MURRAY,
LOUISIANA."

She asked if the gentleman was still waiting, and being informed that he was, she begged that he would be requested to come up and see her. Mr. Murray came up immediately, greeted Mrs. Elmsworth cordially, and told her he had met her husband on the street a minute before; that Mr. Elmsworth had informed him of her delicate health, and given him her address, of which he had instantly availed himself. Mrs. Elmsworth was heartily glad to see Mr. Murray. She liked him very much, and any little change or novelty was grateful to the poor invalid, shut up within those four walls of her rooms. She was talking and laughing quite cheerfully with him when Agnes suddenly entered the room, ignorant that her aunt had a visitor. There was a momentary embarrassment for all parties. Agnes recovered herself first, and advancing to Mr. Murray, held out her hand frankly,

as of old. Mr. Murray took it kindly, and said:—

"I was not aware that you had accompanied Mrs. Elmsworth. I thought that more binding ties kept you in N——, or perhaps," he hesitated; then said, hurriedly, "Dr. Selman is here, too, I suppose, though I did not see him with Mr. Elmsworth. Will you be so kind as to say to him that he must accept this call from me as well as Mr. and Mrs. Elmsworth and yourself?"

Agnes grasped the back of a chair with both hands as she stood. She turned deathly pale, and looked ready to faint. Mrs. Elmsworth was dumb with consternation. Agnes spoke so low it was almost a whisper:—

"You mistake, Mr. Murray. My cousin did not accompany us."

The crimson flashed over Mr. Murray's face as he understood his mistake, but he had too much tact to apologize, so he turned to Mrs. Elmsworth with some observation about the eligible position of their rooms.

She replied in the same tone, and the conversation soon flowed on as before between the two. Agnes sat a few moments striving vainly for self-command, then rising hastily, she quitted the room. Mr. Murray looked after her retreating form until the door closed after her; then turning,

"My dear Mrs. Elmsworth, how is this?" Mrs. Elmsworth, feeling herself justified by the circumstances, related the whole sad story. Mr. Murray listened intently, shading his face with his hand. Mrs. Elmsworth wept profusely when she had completed her narrative. Mr. Murray took her hand, gently.

"Thank you for telling me this. I need not say I receive your confidence as sacred. Miss Graham has in all things proved herself worthy of her father. There can no higher praise proceed from my lips. But she must have suffered—must still suffer intensely. She was deeply attached to her cousin."

"And still is," added Mrs. Elmsworth. "I do not doubt it," replied he.

A few moments after, he took leave of Mrs. Elmsworth, promising to call again very soon to see her.

He came again the next day, bringing as an excuse a basket of fruit and flowers for Mrs. Elmsworth. Agnes was sitting by her aunt, reading aloud to her, when he knocked at their parlor-door. He listened to the clear tones of her voice. She was reading the Psalms for the morning. He offered the basket to Mrs. Elmsworth, who exclaimed with pleasure at the sight. He spoke to Agnes:—

"Will you not conclude your reading, Miss Graham, and allow me to join you?"

Agnes, without a word, took up her prayer-book and began where she had left

off; Mr. Murray reading responsively with her, until the lesson was concluded. He had drawn out of his pocket his own little well-thumbed prayer-book. "What a comfort it is," observed he, after they had finished reading.

"Yes," said Mrs. Elmsworth; "and it is wonderful how appropriately to the needs of each day the Psalms and lessons seem to fall!"

Agnes rose, and fetching some plates and vases, began arranging the fruits and flowers out of the basket. Mr. Murray watched her, while he continued to converse with Mrs. Elmsworth: the beautiful face, so saddened, so changed in expression; the heavy, languid fall of the eyelids; the drooping curves of her mouth, showing how the will had wrestled with the heart. There was all about her, a clinging expression of wearing sorrow, most touching to behold, and yet, when the long black lashes were lifted and the dark eyes raised fully and calmly to his, in answer to some questions, he could not but remark the sweet chastened glance, the quiet, serene beaming—so different from the brilliant, flashing rays which used to gleam there. Agnes's soul was equipoised and firm. Mr. Murray could not help thinking she was lovelier than ever, and he felt all the former love for her, which he had vainly tried to chain beneath the cold icy crust of duty and necessity, surging in his heart, as he looked upon her. He asked Mrs. Elmsworth if they had seen anything of Paris; and he was surprised to hear that she had never been out of their rooms since they reached Paris. "Agnes tried walking once or twice," she said, "but she found it disagreeable; she was followed and annoyed, though she had Marie, the *femme de chambre*, with her. So she gave it up, and had not been out for weeks. She was herself unable to walk, and would have to be carried in a chair up and down stairs, if she attempted to ride."

Mr. Murray understood Mr. Elmsworth was too busy in the pursuit of his own pleasures to trouble himself about them, and these two women had been shut up all these sweet spring days in those hot rooms. No wonder Agnes looked so pale and languid; the close confinement was sufficient to kill her, without the addition of mental suffering. He walked to the window, looked out an instant, then came to the table upon which Agnes was disposing the vases of flowers for her aunt's admiration.

"Miss Graham, you have a bad headache to-day!" Agnes started; and half smiled at the unexpected charge, but was forced to confess Mr. Murray was right.

"She had a headache—only"—

"Only—it is no more than you have had every day, I suppose, for the last two weeks, or perhaps months!" Agnes said nothing—

her aunt looked alarmed. "My dear, if you were not well, you should have spoken. Do go and lie down now; I will send for Dr. — immediately." And she extended her hand towards the bell-ropes. "No," said Mr. Murray. "No, Mrs. Elmsworth, no physician is needed. Miss Graham suffers from want of fresh air and exercise. Oblige me by commanding her to put on her bonnet and call the *femme de chambre*. I see my carriage still waits at the door. If Miss Graham will go with Marie in it, for a drive, I will remain with you till she returns."

Agnes knew not how to refuse. Her aunt and Mr. Murray urged and entreated, and before she knew what she was about, Mrs. Lucy had brought her bonnet, gloves and mantle. Marie stood before her in her smart hat and shawl, ready to accompany her. There was nothing to be done—but to go. Mr. Murray handed her in the carriage and Marie by her side, gave an order to the coachman—the footman slammed the door, and off they whirled to the Bois de Boulogne. Marie was charmed, and chatted away as fast as her little French tongue would permit, pointing out everything to "Mademoiselle" she thought likely to interest her. Agnes could not help being amused at her lively piquant remarks, and found herself laughing aloud, more than once, at her naive speeches. There was a strong *entente cordiale* established from that hour between Marie and herself. Long before the coachman turned his horses' heads back towards the hotel, Agnes's headache was nearly gone—and she really felt better than she had done for a long time. Mr. Murray exulted in the effect of his prescription, and Agnes, holding out her hand with a sister's frankness, thanked him warmly for the pleasure he had given to her and to Marie.

Mr. Murray was constant in his visits to Mrs. Elmsworth after this. He frequently persuaded her to be carried down stairs in a chair, and placed in his carriage and driven gently out in the pleasant Bois de Boulogne. The drives were of service to her. She would sleep so much better after them, that it refreshed her greatly. When Mr. Murray did not come, he sent the carriage. He said, "They did him a favor by making use of it—his horses were really suffering for want of exercise." So he would listen to no refusal on their part. Mrs. Elmsworth saw how much real gratification it gave him to be useful to her in any way—so she accepted his courtesy as freely as it was offered. The hours in which Mr. Murray visited them, or in which they rode, were generally those in which Mr. Elmsworth and Count Serimia slept as well as they could, after their nightly revels. Mr. Elmsworth was aware of Mr. Murray's frequent visits, and he knew his wife often made use of that gentleman's

equipage. He did not care much what they did, so long as they did not incommode him, or ask him for money. And when Serimia ventured to remonstrate against the intimacy, he ridiculed the idea of Mr. Murray's ever being anything more than a friend to Agnes. He said, "he knew she had rejected Murray before he came to Europe, not more than six months ago."

"Rejected Murray! Pray, does your niece expect to marry anything less than a royal prince, that she should reject a man who could marry almost any woman he pleased?" sneered Serimia.

"I don't know whom Agnes expects to marry," coolly replied Elmsworth. "I thought you intended her to marry you."

"So I do, and so she shall," answered Serimia,—"but I know Murray—he is no friend of mine, and will do all he can to prejudice Miss Graham against me!"

"My dear fellow! that is no concern of mine," said Elmsworth. "I'll help you all I can—but Murray's visits amuse my wife. He gives me no trouble. There was no reason why Agnes should not have married him before, if she had wanted to, and I have positively no means short of absolute insult of forbidding him my quarters. That is a risk I don't care to run—for Murray, as quiet as he looks, has a devil of a temper when roused—he is a dead shot and a capital swordsman! So if you like to undertake him, remember I have warned you!"

Mr. Murray's advent made an agreeable change in the life of those "quarters," as Mr. Elmsworth called them. His wife was brighter and more comfortable. She enjoyed the fresh air in her daily rides, and was refreshed by the fruit and flowers with which her friend kept her supplied. He brought her pleasant books to read, and pretty engravings to look at. In many little ways he contrived to cheer the life of the poor invalid. And Agnes was most grateful for it; she expressed this both in looks and words. Mrs. Elmsworth had never been to Agnes what Mrs. Selman was; but now, in the time of her illness, it is impossible for any but a woman's heart to understand how Agnes clung to the feeble sufferer. She absorbed herself in the life of her aunt with something of the inexpressible tenderness a mother feels towards a sick infant. So Agnes was very, very grateful to Mr. Murray; only grateful! He knew that as well as she. They perfectly understood that between them the past was dead and buried.

Agnes never alluded to the days he had known her in N—. They spoke sometimes of Ail-lee—of Mrs. Hudson, Elizabeth, Tom Adams. "Elizabeth was soon to be married," Mr. Murray said; "he was selecting articles to make a corbeille for his god-daughter."

Agnes went to her room and brought out a set of emeralds and diamonds, beautifully mounted, like small ivy leaves.

"Please put these in the corbeille for me, Mr. Murray; they will suit Elizabeth's fair complexion!"

Mr. Murray took the case. How well he remembered an evening that Agnes had worn these very jewels! How brilliant she was in her dress of rose-colored satin, with wreath of green velvet leaves and these jewels; and he looked at the calm figure beside him, in her deep mourning dress, and thought how she had put away, with her own hand, the cup of happiness brimming from her lips because there was sin in it. His heart yearned over her; it knelt before her with involuntary respect and admiration. Agnes stood looking upon the case of jewels, leaning against a chair in a kind of abstraction—her thoughts were evidently afar off. At last, turning to Mr. Murray, she said, suddenly—

"Mr. Murray, I have had a great desire to go to church since I have been here. To-morrow, I know, is the first Sunday of the month; I should be very glad to go and"—she hesitated, then added in a lower tone, "I have been confirmed, but have never yet partaken of the Holy Communion. I should like"—her voice failed and her eyes filled with tears.

Mr. Murray took her hand in both of his, and pressed it warmly. "I always go to the American chapel here, and will be only too glad if you will allow me to call for you. It is not very far; we can walk, unless you prefer the carriage."

"No," Agnes preferred walking if practicable. So it was settled between them.

Count Serimia sat an hour that evening in Mrs. Elmsworth's saloon. Agnes was scarcely conscious of his presence; her thoughts were riveted upon the coming day, and the reception of the holy rite she was to partake of for the first time. Serimia noticed her abstraction, but attributed it to a wrong cause—Mr. Murray's influence. After vainly endeavoring to excite her interest and attention, he took his departure, filled with jealousy and irritation against both Agnes and her friend.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was bright and sunshiny the following Sunday. The Boulevards and principal streets were thronged with people, pouring out in one continuous stream to see the military procession. It was a festival day in Paris, the fête of Napoleon I. The old soldiers from "Les Invalides" marched, early in the morning, to the lofty monument

erected to the great Emperor, and hung their wreaths of immortelles on the iron railing which surrounds the base of the column. All was gayety and bustle; there were crowds of loungers in the cafés, and the chairs by the side-walks were filled with merry, gossiping people, and there was, also, to be a grand illumination that night.

It was half past ten when Mr. Murray drove up in his carriage to take Agnes to the American chapel, considering it best for her, instead of walking, to ride through the crowded streets. They drove through some of the less frequented streets, avoiding the press of the greater thoroughfares. The congregation was already assembled, and the service began soon after they entered. Agnes soon forgot all but the solemn worship to which she had been so long a stranger, and in which for the first time in her life she fully and appreciatingly sympathized and joined. The rich tones of her magnificent voice added force and volume to the canticles and chanted Psalms. Some persons even turned to see whence the sounds proceeded, but Agnes was not aware of it; her whole heart was in the service, and she knelt by Mr. Murray's side in the reception of the Holy Communion; the tears streaming down her cheeks, her heart breathing supplications for all so dear to her, her Aunt Eleanor, Mrs. Elmsworth, and above all for Robert. It was such a comfort to pray for him at that holy time. The sweetest peace fell upon her soul. She rose from her knees strengthened, comforted; and it was with the calm smile of peace unutterable that she extended her hands to Mr. Murray and thanked him for the inestimable privilege she had just enjoyed through his kindness. It was a new bond between them, and they both felt it to be so, Mr. Murray with a thrill of joy which he suppressed as selfish, and Agnes with the quiet trustfulness of a sister's love.

As they drove along the Boulevard des Italiens, which they found deserted by the crowd, who had followed the procession to the monument of Napoleon I., and thence up the Rue Rivoli, they saw, standing at the door of a café, Mr. Elmsworth and Count Serimia. Mr. Murray lifted his hat in reply to Mr. Elmsworth's salutation. Agnes shrank back into the corner of the carriage. The sight of Serimia was exceedingly painful to her at that moment. Mr. Murray looked earnestly out of the carriage window, then drew his head in and said:—

"I regret to see Mr. Elmsworth often accompanied by the person now with him—a man who, though entitled by his noble birth and liberal education to a respectable position in society, has long ago forfeited all claims to be received by gentlemen or men of honor."

"You speak of Count Serimia?" asked Agnes.

"I do. I have wondered how and where Mr. Elmsworth formed such an acquaintance. This man has been for years a hanger on at Baden Baden, and the lowest gambling saloons of Paris. He was obliged to absent himself last year on account of a very black and mysterious transaction, in consequence of which a young English nobleman lost his life. The other parties were arrested, I believe—but Serimia escaped, and at the time of the trial one of the principal witnesses could not be found, else it is supposed it would have gone hard with Serimia. Many said that the man who was the principal witness had been made way with or spirited off—perhaps to Serimia's estate in Sicily. At any rate he was not forthcoming, and has not been heard of since. I know the police have had an eye on Serimia ever since."

Agnes explained how they had met Count Serimia on the vessel coming over, and her uncle's infatuation in regard to him.

Mr. Murray listened with ill-suppressed indignation to Agnes's carefully guarded account of Serimia's intercourse with them. He understood more than she meant for him to know by the very care she took to conceal the intense feelings of annoyance and disgust she experienced towards her uncle's favorite companion. He set his teeth hard together, and his brow gloomed as, by his artful questions, he drew from the involuntary witness some glimmering idea of the daily persecution she compelled herself to endure for her aunt's sake, and he only vowed to put an end to it in some way. "Edward Graham's daughter forced to receive and bear with the attentions of such a vile debauchee as Serimia! the thought was unendurable!"

Mr. Murray bade Agnes good-day at the door of her hotel, and drove home, thinking what means he should adopt to put a stop to Serimia's intimacy. He feared, if he went direct to Mr. Elmsworth, that gentleman would regard it as impertinent interference, on his part, and any coolness there would shut the door of communication between the ladies and himself. He made up his mind to see Serimia, and either to buy or frighten him off their track. The first was easier to do than the second, for Mr. Murray knew Serimia was physically no coward. He was very disagreeably surprised to find lying on his table, when he reached his lodgings, some letters placed there by his courier during his absence at church, which demanded his immediate presence in England, on some business connected with Mrs. Hudson's estate, and involving a large amount of money invested, by his advice, for Elizabeth, in stocks and other securities. He saw at once that he would be obliged to

leave Paris the next morning for London. Some of his agents had failed, and he feared the settlement, so important to his god-daughter's interest, might be troublesome and intricate. "Go he must, there was no help for it!" He sat for some time, after reading the unwelcome letters, absorbed in thought. He considered it was improbable that Mr. Elmsworth, who seemed delighted with Paris, would quit that city before he could return. He would hasten back as soon as possible. In the mean time, he doubted whether it would be wise or best for him to see or write to Serimia, warning him to desist from his impertinent intrusion upon Agnes's privacy—that might rouse him to use more dangerous and dishonorable means to attain his ends, whatever they might be. Mr. Murray knew perfectly well what an unscrupulous man he had to deal with, and how necessary it was to proceed with caution if he desired to baffle him. Suddenly rising and ringing his bell, he desired his courier to come to him. "Antonio" soon presented himself before his employer. Antonio was a Corsican, had the dark hair and flashing eyes of an Italian, but a broad, almost squarely formed face, with a heavy beard and long moustache, which, as well as his originally jet black hair, was thoroughly mingled with gray. He looked older than Mr. Murray, but was strong and muscular, showing great vigor and powerful sinews in his rather short, stout frame. Mr. Murray motioned him to close the door, and to take a chair near him. Then addressing him in Italian, though Antonio spoke both French and English well, Mr. Murray said, confidentially:—

"Antonio, it has been many years since I knew you first, since we travelled together for the first time. Do you remember our trip to the East in 18—?"

"Yes, signor."

"Do you remember how ill I was in Smyrna, and the kind English gentleman who came to see me, through your solicitation, and nursed me so tenderly?"

"Yes, signor! that good signor Graham! I remember him!"

"That good gentleman, as you properly call him, went afterwards to America, married and died there, leaving one only daughter, who is now a grown young lady, and is here to-day in this city."

"Ah!" said Antonio, smiling and nodding his head, "I think, signor, it is probably the beautiful young lady at the hotel in the Rue de la Paix, to whom the signor sends his carriage and the flowers every day. Francois, the coachman, says she is good and beautiful as an angel."

"Francois is right, and so are you, in your quick Italian wit, Antonio! Yes, that is the daughter of my kind friend. She is

indeed beautiful and good; but she has enemies; her aunt is ill and unable to protect her. Her uncle is leagued with her tormentor. They are bad men, and will betray the innocent dove unless we can defend her. Do you know the Count Serimia? Do you remember him at Palermo and his old castle near Ispica, over the valley of Tombs, in Sicily?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

MR. MURRAY was startled himself at the effect of his question upon his courier. Antonio sprang from his seat as if a serpent had stung him, and stood before Mr. Murray with his hand outstretched, his eyes blazing with fierce passion, his lips quivering, his strong, white teeth clenched in intense anger. He stood thus for an instant, then sinking slowly back in his chair, he said, in the low tones of suppressed hatred and deep emphasis:—

"Yes, signor! yes! I know the Count di Serimia! Listen, and I will try to tell you how I came to know him. Signor, I am but a poor man, a poor courier; but I have feelings and honor, too, as well as the nobleman. Signor, when I was very young, I left my home in Corsica and became a courier. My mother had married again, after my father's death, and went to Milan to live. Milan was no pleasant home to me. My father had been courier, and I followed his vocation. So I came to Paris, seeking employment. Shortly after I arrived here I met your excellency, and you were pleased to take me as your courier to the East. You remember, signor, there were other applicants for your service who were more learned and skilful than I; but you took me. It was a great favor to a poor fanciullo like myself; so I have considered it, and I strove to serve you faithfully."

Mr. Murray extended his hand to Antonio. "You have always been honest and true to me!"

The courier pressed the hand to his bearded lip, in his demonstrative Italian manner.

"Thanks, signor, it is a happiness to me to serve your excellency; I have always found it so," he paused an instant, then went on with his story.

"You know all that happened on that tour, signor; we were absent three years; you returned then to America, and I found employment with other families in my vocation. It was a wandering life I led, signor; here to-day, there to-morrow. I happened once to visit Milan, whilst travelling with some English people. I thought I would go to see my mother while there; I went, signor; I found my mother ill and very

poor—her second husband was dead. She had not long to live, I saw that; I gave her what money I had with me, and promised her to take care of a little girl, her only child by her second marriage. She was scarcely more than an infant, but she seemed to love me, and putting her little arms about my neck would kiss me, and stroke my beard and try to say 'brother,' as our mother bade her. Signor, I am a rough man, but my heart warmed to the little tender child. I arranged with a good neighbor, a widow, for her to take care of my poor mother while she lived, and to keep the little Gabriella, in case my mother died before I could get discharged from my employers. We travelled on, then, throughout Italy. I sent my mother money from time to time, as I got it. At last came a letter saying my mother was dead, and that the good neighbor had taken Gabriella home; then I sent my money to her. So, signor, I had something in the world belonging to me to live and save for—my little sister. Whenever I could I went to see her; at every visit I found her growing in beauty and goodness. At last Gabriella was grown up—seventeen years old. Then I thought, signor, I would bring her back with the good neighbor, who was like a mother to Gabriella; that I would take them back with me to Paris, and make a plain home for myself; for, signor, one grows weary wandering so much, and Paris was the best place for me to live in, on account of getting work. So I brought them, signor, and I had a home at last—a pleasant one to me; though so poor and simple, it was a place to rest in during the interval of journeys. Gabriella was the flower of my life—she was gay and so good! I thought I ought to seek a marriage for Gabriella, and let her still live in and keep my house, with her husband, for she was unprotected in my absences, and the kind woman whom she called mother was not very wise; then, if Gabriella stayed there, whenever I came back to Paris, I would find a warm little chamber for myself, and some one to love me; so I talked to Gabriella, and she chose a young artisan who lived in the attic above us, who often visited her. Jean was poor, but it did not matter; he was good and industrious, and had his trade; between us Gabriella would want for nothing; so they were betrothed and were soon to be married. Gabriella was gay as a bird; she seemed happy and satisfied. One Sunday she went with her Madre, as she called her, and her lover to the Bois de Boulogne; how well I remember how she looked; how pretty she was! She was dressed in a silk I had brought her from Lyons, and a bright scarf from Rome. I never forgot on my journey that she was a pretty girl and liked pretty things, signor; she had on her long,

gold ear-rings, and over her shining black hair she drew her Milanese veil of black lace; she liked it better than the stiff Parisian bonnets. My poor Gabriella! she left me, smiling like the spring, promising to return early, for I had to start early the next morning with some travellers for Constantinople. It was later than I expected before they returned, and Gabriella was out of humor, and her lover angry. It seems a party of gentlemen had rode past them. Struck with Gabriella's beauty and peculiar dress, they had spoken loudly their admiration, and one of them, returning shortly after, had thrown her a bunch of violets and other flowers, paying her an extravagant compliment at the same time. Gabriella was pleased with the flowers and his admiration, and had replied to him in her soft, broken French. Jean was angry that she was pleased, and snatching the flowers from her hand, trampled them under his feet, addressing furious reproaches in his jealousy to Gabriella, and threatenings to the gentlemen; then Gabriella was angry—and there, before the gentlemen, took back her promise from Jean and started back home with La Madre; the gentlemen only laughed and galloped away. I talked to both Jean and Gabriella, but she was stubborn and would not own she was wrong at all. Jean took his cap and went away. I was much troubled, but hoped it would all come right again after a little time. Jean loved Gabriella, and I knew she was reasonable, though somewhat spoiled from my indulgence and La Madre's weak love; so I started the next morning for Constantinople in good heart. I was gone six months, signor, and when I came back and hurried as soon as I could to my home, taking with me the cashmere shawl and pretty trinkets I had bought for my little sister, I found all silent, desolate; the *portière* had given me the key without a remark except a kindly greeting, saying, 'La Madre was not at home; everything was as usual; the simple furniture as I had left it. I thought they had gone out, perhaps to the flower-market, where Gabriella used often to go to buy natural flowers to work from—she was a flower-maker. It is a pretty trade, and she liked it, so I had to let her learn it, though she had no need to work, signor, unless she chose. I made enough for her and La Madre. I sat down on a chair and waited a long time, hours it seemed to me; at last I heard the slow, heavy step of La Madre mounting the staircase which led to our lodgings; it seemed to me slower and more feeble than I ever heard it. I listened to hear the lighter step of Gabriella; she always ran on before and opened the door. I got up and hid behind the door, intending to jump out and catch Gabriella before she discovered me—my poor little sister! but she did not

come. La Madre opened the door and tottered in; she had been to the market. In her basket were a loaf of bread and some vegetables. She put the basket down, leaned on the table with a deep sigh of fatigue and sadness; just then she spied my hat and cane which lay upon the table. 'Holy Virgin! Antonio is come back, and what have I to tell him!'

"Then she began to wring her hands, calling upon Madonna and all the saints to help her—and to help me. You may suppose, signor, I was alarmed. I thought my darling Gabriella was dead. I stepped from behind the door, and seizing her arm, bade her be quiet and tell me what all the lamentation meant. It was soon told, signor. I learnt that my sister had left me, and gone off with the gentleman she had met in the Bois de Boulogne. It seems he had met her again—found out where she lived—and then managed to see her constantly, both on Sunday when she would go to mass, or walk out with La Madre, for a little pleasure. He found out she went frequently to the flower-market, and he would meet her there. In short, it was the usual story, signor: A foolish young girl and an unprincipled man of the world. Gabriella refused to make friends with Jean, and told La Madre the gentleman had asked her to marry him. One morning he met her at the flower-market, and took her off in a carriage in spite of La Madre's entreaties to Gabriella not to go. Gabriella kissed her, told her she was going to be married to this nobleman, and would be a great lady, and would send for her, and for me too, to share her happiness. That was the last La Madre had seen or heard of Gabriella. Signor, you may imagine my feelings on hearing this tale. La Madre would not give me the name of this gentleman, but she said he was Italian, and she would know him if she ever met him again. I knew, signor, he would never marry my poor, foolish little sister; so I began to search for her. I made La Madre keep the rooms as they were, in case Gabriella should come back. I got the police to search for her. I put advertisements in the journals I thought perhaps might meet her eye. I walked the streets by day and by night. I frequented all the places of public amusement, but all in vain; I could not find my sister. I had no heart to leave Paris, and refused to go as courier to several people who wanted me. Month after month passed away. I was almost in despair, signor; it was the last of the winter. It had been a hard winter on the poor. I often dreamed of my little Gabriella—my poor little bird, lying out cold and dead in the snow and pelting rain. One day I was sitting in my room, signor, worn out with walking the streets all night, when the *portière* knocked at my door and handed me a letter. It was

from Gabriella—a long letter—written at intervals. She had gone away with the gentleman who had promised to take her immediately before the priest, and make her his wife. Of course, he did not, only drove to the railroad and went out to Versailles, where he took lodgings for her, but he continued to cheat her from time to time with promises, and she had no resource but to believe him, and hope on, while her better judgment warned her how baseless such hope was now. At first all was fair and pleasant; her betrayer indulged and flattered her, providing her with every comfort and luxury; but he grew weary of Gabriella's importunities and her tears, and ceased gradually his attentions and visits to her. She did not know his residence; knew nothing of him but his name, which she said she would not tell me, signor, fearing my vengeance on the villain. She lived at the lodgings he had placed her in as long as her money lasted, hoping he would return. At last she had to leave this place and get back to Paris, and go out in her grief and shame—she was then in no situation to bear exposure. She made a bundle of her best clothes and a few jewels she had; sold them; with the money she received, she rented a wretched attic, but still it was a shelter, she was thankful for it. She brought home materials for working at her trade, and managed to dispose of her flowers as she made them, through the kindness of a poor woman named Rosine, who lived next door to her. Thus Gabriella managed to live until her child was born. She was afraid and ashamed to come back to me, and called herself by another name, so that I could not find her. She was very sick after her child's birth, and the little money she had saved was soon spent. Rosine helped her as much as she could, but she, too, was very poor. Gabriella was forced to leave even this miserable shelter, and go into the street with her babe in her arms, and beg for bread. She never ventured where she thought I might find her. She sold all she had but rags to cover her, and a shawl to wrap her babe in. One day, almost starving, she ventured to beg alms from some gentlemen coming out of a café; they were stepping into a carriage standing in front of the door, in which one of the party was already seated. As Gabriella came forward, holding out her young child, pale and emaciated with misery and hunger, as she was, the man looked out of the carriage window. It was her betrayer; Gabriella screamed and seized the carriage-wheel with one hand. The man uttered an oath of annoyance, flung a piece of gold on the pavement, and ordered the coachman to drive on. The wheel turned. Gabriella still grasped it; she was thrown violently forward on the stones of the pavement, as

the carriage rolled swiftly away. A policeman picked her up. She was somewhat bruised; but her child's head had struck upon the hard stones—the babe was dead in her arms. They took it from her and carried her to the hospital. She lay there sick for several weeks, raving and utterly miserable. When she grew better, able to walk, they gave her a few sous and sent her away. She had no place to go to; she would not come back to me. She was weary of living. She took the money, bought some paper, pen and ink, and got permission to sit in Rosine's room while she wrote me this letter. It was her farewell to me and to life. Signor, I read her letter through. Every word burnt into my brain and my heart. Then I got up and took my hat. La Madre asked me where I was going. I told her to La Morgue; the letter was dated a day previous. I went to La Morgue, signor. They had just brought in some bodies caught in the net in the Seine. I walked through the dreadful room. There, dripping with water, her long black hair trailing almost to the floor and streaming pools of water upon it, lay what I sought—the body of my unfortunate sister. I took her away and buried her, where La Madre goes often to hang wreaths of immortelles above her grave. I went off again for several months as courier. I returned, signor, and was walking with La Madre along the Boulevard one day, when she suddenly cried out, catching my arm, pointing to a gentleman entering a café on the opposite side of the street.

"It is he," she said; 'the man who gave flowers to Gabriella.' I crossed the street, entered the café, bought an ice, and looked at the man. I knew him by sight. I had seen him before. It was Il Conte di Serimia."

Antonio almost hissed the name with the venom of a serpent through his clenched teeth, then resumed with calmness:—

"You see, signor, I know him, the Count Serimia. I have the *vendetta* against him!"

Mr. Murray shuddered at the quiet tone in which these words of mortal hate were breathed. He had been deeply moved by Antonio's tale. He sprang from his chair, and walked hastily up and down the room before he could trust himself to speak, then stepping before Antonio he said:—

"I have no one but you, Antonio, to do me a great service; but, after listening to your story, I scarcely know how to ask it of you; nor indeed can I dare to trust you, because you might be brought in contact with Serimia; and you have the *vendetta* against him."

"Signor," replied Antonio, "you have been good to me always; and so was the

Signor Graham. A true Italian forgets, as little his gratitude as his revenge. I would gladly serve you in any way that I can. I don't mean to use the assassinamento against Count Serimia; that would not serve my purpose at all. I know of his narrow escape from trial for the murder of the young Englishman. I mean to find the missing witness, and have him hung, if I can—Il Conte, the handsome young nobleman." Antonio smiled grimly at the thought.

Mr. Murray looked at him searchingly, his glance bent on the courier.

"Antonio, I have always found you true and faithful, a man of your word. Will you promise me, if I trust you now, never to attack Serimia's life except in self-defence?"

Antonio hesitated. At last he said:—

"I promise, signor; more, I swear it!"

He drew a small crucifix from his breast, and pressed it to his lips.

Mr. Murray held out his hand to him. It was quickly grasped. He knew he could trust Antonio. Then resuming his seat Mr. Murray proceeded to explain to him Agnes's situation. Mrs. Elmsworth had spoken to him about her husband's engaging a courier, if they found a man absolutely necessary to them in that capacity. He wished Antonio to secure the position, if possible. But he would have to be recommended from Galigiani, as he knew Mr. Elmsworth would employ no one at his recommendation; besides, he would fail in his plan, if it was known Antonio had any connection with him.

Antonio said there would be no difficulty about the recommendation. He could get as strong a one as he needed from Galigiani, or the English and American ambassadors, without using Mr. Murray's name in the matter.

Mr. Murray inquired "whether he supposed Serimia knew him at all?"

"No," replied Antonio; "he knows the brother of Gabriella has the vendetta against him, for I warned him by nailing a slip of paper upon his door with my vow written on it of vengeance against her seducer. But he cannot know me or my name. Gabriella may have spoken of her brother Antonio; her name was Lippi, her father's name; mine, Frascati. I will have my letters of reference made out as Jacopo Frascati; that is also my name—Antonio Jacopo Frascati. I was so christened. I am generally called Frascati."

It was so agreed. Antonio promised to write constantly to the address Mr. Murray gave him, in case Mr. Elmsworth should take it into his head to leave Paris during Mr. Murray's absence, and to do his utmost to watch over and protect Agnes. Mr. Murray promised to continue Antonio's

wages, and to secure him an annual pension of one thousand francs, so long as Antonio lived, if he faithfully performed his duty. He wrote a few lines, which he gave Antonio, at the latter's request, commending him to Agnes, and entreating her to repose full confidence in him.

"Because, signor," said Antonio, "the time may come when it would be very necessary and important to convince the signorina of my faithfulness to you."

Mr. Murray felt greatly relieved in his anxiety for Agnes when this matter was arranged, and he had secured so trusty an adherent near her. He was well satisfied to receive a letter from Antonio the day after he reached London, saying his plan had worked rightly. Mr. Elmsworth was satisfied with the strong recommendations brought him by Jacopo Frascati, and had engaged him immediately, glad to save himself trouble in looking for a courier. The family were to leave in a few days for Switzerland. Count Serimia had been frequently to visit them, had dined there, and was evidently urging their departure as soon as possible. He knew Mr. Murray was in England, and he was desirous to get Agnes out of Paris before he returned, without leaving any clue by which he could follow them. Antonio had made himself as useful to Mr. Elmsworth as possible. That gentleman was charmed with his skilful, obliging valet. He had been very attentive to Mrs. Lucy, who was loud in her praises of him to Mrs. Elmsworth and Miss Graham. He was in a fair way to become the general factotum; even Count Serimia noticed his careful attention and politeness. "I will gain the good-will of all," wrote Antonio, "that I may be useful to the young lady—and of Il Conte, that I may gain his confidence and bring him yet to the bar of justice."

A week after, Mr. Murray received another dispatch from Antonio. They were about to start for Geneva. Count Serimia was to travel with them. "It is painful to Miss Graham," wrote Antonio, "but she is helpless to resist this intrusion, and so is Madame. Mr. Elmsworth has discharged good Mrs. Lucy because she speaks a little French, and has taken a creature of Serimia's instead to wait on the ladies. The ladies are distressed at parting with Mrs. Lucy, but are compelled to yield to Mr. Elmsworth's, or rather Serimia's will. Fanchon is nothing more than a spy for him. I have taken Mrs. Lucy for the present to my lodging, to live with La Madre until you return, signor. You will be so kind, I know, as to procure for her another situation. She wishes to return to America. I shall keep strict surveillance over Fanchon."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

On the day that the Elmsworths were starting from Paris to Geneva, a very different scene was being enacted at Davenant Hall. A small crowd of people were waiting at the landing the arrival of the packet from Memphis. Dr. Leonard was there, and Mr. Danvers. The countenances of both were sad, and the words exchanged between them were few and full of sorrow. A number of the planters in the neighborhood were grouped together, conversing in low tones, their equipages standing off a short distance. Their footmen and attendants were gathered together in imitation of their masters, interchanging high-flown compliments, and exchanging all the petty gossip of the plantations. The carriage from the hall was there, with its handsome horses and usual attendants, but they did not join the gossiping groups around them. Every hat was bound with long weepers of black crape, and streamers of the same material were attached to the head stall of each horse, instead of the customary rosette of green and silver. Between the carriage and the river bank nearest the landing-place, in the central position, stood an unwonted equipage—a large, black-plumed, double hearse. Its curtains of velvet swept the long sides of the vehicle with their silver fringe, and the Davenant arms gleamed spectrally in silver embroidery upon their heavy folds. This carriage, always distasteful and depressing to poor humanity, was drawn by four noble iron gray horses, almost concealed by the large pall of black velvet which hung over the back of each horse, trailing nearly to the ground the rich fringes and emblazonry similar to that upon the curtains of the hearse. The boat came in sight. Her shrill whoop echoed over the river; she slowly rounded to; the broad stage was run out. Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers went on board. In a few moments, the regular tramp of men carrying a burden was heard. The sad procession appeared, Mr. Danvers and the captain of the boat leading the way. The passengers thronging the gangway of the boat uncovered their heads; the friends and neighbors of the deceased on shore walked forward and stood bareheaded in the presence of death. The heavy cases—the outer coverings of the leaden coffins—were borne by their handles of massive silver, by twelve men—six on each side. Following close behind the last and smaller case, walked Robert Selman, his hat drawn low over his brow, his head sunk upon his breast, his arms folded in the sable cloak which hung around him. Dr. Leonard walked by his side. No one greeted him save by sympathizing silence, but all eyes bent sorrowfully and pitifully upon him.

So Eleanor Selman and her husband came home to the house she so loved, and had so deeply suffered in during her mortal life. Judge Selman, taken suddenly ill with gastric fever, died after a few days' illness. His wife survived him but a single day. The shock killed her, enfeebled as she was by heart disease; her husband's death was a mortal blow. The coffins were lifted into the hearse. Robert got into the carriage, Mr. Danvers with him. Dr. Leonard drove after in his buggy. The neighbors took their places in their respective carriages, and the mournful train started towards the Hall. The boat waited until they were out of sight, and then the long, mournful whoop, sounding like a farewell, showed that she had left the landing, and was speeding on her path down the mighty river. The neighbors followed to the gate of the park, then turned back, leaving the hearse and mourners to enter alone. The old servants stood weeping at the door, where they had so often welcomed their kind master and mistress. In profound stillness and deepest grief, tenderly, carefully, by their hands, the coffins were lifted out of the hearse, carried to the funeral chamber, and laid upon the slab beneath the canopy. The black, ghostly plumes bowed and nodded in the wind. The candles blazed and flickered in the tall candelabras. The watchers were all ready at their posts. Robert had written, "Let all be done according to family custom, as my mother would have desired."—and it was so done. Three days and nights the dead lay in the ancestral pomp; the wax-lights making mournful brilliancy in that gloomy chamber. On the fourth morning, the strong bolt was drawn back which closed the double door. The hearse stood without in all its stately trappings; but now, at the head of every horse, walked a groom in mourning, checking to a solemn tread the steps of the fiery steeds. Friends, neighbors, and strangers streamed after on foot in long procession. All the negroes of the vast estate followed, walking four abreast. Tears ran copiously down their sable faces. Those they came to bury had been faithful and true to them, and could answer confidently at the judgment bar, that for the slaves delivered to their care by God's providence, they had done what they could. So all wept for Judge Selman and his noble wife. Robert and Dr. Leonard walked nearest the dead. The gate of the private road to the churchyard was open: solemnly and slowly the procession advanced. As the hearse passed through the churchyard gate, Mr. Danvers' voice rose like a clarion upon the stillness, in the grand rejoicing words of the burial service:—

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord!"

The service was ended. The glorious

pean which the church sings over the graves of her faithful dead was finished on earth. (Does it ever end in Paradise?) The inner iron gate of the mausoleum was closed; the masons, with their trowels, began to replace gently the marble slabs which blocked up and concealed the entrance of the vast tomb. Robert Selman turned away, and hastened, with quick strides, towards the desolate hall, now his home. Dr. Leonard would have accompanied him in his fond, anxious sympathy; but Robert motioned to him not to come. The stricken man would be alone with his grief. What earthly comfort remained for him?

Some people like to receive what they call sympathy, and cannot bear to be without companionship in their sorrows. It may be the better, softer temperament, I do not know. The grief that can weep may often be consoled. The sight of tears in other eyes, the sound of loving words from friendly lips give balm and solace to some. But there are men, and women, too, of different mould and temperament; when the blow strikes home, when the very chords of life seem severed and bleeding, riven with wounds from God's thunderbolts, which his hand alone can stanch, and bind and heal (for God can heal any, all wounds that human heart can feel)!—there are no tears in the dry eyes blasted with excess of sorrow—no words from the pallid lips to cry aloud the agony that is unutterable to any ear but God's! Oh, kind heart, leave such a man or woman alone with their grief. The blanched face will smile back wintrily in yours—the burning hand return your friendly pressure—in vain. Job's friends comforted him most when they sat down beside him in the ashes seven days *in silence*. Rest and quiet, to be alone with grief, alone with God, that is best. The comforter will be sent in God's own time; the wound will heal at his command—not sooner. Then the Christian mourner learns, through the Pentecostal fire, the strange language of affliction, and he can interpret for himself the lesson, before unintelligible, that the grief was sent to teach, and can tell with the Psalmist "why he was afflicted." But Robert Selman had no Christ to go to. Human sympathy he disdained—who so utterly bereaved as he? The people who had crowded to the funeral soon scattered, talking as they went homeward—discussing the funeral, the sudden illness, the virtues of the deceased, the morbid pride of the Davenants, the value of the inheritance, the grief of the heir. The rector and Dr. Leonard went home, too, but it was to retire to their separate apartments. There was no food eaten that day at either rectory or hall.

A few days after this eventful one, Mr. Danvers wrote to Agnes, bidding her break the heartrending intelligence to Mrs. Elmsworth as discreetly as she could.

"I know, my child," he wrote, "how great will be your sorrow. It is well that you have another, so weak as Emmeline, dependent upon you. I pray God will grant you strength to perform your duty now as faithfully as you have ever tried to do it." He told her further that Mrs. Selman had left a will, devising some legacies: One of a small pension to Mrs. Clark; Alice's portrait to Dr. Leonard; and all her jewels to her "niece, Agnes Graham, daughter of my dear sister Agnes, as a slight token of the deep love I have ever borne her." She is already so amply provided with wealth that she does not need the daughter's portion which I would else set apart for her; but I leave to her the sum of \$20,000 to be invested, and the interest to be paid her by Dr. Leonard, or any one else whom the said Agnes, my niece, may appoint as her agent and trustee. This interest I desire my niece to appropriate to such charities as she may see fit, my object being to recall to her remembrance continually, by the use of this money, the affection and tender interest I feel towards her."

Mrs. Selman's will was written after Agnes's visit to Davenant Hall.

"Robert," continued Mr. Danvers, "seems entirely overwhelmed and absorbed in his grief, and keeps himself shut up in his own apartment. He refuses to take any interest even in the necessary affairs belonging to the estate, and entreats to be spared all such details for the present. Dr. Leonard, consequently, is obliged to look after everything."

Mr. Danvers hoped, however, that in a few weeks Robert would be calm enough to attend to his business matters. He had endeavored to prevail upon him to leave the gloomy hall and stay at the rectory for a while, but without success. Dr. Leonard was with Robert at the time he wrote, "else would have added a line to his darling child; but he had gone to meet a man who was to fix the lightning-rods which had gotten out of order at the hall."

A week later, another letter was written to Agnes from the rectory, again freighted with sorrowful intelligence. Dr. Leonard wrote: The day after Mr. Danvers' letter to Agnes, there was a fearful storm, almost a tornado. It tore up large trees by the roots, and laid fences and even houses prostrate before it. One of the dreadful southern tempests, almost a hurricane. "The low roaring of the thunder, the hoarse muttering of the wind," Dr. Leonard said, "was fearful to hear." The lightning came in incessant sheets of vivid forked flame, and the rain fell in whirling torrents. He was at the hall, sitting with Robert, when suddenly the great plantation bell began to ring furiously, and the negroes ran screaming towards the hall, calling "Fire!" It was

"Fire," truly enough! The hall itself was on fire, caught from the lightning, which had set fire to the curtains and plumes of the funeral chamber, where a window had been carelessly fastened after the recent funeral, and had blown open through the violence of the storm. The lightning rods were out of order. They were to have been put in repair that very day, but the sudden bursting forth of the tempest prevented its being accomplished in time. The house was old, the interior wood-work very dry, and so filled with hangings and drapery, that it burnt like tinder. The fire had gotten such a start, the flames were bursting through the floor and out of the windows, before the negroes (who first discovered it) saw it from their quarters. They got out the silver plate and valuable papers, and some furniture. The portraits were set in the walls, so they were all lost, except Judge Selman's and his wife's. Robert had seized an axe, and rushing through the smoke and flames, had cut them out and borne them safely out in his own arms, regardless of his exposure either to the fire or the pelting storm. They could do no more. The negroes were superstitious about fire: from lightning, as they do not believe it can be extinguished, and Robert positively forbade any one's exposing himself in attempting to either save the house or furniture. So they stood off at a safe distance, and watched the destruction of the fine old mansion, the negroes weeping with all the extravagant demonstration of that excitable race, and the rest in silence. The house soon burned up, the walls fell in, and Davenant Hall was only a remembrance!

Dr. Leonard said, "Robert, strange to say, seemed scarcely grieved! He stood, leaning against a tree in the park, with his arms folded, looking at the blazing house, with a bitter smile upon his lips. 'Monument of pride,' he muttered, 'accursed home of an accursed race! let it perish! Poor Eleanor! I am glad she is spared this blow! she loved this place so dearly! Robert has suffered so deeply here, that he has only bitter feelings towards it; but George and I feel as if we had lost another friend, in the old house; and we have so few friends to lose at our age! But we feel grateful, my child, so long as you are spared to us. Robert is here, at the rectory; as soon as his affairs are arranged here, he will go to South America, he says, with a young physician of New Orleans, who goes out on professional business. I encourage the idea it will do Robert good to get away from this place for a while; he will probably sail in two weeks, before you can receive this letter. My child! I must say to you, I begin to recognize the hand of Providence in separating you from your cousin. Dear as Robert is to us—to me—for he has the

same blood in his veins which warmed the heart of my beloved Alice—I am compelled to see, with infinite pain, that he is thoroughly imbued with German skepticism and materialism. Why, why was he sent to Europe? No advantages of education could ever repay for the deadly poison of doubt and unbelief imbibed in that polluted atmosphere. My poor, heart-stricken boy finds no comfort, no consolation in the hopes of immortality which brightened the dying hours of his parents. He listens respectfully, but in gloomy doubt, to the consolation which the tender words of Mr. Danvers proffers to him. This very morning, taking George's gentle hand in his, he raised it to his lips, saying as he did so, 'Dear Mr. Danvers, I wish I could think and believe as you do—but it is impossible. I do not—and cannot.' George threw his arms around Robert and wept over him. I brought your last sweet letter, my darling child, in which you describe your feelings in receiving your first communion at the American Chapel in Paris—the serene peace and calmness that fell upon your troubled heart, and the earnest prayer in which you remembered us all—particularly your cousin. I gave it to Robert—he read it. For the first time since his mother's death, he wept. He asked permission to keep the letter—I gave it to him. I asked him, my dear, why he did not correspond with you, as he had always done before the sad parting between you; you were still cousins, and the last of your race? Surely, friendship might exist, even if a closer tie was forbidden."

"No," he replied, "no, I cannot; it is folly to think she can ever be to me a mere friend, the sister of my early days. All—or nothing! She is to me, and must ever be, the one woman on earth that I love. She must either become mine wholly—or let the silence of the grave rest between us. Dr. Leonard," he continued, "concerning Agnes now, two events only I desire ever to know—her marriage, or her death, should I survive her. She may marry—it is possible—though I know, and she knows too, no man will ever be to her heart what I have been—what I am. If a future is possible for her, let her make it. If it is possible for me, I shall endeavor to seize it at the flood-tide. I am tempted sometimes, do you know, and he laughed scornfully, 'I am often tempted to believe in the old Greek fable of the wrath of the gods, and their determinate pursuit of vengeance against certain families. The Calvinistic doctrine of fatality, 'reprobation,' or 'God's unchangeable decrees,' or whatever technical term they have for it, would suit me very well, just now. Your Scriptures are as bad as the Pagan faith—for the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the fourth

generation. I know it is so physically; my medical experience tells me that; and why not morally? I wonder what dreadful sins old Philip St. George committed, besides killing that pious Achates of his in a gentlemanly way! Agnes and I are the fourth generation, the last, I trust, of the accursed race. It was vain to argue with him in that bitter mood. Agnes, my child, is your heart bleeding at these wild words? Our hearts did; but it is best, my dear, that you should know all, so that you may pray for what he needs, dear wretched boy! I am an old man, my child, and therefore do not blush for the tear-drops which have fallen as I write, and blistered these pages."

CHAPTER XXIX.

AGNES was exceedingly annoyed, as Antonio had said, when she discovered that Count Serimia was to be so familiarly associated with them in their future travels. Mrs. Elmsworth was scarcely less troubled than her niece, but they both knew it to be worse than useless to attempt any expostulation with Mr. Elmsworth, who never consulted any will save his own, and, recently, Count Serimia's. Mrs. Elmsworth had grieved greatly at parting with the faithful Mrs. Lucy and the substitution of Fanchon. It was a very serious discomfort to her, for Fanchon spoke very little English, so that she was of little use to the poor invalid, who became consequently more and more dependent upon her niece. Nobly did Agnes respond to the calls of duty. She herself had conceived a dislike and prejudice instinctively against the fawning, crafty French maid, with her restless catlike eyes. Fanchon was always bright, active, ready to do all and more than was demanded of her, but Mrs. Elmsworth seemed to shrink from having her about her, so much that Agnes quietly assumed all the duties which had been performed for her aunt by Mrs. Lucy, and Fanchon's place was little better than a sinecure. Fanchon attempted on several occasions to intrude herself and her attentions upon the invalid, but Agnes, with all her womanliness, knew perfectly well how to keep people in their places, and Fanchon, after several essays, had no desire to risk encountering again one of those haughty, firm glances, and to hear the slow, distinct words which required her to remain in the adjoining apartments, and only to come when the bell summoned her attendance. Mr. Elmsworth himself had no fancy for meeting Agnes in what he called her "Davenant moods," still less Fanchon. So Agnes's life became more and more restricted within her aunt's sick room. She could not

but notice how many little offices of considerate kindness and thoughtfulness were shown to both her aunt and herself by the courier Frascati. He seemed to have a magical consciousness of their wants, and Agnes felt continually as if innumerable little annoyances and discomforts were warded off, contrary to her anticipations; by some strong unseen arm. She had a strange feeling of confidence in the unknown poor courier, and she really was most grateful to him for her aunt's sake. Frascati had suggested to Mr. Elmsworth that it would be far more convenient for him to occupy a carriage with Il Conte, and he (Frascati) on the box, and to take another for madame, who was so ill, who was best with the Signorina and Fanchon, than to have one huge post-chaise. Mr. Elmsworth heartily concurred in this. Serimia dared not object to the arrangement, though it separated him almost entirely from Agnes, whom he scarcely ever saw. He consoled himself by thinking it would be better when they were stationary, as they travelled very slowly, stopping sometimes for a day or so, according as Mrs. Elmsworth's strength failed; but by some unaccountable means he was balked even then, and yet in such ways that he could not suspect any design, and though dissatisfied, had nothing of which he could justly complain. He liked the attentive courier, and acknowledged to Mrs. Elmsworth "that Frascati did manage to secure every convenience for them, and was altogether a most attentive and convenient rascal." Antonio's dark eyes flashed strangely, and a quick, sinister smile passed like lightning over his lips, as Mr. Elmsworth, in his boorish way, repeated Serimia's words to him as he was attending upon them one day. He bowed low, placing his hand upon his heart: "Il Conte did him much honor; his only desire was to make himself as useful as possible to Monsieur and Il Conte." He was indeed a jewel of a courier.

When they reached Geneva, after going up the Rhine, the fatigue of travel had so prostrated Mrs. Elmsworth that no manoeuvring was necessary to show that Agnes must remain constantly with the invalid. Frascati was so thoughtful and kind at this time that Agnes stopped him one day as he handed in at the door a plate full of fine grapes for her aunt, and thanked him. Frascati's face beamed with satisfaction.

"Signorina," he said, earnestly, "I can do but little for you or madame, but my will is good, command me to the utmost—I will do my best always!"

Elmsworth and Serimia took a fancy to visit the Lake of Lucerne. Serimia had encountered some acquaintances en route to the Righi, and as he found the often-visited scenery of Switzerland somewhat of a bore, and the society of Elmsworth very wear-

some, often disgusting (for Serimia, though a villain, was refined in his habits, and cultivated and delicate even in his vices), he was charmed to meet some *bon vivans*, some fast men, who could at least aid him in entertaining "*ce bête*," as he contemptuously termed Elmsworth. Agnes protested against this jaunt. She saw her aunt was growing more and more feeble. The feverishness of travel harmed her; the cool, dry air of the Swiss mountains was poison to her poor, weak, irritated lungs. But Agnes might as well have appealed to Mont Blanc as to Elmsworth, in any point where his fancies were concerned. As for Serimia—God forgive him—the sound of the more frequent hollow cough, which so often brought the life-blood to the pale lips of the fast declining woman, was almost music to his ears. "She can't last long—especially in this bleak climate; let her live only till we reach Italy! then the sooner she is out of the way, the better!" Antonio managed to secure apartments for the two men of the party that neither connected nor could communicate in any way with those he had taken for Agnes and her aunt. When he retired to rest in one of the finest rooms in the hotel, he laughed aloud—counting the keys of all these rooms he had taken. "One, two, three, four, that is all. Ah, Signor Murray! you will find me faithful—I will watch well over the signorina—I know money is no object to you."

After seeing her aunt comfortable for the night, Agnes stepped out of the saloon on to the balcony which fronted its windows. It overhung the lake. The night was clear—the moon poured a flood of light over the exquisite scene. Before her stretched out the loveliest lake in the world—its waves dimpling in the moonbeams. On one side towered Pilatus—rugged, and sharply cutting its peak against the perfect heavens; gleaming beyond its dark crest she beheld the glittering white snow caps of the Bernese Alps; on the opposite side of the lake softly rose the green summit of the Righi. On the lake below at their bases shot to and fro, darting swiftly through the moon's rays as they sparkled on the blue water, row-boats, filled with gay people. The sounds of laughter, of glad voices, a burst of song, or a merry jodel, were wafted to her ears by the night-breeze.

A man's voice chanted the verses from William Tell.

"Es lächelt der See, er ladet zum Bade.
Der Knabe schlief ein am grünen Gestade.
Da hort er ein klugen
Wie Flöten so süß,
Wie Stimmen der Engel
Im Paradies."

Und, wie er erwacht in seliger Lust,
Da spülen die Wasser ihm um die Brust,
Und es ruft aus den Tiefen:
Lieber Knabe bist mein!
Ich locke den Schläfer,
Ich zieh ihn herein."

Agnes clasped her hands in ecstasy of admiration—her soul was intoxicated with the beauty around her.

"Oh God! what a beautiful world! how beautiful! too beautiful to be real!" She hung entranced, leaning over the balustrade, drinking in with thirsty soul the charms of the perfect scene, until a boat passed close beneath her balcony, and she distinguished the soft, smooth tones of Serimia's voice, as he made some light reply to the coarse badinage of her uncle.

Agnes shuddered, with disgust and horror, as she recognized her own name, uttered flippantly and irreverently by the man who was the husband of her aunt—her sole protector here. She turned away hastily, and left the balcony. The night was spoiled for her. The serpents had entered Paradise.

The climate was getting too cold in Switzerland for Mrs. Elmsworth; Serimia was tired too; it was now September; it was agreed to hasten into Italy. Mrs. Elmsworth wished to get to Rome before the winter set in, so the pilgrimage began again as soon as she could bear it.

Mr. Murray had returned to Paris, but judged it best not to join the party during their travel; his trusty agent kept him fully posted in regard to their plans; he saw Serimia was quiet; not ready to use foul means to attain his base ends, he felt that his presence or any one else's would be an intrusion upon Agnes in her aunt's feeble state. As long as Mrs. Elmsworth lived, Agnes was personally safe; he served Agnes best by remaining away and holding himself in readiness to join her as soon as Antonio notified him. He kept Antonio freely supplied with money and passports, in case he should wish to use them, for Agnes or himself. Mr. Murray had no thought of self in his entire devotion to the daughter of his old friend, but he was but human after all, and sometimes the thought would cross him that Agnes was very young and eternally separated from her cousin by barriers her conscience would never permit her to pass. Was it impossible for her heart to be weaned from the hopeless affection he knew still struggled in her soul? Could she never be won by devotion, constancy, tenderest love? He knew his own love for her to be higher, purer, more unselfish than Robert's; for he would, oh, so gladly, give his own happiness, his own life, in exchange for hers. He would have laid her hand in Robert's and blessed them, in his perfect love for her, satisfied if she were but once more the bright, happy young girl he had known at Mrs. Hudson's. Mr. Murray had thoroughly conquered his own heart, and schooled it; but human hearts are wild dreamers after all, and Hope will sing us to sleep with fairy tales even in mature age. If a day-dream flashed across Mr. Murray's

mind, he resolutely thrust it back—he could do no more! He procured a situation for Mrs. Lucy in an American family, who were to pass the winter at Nice, and who designed returning in the spring to Louisiana—an arrangement which suited her very well.

Agnes had hours and hours of extreme anguish. In her undisciplined youthful thought, hers seemed a strange hard fate, to be inflicted on her by the will of the Creator. "Why," she would exclaim at such times, "why was I ever made at all? I had no volition in the fact of my creation. By what tyranny had God a right to make me, a sentient being, only to crush and kill me? What right had He to frame me with this intellect only to be capable of disorganization? With these affections, only to be torn asunder? He had no right to create me if I was only born to suffer! I do not thank him for this gift of life! It would be a boon to be utterly annihilated, to 'Robert and to me.' So Agnes raged in her short-sightedness—in her agony. Then, too, would come over her fearful shudderings at the recollection of those dreadful, splendid apartments with their unmovable furniture so resplendent with silk and gold; those terrible rooms, where it was possible, nay, even probable, she or Robert might come at last to be shut out and hidden from the sight of man—noxious, harmful beings, whose very existence would be a burden and a curse. The horrible, dark, shapeless, grinning, glittering phantom with glittering eyes, from which the light of reason was forever fled, with clanking chain, and ever-extended, eager, seeking, never-unclasping arms, and fearful devil's claws endeavoring to grasp and rend her—to drag her down below the level of brutes and beasts—seemed ever by her side. The unspeakably loathsome phantom of incurable insanity hovered around her always. "Oh! God! God!" she would cry, "anything but that, anything but that. Slay me, let me die, and I will praise and bless thee forever! Ah! Death is so merciful—it is not even pain—it is no evil—no evil this physical change we call Death; but, oh, touch not my soul, spare my intellect. Since thou hast chosen to create me rational, do not blur and degrade thy own creation." Agnes was so highly organized that she, like most people, was nearly Manichean in her perception of life; she had no respect for matter at all, she had to learn that afterwards in her experiences of life. She learned through her own sufferings, but more through those of others, and from the teachings of Christianity, that the body, too, was valuable in God's sight, that matter in itself was pure and equally indestructible with spirit, that disease and irrationality and disorganization were as terrible in one almost as in the other. Agnes learned to value material existence

as well as spiritual; to thank the God she now reproached so wildly for her creation; to estimate the priceless boon of being, of mere existence—of pure vitality—in God's immense universe. But now she fretted like a frightened child crying out in the dark over the fearful forms imaged by its own fancy. Among the Vallais, in Switzerland, Agnes suffered terribly every time a cretin approached her. She shuddered, she would turn away her head while she redoubled her almsgiving. But one evening, as the carriages were slowly climbing up a mountain, as they passed near a small chalet, Agnes observed a horrible cretin, a woman with an enormous goitre and greatly deformed. This creature hobbled up to the carriage and held out her hand for alms as usual. Agnes laid some money in the outstretched palm; just then the chapel bell sounded from the village, and the Jubilate of the evening hymn burst forth in a lovely chorus of children's voices from the village school-house. The cretin sank upon her knees, and putting her poor deformed fingers together, she lifted her heavy stupid face with a smile which irradiated it, looking up to the sky. Agnes fell back in her seat with a groan. She covered her eyes with her hands, and the tears streamed from between the slender fingers.

"What is it, Agnes?" asked Mrs. Elmsworth, feebly, hearing her niece's sobs.

"Oh! Aunt Emmeline, I have been so wicked and so ungrateful to God," sobbed Agnes; "but I will try to do better."

"My dear," said Mrs. Elmsworth, in a weak voice, "God is so good, and so wise, you will know when you stand face to face with Death, as I do. Never distrust him, Agnes; resign yourself in his hands; so peace will come, and joy, at last when you are in harmony with your Creator and the order of His universe."

"I will try, Aunt Emmeline," said Agnes, humbly, and there seemed to come a cool wind from the white snow-capped mountains, which fanned her heated brow lovingly and laid itself calmly to rest in her fever-tortured heart. Agnes's constant care of her aunt was beneficial to her, she learned so many lessons of quiet patience; and un-murmuring endurance of acute physical as well as mental pain, from the fast declining woman.

The Elmsworths reached Genoa safely, but Mrs. Elmsworth was so wearied that it was thought best to proceed immediately by sea to Civita Vecchia, and from thence to Rome, where they had ordered all letters for the whole party to be forwarded.

They were established, in the course of a week, in a pleasant suite of apartments overlooking the Piazza di Spagna. The column of the Immaculate Conception before their windows, which commanded, as

a side view, the steps leading to the convent of the Trinita del Monte, with its ever-changing crowd of the picturesque vagabondage of Rome. Agnes stepped to the window and looked about her with interest and curiosity; she could not repress a thrill of emotion as she remembered that she stood within the walls of the "Eternal City." She had seen but little, so far, of the customary sights of foreign travel. She was soon obliged, however, to recall her wandering eyes and thoughts to her aunt, who seemed unusually feeble and exhausted from the railroad travel. Agnes helped her to undress and into her bed, and arranged everything as comfortably as she could for her. She was standing by her aunt, holding a glass of cordial to her lips, when Mr. Elmsworth entered the room with a large package of letters.

"Two for Agnes, from the Rectory," he said. He gave them to her and quitted the room, taking his own letters with him. Agnes proposed to read her letters aloud to her aunt, but Mrs. Elmsworth opened her languid eyes and begged she would defer reading them to her until the next morning, she was so very weary and tired.

"Go, my dear," she said, "to your own room; Fanchon can sit here until you return; I think I can sleep; go and enjoy your letters." Agnes was glad to obey the mandate. Two hours afterwards, Fanchon stole gently from the bed of the sleeping invalid, softly opened the door of Agnes's chamber, and peeped in. Agnes was not conscious of her presence; she was lying prostrate upon the floor, deep sobs shaking her whole form almost convulsively, her hands clasped and flung over her head in an agony of grief; the great tears rolling like drops of lead from her closed eyes. Fanchon closed the door and stole away as softly as she had come. She met Frascati in the narrow passage:—

"Ah, monsieur, mademoiselle est tellement affligée! Je n'ai jamais vue une telle desespoir," and she lifted her hands and shrugged her shoulders. "Je pense qu'il doit être à cause d'un amant," continued she.

Antonio seized her by the shoulders with his powerful hands, and whirled her around until she stood face to face with him.

"Look here, Fanchon, if you go about spying and intruding on mademoiselle, I will inform monsieur what I know about—" he stooped and whispered a word in her ear.

Fanchon bit her lips and stamped her foot with vexation.

"Mon Dieu! that is only slander, and you know it, Monsieur Frascati!"

"Slander or no, my pretty Fanchon, it will go hard with you to have it known to monsieur or Il Conte di Scrimia!" Anto-

nio laughed his low, scornful laugh as he uttered this last name.

Fanchon looked at him as if alarmed; then in her most coaxing tone:—

"But surely you would not harm a poor young girl, trying now honestly to get her bread? Monsieur is too generous for that."

"As for the honesty, my little Fanchon, we will not discuss that point; but I will make a bargain with you. Let mademoiselle alone; cease spying into her hours of privacy, and reporting all she does or says, as you know you do." Antonio looked steadily at her, Fanchon's eyes fell; "and I will not only make it worth your while by doubling the amount you now receive from—you know who, but I will also promise to forget all I know concerning Mademoiselle Rosette Marie Fanchon de—"

Fanchon put her hand over his lips. It was a pretty hand—Antonio gallantly kissed it.

"Enough, enough, Monsieur Frascati; your reasoning is convincing; I accept your propositions."

"How many francs is it now, mademoiselle, per month?"

Fanchon counted on her fingers. "One hundred," she replied.

"Ah, well! mademoiselle, receive two hundred." Antonio pulled out his pocket-book and gravely counted out the money.

Fanchon's gray eyes glistened; she took it eagerly.

"Now," continued Antonio, "this amount every month, and perhaps more if you are faithful, and obey me implicitly."

"But, monsieur," said Fanchon, "he—my employer—he will discover—then what shall I do?"

"You shall continue to report to him. You have imagination under these pretty temples, my charming Fanchon; only you must swear by the Holy Virgin to bring me a written account of every word you or he may say."

"Ah," said Fanchon, "that is very easy; quite delightful it is to have so sensible and amiable a person as you to deal with, Monsieur Frascati!"

"And remember, beautiful Fanchon, I have means of ascertaining whether you deal truly or not with me."

"Assuredly monsieur need not distrust me! Two hundred francs and perhaps more! Monsieur may rely on my honor."

Fanchon, bowing gracefully, retraced her steps and tripped lightly into Mrs. Elmsworth's room; she was sleeping calmly.

Agnes Graham's head touched no pillow that night. Fanchon came in the morning and found her sleeping the sleep of exhaustion where she had seen her lying the night before, upon the floor, the traces of blistering tears plainly marked upon her

cheeks; in her clasped hands were clenched the letters of Mr. Danvers and Dr. Leonard.

"Poor thing!" muttered Fanchon, as she threw a shawl over her feet, without disturbing her. "Poor young lady! she is suffering much! it would indeed be a shame to betray her! and then two hundred francs! it is much!"

Fanchon stepped out lightly, and, calling Frascati, asked him to have a warm bath prepared in her own room, which opened into Agnes's by a communicating door.

"So as to have it ready against mademoiselle's waking; she will need it, monsieur; for she has lain all night weeping on the floor, where she has just fallen asleep! It is some great trouble apparently."

Fanchon took Mrs. Elmsworth her breakfast, told her Agnes was suffering with severe headache, and had fallen asleep, and she thought it best not to waken her. Mrs. Elmsworth commended her discretion. Fanchon was so dextrous and attentive, and showed so much hearty good-will, that Mrs. Elmsworth began to think she had done the girl great injustice in her prejudices against her.

So Agnes thought also when she woke up, finding the shawl carefully thrown over her; and after she had risen, aching and tired, from her hard couch, trying to collect her scattered thoughts, Fanchon stood before her, saying—

"Mademoiselle, you were so weary last night that you fell asleep on the floor without undressing; so I have had a hot bath prepared for you in my own room. If mademoiselle will condescend to use it as a bathroom this morning, she will find it very refreshing."

Agnes felt that she would, and therefore accepted Fanchon's offer. Her limbs trembled so she could scarcely stand, but she was forced to exert herself she knew, for her aunt's sake; but the pallid cheek and knitted brow showed what a violent constraint she was putting upon herself. Fanchon threw open the door between the rooms, assisted Agnes to undress, and left her. She returned after she heard Agnes re-enter her own chamber, bearing a small waiter with a tiny cup of strong coffee and a thin slice of toasted bread.

"If mademoiselle will drink this coffee which Monsieur Frascati has made himself for her, and eat a mouthful of toast, mademoiselle will feel better able to attend to madame, who has already asked for her."

Agnes swallowed the coffee, but refused the bread. Tears rushed again to her eyes, as she thought of the sad intelligence she would have to communicate to her aunt. She covered her face with her hands and groaned aloud.

Fanchon stood respectfully behind her. Agnes's long, black hair hung in dishevelled

masses over her shoulders. Fanchon touched it with her hands.

"If mademoiselle will permit, I could quickly arrange mademoiselle's coiffure, and relieve mademoiselle of that trouble."

Agnes sat down mechanically. Fanchon dexterously disentangled the heavy plaits, and in a very little time Agnes's hair was folded around her head as she usually wore it. Fanchon was an artiste in hair-dressing. Agnes thanked her, finished her toilet, and grasping her letters in her hand passed into the salon, where she found Mr. Elmsworth and Count Serimia just preparing to set out on a tour of inspection. Agnes scarcely heard Serimia's gallant salutation, returned it by a hasty bow, and walking up to her uncle, requested to have a few moments' private conversation with him before he went out. Mr. Elmsworth looked at Serimia, who, taking up his hat, bowed and quitted the salon. Agnes requested her uncle to be seated, and handed him Mr. Danvers' letter. He was as much startled as it was possible for him to be at the intelligence it contained.

"Poor Selman! poor Eleanor! It is very sudden!"

Agnes made no reply, but folding Dr. Leonard's letter so as to show only the description of the burning of the hall, she gave him that to read also.

"Good God! this is dreadful!" exclaimed he; "this will kill Emmeline."

"I fear it will," said Agnes; "for that reason I thought it best to consult you as to what it was best to do."

"I think it best to say nothing about it, can do no good. She will never return alive to America at any rate. Our letters are so uncertain she will never be alarmed, even if she receives none for some time."

"Aunt is certainly very much prostrated by this travel," replied Agnes. "You think the end not far off; in that case it would be humane to conceal this from her, and spare her suffering. I can say the letters concerned my own affairs principally, as they certainly do, and she will soon be beyond the reach of mortal suffering."

"I should think that the best course to pursue," said Mr. Elmsworth, taking up his hat and walking out of the room to join Count Serimia, who was waiting for him in the passage, where they could hear him humming the air of the Duke's song in "Rigoletto."

Agnes was spared any questions about her letters. Mrs. Elmsworth was dozing when she took Fanchon's seat by her aunt's bedside. When she woke, she had a spasm of coughing, and was so weak and suffering she did not seem to remember anything about Agnes's letters of the previous night. So it continued all that week: such a long, long week to the poor, pale creature, racked

with keen pain, growing weaker, weaker, hour by hour, with that pale girl watching every quiver of the pallid lips as if her own life hung upon that feeble respiration. Mr. Elmsworth and Count Serimia went off on an excursion to Tivoli for a few days. Mr. Elmsworth saw his wife was sinking fast, and he wanted to escape the scene. He hated "scenes," he said to Serimia. In truth, neither he nor his companion liked to be much in the presence of death. There are times when conscience will awake even in the most evil of men, and Mr. Elmsworth did not care to witness the last struggles of the life of the woman he had so cruelly neglected. So they went off, and Agnes was left with her dying relative, in this strange city, with only Fanchon and Frascati to attend her in this dark hour of trial. Frascati wrote to Mr. Murray to come, but there were storms on the Mediterranean, and the letter was delayed. A few days of complete exhaustion—a severe coughing spell—a hemorrhage—and Emmeline Elmsworth's worn and weary spirit fled to the peaceful haven "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Frascati attended to everything, sent an express for Mr. Elmsworth, who soon returned when he found it was all over.

Agnes begged that her aunt's remains might be sent to Davenant Hall, to be buried with the rest of the family.

"No," Mr. Elmsworth said; "it was nonsense; it made no difference where people were buried; it would be great trouble and expense."

So the poor creature, who had been so long the slave of his whims and caprices—who had loved him to the last—was laid among strangers in the Protestant cemetery at Rome. Elmsworth had no sympathy with the sentimentality of being buried amongst one's kindred.

CHAPTER XXX.

AGNES GRAHAM sat on the grass beside the new-made grave of her aunt. One week had elapsed since the pale form was given to its kindred clay. Agnes had asked Frascati to procure a carriage and accompany her to the gate of the cemetery. Mrs. Elmsworth's grave was made not far from the entrance. The grass was brown and parched by the hot summer sun—the few trees of sombre stone pine, spread like dark shields above the imaginative girl, as if they would hide from her streaming eyes the glorious, intense "blue fire" light of the Italian sky; not like their stately pyramidal sisters of the Alpine cliffs, which appear so many indices to point the mourner to the stars and the "better land,"—the land of

beauty, the paradise of the blessed ones. The huge, gray pyramid of Caius Cestus towered up near the wall and flung its added depth of gloom to the shadow already over her, as she sat there weeping—alone and desolate. Agnes had brought her prayer-book with her to read the burial-service. The English chaplain being absent, Mr. Elmsworth did not trouble himself to look for a clergyman among the many visitors who crowded the city, so Emmeline Elmsworth was laid in an unblest grave. Agnes had knelt by the grave this morning and read in a low voice the holy burial-service of the Protestant Episcopal Church. It comforted her, and it was with a softer feeling that she laid upon the lowly mound a cross, woven of violets and passion flowers. All was done—her pious duties ended, and she still sat there weeping now over herself—her own sad, desolate life. No drop of her blood flowed in the veins of any human being save Robert's. Separated from him, as she must be, who was left to her? None, except the two men, no longer young, at the Davenant rectory. And life had once been so bright! Such a little while since the first dark cloud fell across her path! She laid her head down on the new-laid sods and felt that it would be merciful could she rest there forever. "God's ways are not our ways." Agnes could not see to the end.

At length she rose and returned to the carriage—the faithful Frascati aided her to mount its steps. They drove back to the hotel.

Count Serimia showed sufficient discretion not to intrude upon Agnes in her deep affliction. So she enjoyed peace and quiet in her own apartments. Fanchon was very kind. Frascati watched Agnes vigilantly, and tried to anticipate her every want. Agnes needed nothing that they could do for her, and it comforted her—the respectful sympathy of these servants.

She requested to see Mr. Elmsworth, thinking it best to communicate to him immediately her plans for her future. He came to the salon which he had almost entirely deserted since his wife's death. The rooms were distasteful to him! He spent his time with Serimia, and took his meals at a restaurant.

Agnes begged him to make arrangements to return immediately to Paris, "to which place only," she said, "she would trouble him to escort her. She could probably succeed in getting back to New Orleans with some returning family, or she would ask him to place her under the protection of one of the captains of the direct line of steamers from Havre to New Orleans, from whence she could readily get to Davenant rectory."

Mr. Elmsworth listened with an apparent surprise to Agnes's plans. He evidently

had expected some such communication from her. He was fully aware of the force of her character, and therefore had no hopes of attaining his and Serimia's ends by open resistance; but, hypocritically, disguising the anger excited by her quiet, determined manner, he said, "he was ready to leave Rome as soon as she pleased. If she thought it best to withdraw herself from his protection, he could not oppose it, as her father's will gave her power to do so at her present age."

Agnes replied—"That she would like to leave as soon as possible; by the next steamer for Marseilles!"

"That will be the day after to-morrow, at 8 o'clock P. M."

"I can be ready at that time."

Mr. Elmsworth quitted Agnes and went to discuss the matter with Serimia. If Agnes once got back to Paris, in her present mood, good-by to all the Count's hopes of the heiress's hand, or his of repossessing himself of his notes of indebtedness to Serimia. Revolving these thoughts, he sought his confederate. After a short discussion with him, he returned in high spirits to Agnes, telling her it was all arranged, and that he would himself telegraph for rooms on the steamer.

Agnes thanked him—called Fanchon to give her orders about packing the trunks, and, at the same time, presented her with a handsome sum of money, as a mark of gratitude for her recent attention to her aunt and herself—bidding her go out and make such purchases as she might like before they quitted Rome. Fanchon kissed her hand very gratefully. She wondered how she could ever have been so blind to her own interest as to have entered into a conspiracy against so charming and generous a young lady. Agnes told her, if she preferred doing the packing of the trunks that afternoon, she might take the whole of the ensuing morning for her shopping expedition.

Fanchon said she would infinitely prefer that arrangement, as it would give her more time for selection in her purchases; and if mademoiselle did not disapprove, perhaps Monsieur Frascati might be prevailed upon to accompany her; as she, Fanchon, spoke no Italian, nor knew the best places for shopping, which he doubtless did.

Agnes had no objection. Fanchon asked if mademoiselle would be so kind as to mention the matter to monsieur himself—she would greatly oblige her.

Agnes promised she would do so. Thus all parties were contented.

Fanchon had a charming morning for her expedition; very pretty she looked in her tasteful Parisian attire when she came, with her gay little parasol in hand, to bid mademoiselle good-morning, ready to sally forth with her cavalier, who had also made an

extra toilet in honor of his coquettish companion. Fanchon was supremely happy, contented with the distinguished appearance she presented herself—as well as flattered by the elaborate toilet which Antonio had made to accompany her. He was so very gallant, and so delightfully complimentary in his manner and expressions towards her, and then such a valuable cicerone! He knew all the best places to shop—jeweled down all the extortionate prices. Oh! it was "délicieuse." Fanchon bought herself all sorts of Mosaics, Camei, scarfs, shawls, and ornaments of Roman pearl. Frascati allowed himself to be loaded with all kinds of small articles that Fanchon was unwilling to intrust to the keeping of the "garçon" to be sent to the hotel. When she had satisfied her feminine passion for such things, and spent as much money as she conveniently could spare, Antonio presented her with a handsome necklace of beads, and a crucifix of Etruscan gold, as a souvenir, which was said to have been blessed by the Pope himself, and to have indulgences attached to its daily use. He took her to a restaurant and treated her to ices and cakes, and then proposed that they should complete their tour, "as good Catholics ought," by a ride to St. Peter's, and a survey of the city from the dome. Nothing could be more "agreeable" to Fanchon; Frascati summoned a carriage, and they soon found themselves before the grand colonnade which leads to the façade of the Church of the "Prince of the Apostles." Fanchon and Frascati were both devout Romanists, and knelt down before the high altar and said their prayers with unfeigned fervor—Fanchon using her new beads with great sobriety and unction. They then took a survey of the grand building, Antonio explaining reverently and earnestly the pictures, statuary, with their legends, to his now awe-struck companion. With all his shrewdness in worldly matters, Antonio was a very child in faith, and received all these monstrous legends in profound submission and absolute belief. Fanchon was deeply impressed, but thought the greatest act of self-denial was that of St. Petronilla, the daughter of the "Prince of the Apostles," who so willingly sacrificed her wondrous beauty, and received so gratefully the fearful plague of leprosy, rather than break her vow of chastity. After an ascent to the dome and a view of the city, Fanchon was ready to return to the hotel, rejecting Antonio's proffer to conduct her through the halls of the Vatican, to see the paintings and sculptures which, to his Italian taste, were the chief attractions of the wonderful palace. But Fanchon had little taste for the fine arts, cared for color only in her dress, and grace only in the fashioning of her jewelry, or the shape of her mantle.

Antonio yielded, good-humoredly, to the whims of his fair companion, and agreed "it was time to return to the signorina."

Agnes opened the door, which she had kept locked at Antonio's earnest request during his absence, and smiled faintly, as she welcomed them back, at Fanchon's extravagant expressions of delight and gratitude. Her hours had been spent sorrowfully enough in packing up, with her own hands, her aunt's clothing, in order to hand the keys of those trunks to Mr. Elmsworth.

Fanchon exhibited all her purchases to Agnes, expatiating wholly on their beauty and cheapness, mixing up her description of St. Peter's, the blessed Virgin, the holy cross, in a strange medley with rhapsodies over the beautiful jewelry, the lovely scarfs, &c. &c. &c. Agnes listened patiently, as she thought "one short year ago I should have been as pleased with all these things as this poor girl."

It was something to have given Fanchon so much pleasure. Agnes was glad to see her so happy.

Antonio had brought a basket of green rushes, filled with fine fruit, garlanded with flowers for "the signorina." To gratify him, Agnes tasted some of it. Fanchon pared the fresh, green figs with her dainty fingers, and Antonio selected the richest grapes, pressing her to eat. Upon these two humble servants was the beautiful, rich, brilliant Agnes Graham entirely dependent for sympathy and protection.

"Here, Agnes," said Mr. Elmsworth, entering her apartment suddenly, "here is a letter just come for poor Emmeline, evidently written by Eleanor. I suppose it is the last Eleanor ever wrote to her sister. Take it and read it. I have really not the heart to open it. You can tell me if there is anything in it necessary for me to know. It almost makes me shudder to have it; it seems like a letter from the tomb. But women like you don't mind such things. I suppose you will be pleased to have it. Ugh! take it!"

Mr. Elmsworth threw the letter in Agnes's lap; a really unaffected shiver ran over him. The remembrance of neither his wife nor her sister was agreeable to him.

Agnes seized the letter and pressed it to her lips while her tears streamed at the sight of the familiar handwriting so dear to her, which would never come again to her longing, yearning vision, bringing its words of consolation, faith, and tender love.

"Oh! Aunt Eleanor! Aunt Eleanor, dear Aunt Eleanor!" was all she sobbed out in response to Mr. Elmsworth's words. He escaped immediately from the unwelcome sight of his niece's tears to the more genial society of Serimia.

Agnes wiped away her tears as soon as she could check the torrent, bolted her

door, and kneeling down, she carefully and reverently opened the seal of the letter—the last letter of the beloved dead aunt to her departed sister. To her, as to Mr. Elmsworth, it seemed a voice from the tomb; but while it was a fearful, unpleasant knell to him, to her it was a holy, solemn utterance.

The letter was dated on the day previous to Mrs. Elmsworth's sudden death. She wrote it sitting by the bedside of her sick husband—as he slept; apparently she seemed to think a healing, balmy sleep, but it was the sleep from which he only woke to die, and after which she followed him to the better land. She wrote cheerfully, giving such details of their daily life as she thought would interest her invalid sister. Agnes read page after page as fast as her streaming tears would permit her to see the characters. At the last page Agnes lifted her joined hands with an exclamation, as if she were remonstrating with her aunt in person:—

"Oh! Aunt Eleanor! not that! not that! Aunt Eleanor! spare me!"

Then her head sank down with a groan upon her clasped hands, which lay over the outspread letter, as she knelt before the low table.

These were the words Mrs. Selman at the close of her epistle: "I am glad to learn, Emmeline, that you saw so much of Mr. Murray while you were in Paris, and that you think he still retains his fancy for Agnes. It would be a joyful thought to me if I could believe she would be persuaded at last of the value of the love of such a man as I know Alfred Murray to be. But though I would not urge her to decide upon such a vital point as this from any but highest, purest motives, yet I cannot but pray that our dear child may soon meet (if not in Murray, some other) with one whom she can love and give her life to, joyfully. You know, Emmeline, that young hearts are tenacious of life—that young trees bloom again even after the earliest blossoms are rudely pruned—bloom better, perhaps, for that very pruning. I must still hope for Agnes, and for my poor boy! I see plainly that Robert will cling to the desperate chance of change in Agnes's resolves towards him; he will never give her up until she is absolutely severed from him by marriage or death. Emmeline, dearly as I love both—both my children—for both are mine, I think I would rather know both were dead, than that, under the circumstances, they two ever became one. God forbid that union. I am so weak though, that if Agnes should come to me even now with her hand in Robert's, I could not reject her. So, Emmeline, leave nothing untried to wean her heart from Robert. Let them be the brother and sister they were once."

Crush out this mad, wicked passion as much as you can, for both their sakes. God have mercy upon my poor beloved children! If Agnes would marry, eventually, as I hope she will, there will be hope for Robert that he would not cast away all ambition, all joy in life as he is now doing. My poor wretched boy! Agnes's sacrifice is incomplete while she lives single; he *will* hope; I see this. I can only pray that her heart may change, that a new and more holy affection may come to supersede this wild fantasy. You and I, Emmeline, know that this is possible, nay, at their age, even probable; pray God to hasten the change in both."

So Eleanor Selman spoke to Agnes out of her grave, and the girl read the words again and again as she knelt in hopeless despair. "I will never be his wife, aunt Eleanor," she murmured, "never Robert's, but not another's! ah, no! no!"

Antonio's power over Fanchon, besides his appeal to her natural cupidity, was derived from a discovery he had accidentally made of her identity with a certain Rosini Marie Benoit, who had been committed to prison for having stolen some valuable jewels and a large sum of money from a young lady to whom she acted as coiffeuse some years previous. It was that name, which Fanchon had dropped on entering upon a new career in Serimia's service, which he had whispered to her when he had attempted to over-bribe her employer. He knew Fanchon was true to her bargain with him. She was afraid of him in the first place, she was glad of the money he paid her in the second, and she had conceived a wonderful admiration—quite a "grand passion" for him in the third. Of all which emotions Antonio was perfectly cognizant. Fanchon hastened away to pack up her recent purchases. Antonio was left alone with Agnes. Advancing respectfully towards her, he took from his pocket-book a slip of paper, which he handed her. It was Mr. Murray's note, commending him to Agnes's confidence. Agnes read it carefully. Antonio turned over the leaves of his pocket-book, opened it at a page yellow with age, and gave that also to Agnes. It was a note of warm approbation and recommendation from Alfred Murray of Louisiana, signed also by Edward Graham of London, in favor of Antonio Frascati, dated the year of their travel in the East, long before her father's marriage. Agnes looked at Antonio with surprise.

Antonio knelt down and kissed her hand respectfully, as is the habit of Italians towards their superiors. "Signorina, I had the honor of serving your excellent father before he went to America, and it was at Signor Murray's request that I left his service in Paris to come to Mr. Elmsworth's, in order that I might assist you, signorina,

and try to baffle the wicked schemes of Mr. Elmsworth and Il Conte di Serimia. I show you these letters now, signorina, because it is now necessary you should trust me, signorina." He drew nearer to her, and lowered his voice almost into a whisper: "The rooms were not taken on the steamer for Marseilles, but on the Santa Clara, for Messina, whence you are to be taken to Il Conte's castle, near Palermo, and there forced to become his wife, or worse."

Agnes could scarcely repress a cry of horror, but she mastered the impulse by a powerful effort, and stood staring at Antonio as if at some dreadful sight.

"Yes, signorina, I speak the truth, as you will find to-morrow night, when we reach Civita Vecchia!"

"But, Frascati," gasped Agnes, "is there no way to escape, no way to prevent this unutterable horror, this fearful outrage?"

"I hope so, signorina; there must be found some way. I do not know why the Signor Murray is not here. I wrote him ten days ago to come. Some accident must have befallen my letter. He surely could find a way to protect you. Signorina, as soon as I found out this dreadful conspiracy against you, I went to the Palazzo of the English ambassador, knowing your father was English, and thinking to get some advice there; but his lordship is not yet in town for the winter. Then, signorina, I went to the best avvocato, lawyer you call in English, and related the circumstances of the case, using feigned names. I had heard Mr. Elmsworth tell Il Conte that you were of age in your own country, by your father's will; so I told the avvocato; he says that would not hold good here; there is no American ambassador in Rome. And a young lady should obey the wishes of her guardian in the selection of a husband; that is the custom and the law here, signorina. Then I asked him if the young lady were to escape and take refuge in a convent, would that protect her? And he said, 'no, the law would deliver her up to the care of her guardian; besides, signorina, you are heretic.' Antonio crossed himself, and sighed as he regarded Agnes: "So it is very bad, signorina. There is no steamer for Marseilles to-day or to-morrow."

Agnes hid her face in her hands, utterly prostrated by this intelligence.

"Don't despair, signorina! The Holy Virgin will doubtless protect a young lady like you—there is a vessel from Marseilles due to-morrow—the Lucia—perhaps the Signor Murray will be on her."

Agnes could not speak, but sank into a chair almost paralyzed with fear. Antonio brought a glass of water and put it to her lips.

"Do not let Fanchon suspect anything, signorina; I have bribed her so much higher

than Il Conte, that I think she is true to us—but still it is best not to trust too much!"

Agnes recognized the wisdom of this advice, and understood to whom the agreeable change in Fanchon, which she had observed recently, was due. She tried to control herself and to assume a tranquillity that she did not feel, as she heard Fanchon's light step approaching through the adjoining apartments. Agnes wondered, in after years, that her hair had not turned white that night. Antonio begged her to lie down and try to sleep that night; he told her he had, ever since her aunt's death, made his bed just outside her chamber-door, he had so little confidence in her personal safety, surrounded as she was by spies and traitors. He asked her to lock all the doors, even that leading into Fanchon's room; which Agnes, after being convinced latterly of the girl's good-will, had left unlocked, feeling some kind of companionship and protection in Fanchon's proximity. Agnes threw herself, dressed as she was, upon her bed—counted hour after hour, until the gray light of daybreak, streaming in her window, quieted her perturbed spirit, and she sank into an uneasy slumber. She was disturbed by a vigorous knocking at the door. Fanchon came in, when she roused herself to open it, saying, "It was time to start—the luggage had gone, and monsieur waited only for mademoiselle—would mademoiselle be so good as to tie on her bonnet and mantle, while she sought a 'petite tasse du café' for mademoiselle's breakfast?"

The slight additions to her toilet were soon made. Hastily swallowing the cup of hot coffee Fanchon brought, feeling she must support and husband her strength, and commending herself to God, Agnes descended to the carriage, where Mr. Elmsworth was impatiently waiting her coming. Count Serimia had gone on in advance of them. Agnes drew her veil over her face and leaned back, without speaking; once only she leaned forward and looked out, as they passed near the cemetery where her Aunt Emmeline slept in peace. When they reached the railroad depot, she beckoned to Antonio, and speaking in Italian, which neither of her companions understood, she asked in a low voice—"Is there no hope?"

"None, signorina—but in the Holy Virgin and Signor Murray! You are closely watched, signorina." Then changing to English, he said, as if in answer to her question—"Your trunks are all right, mademoiselle."

It was sunset when they arrived at Civita Vecchia. They went immediately to the vessel, lying in the harbor; as they passed the hotel, near the haven, a caged mocking-

bird burst out into singing, its glorious, varied notes ringing out in that strange land as clear and as full of rich melody as ever Agnes had heard in her own country—her native Louisiana—from which both were now exiles. A tear rolled down her cheek, as she listened to the bird's bright song, sounding fainter and fainter as they moved off, in their little skiff, over the water, on their way to the vessel which lay a little distance from the shore. Agnes read the name on the prow of the vessel, as they neared it—"The Santa Clara."

She heard Antonio ask the boatman when the Santa Clara sailed.

"To Messina, at eight o'clock, this evening," was the reply in Italian.

She saw Serimia walking on the deck of the vessel—disguise was no longer necessary. He felt triumphantly secure. Agnes was safe now, he considered—and he looked insolently complacent.

Agnes turned sick and faint, as she grasped Fanchon's arm and attempted to leave the skiff. Antonio saw her totter—sprang forward and aided her to ascend the steps, which led up to the gangway.

"Courage, signorina, don't despair; the Lucia comes in before we start!" He evidently whispered hope which he did not share; his countenance showed harassing care and anxiety. It was necessary, however, to elude suspicion, in order to save Agnes. So he bustled about after the luggage, and was soon in an altercation with the boatman, about a piece which, he said, had been left behind, and for which it was necessary to return to the shore. Anything to gain time! He strained his eyes, peering into the horizon, but the rippling sea met the dark blue sky; nothing broke the distance, save a few whirling curlews and white gulls. Agnes hastened past Serimia, down into the cabin, and into the state-room assigned her; threw off her bonnet, and, falling upon her knees, prayed God not to desert her in this extremity. Fanchon knocked at the door to know if she would have dinner. Agnes desired none. She sat upon her narrow berth in a state of dumb despair. The shadows grew darker and darker—lights began to twinkle in the passage before her dark room, and shone in through the small transom over the door. The steam was being raised, it hissed and breathed hoarsely, rumbling beneath her feet, in the boilers—at last the first tremulous vibrations of the paddles were evident—the signal of departure was given—the steamer moved slowly from her moorings. Agnes felt all hope die within her. Suddenly the engine was reversed, the steam escaped through the safety-valve, and the Santa Clara lay still upon the water, holding on to her steam.

"What is the matter?" It was Serimia's

voice. Agnes heard the question distinctly. All her senses seemed paralyzed, except that of hearing, that was more acute than ever.

"What is it?" was again asked by some one on the deck.

"Only waiting for passengers and mail from the Lucia, which is just coming into the harbor!"

Agnes heard the regular splash of the oars, as a small skiff drew near the side of the Santa Clara. There was a port-hole just above Agnes's head—it opened on the sea. She climbed up on her berth and pulled it open. Yes! it was a boat, it was passing directly below her port-hole. Agnes saw all in it distinctly. The mail-bags lay in a pile in the bottom of the boat; there was a single passenger—Agnes could not see his face—he seemed afraid of the night-air; his cap was drawn deep over his brow, and the lower part of his face was concealed by the furled collar of his travelling cloak, which was pulled up about his neck.

A man sprang into the boat from the vessel, officiously aiding in transferring the mail-bags to the ship. He turned hastily towards the solitary passenger, as he lifted up a bag—the light from the lanterns flashed upon his face—it was Antonio. He bent over as if to take a better hold of the bag. Agnes heard the whisper—"Is it you, signor?" The gentleman put out his ungloved hand for an instant—it was well shaped, strong, and white; upon the little finger gleamed a peculiar seal-ring of onyx.

"Now God and all the saints be praised!" ejaculated Antonio, and he swung up the heavy bag as if it were filled with feathers.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE bell rang for supper. Agnes heard the confused sound of the many feet tramping over her head, as the crowd of passengers hastened towards the eating-saloon of the ship. Fanchon came to see "if made-moiselle would take anything?"

"No," Agnes preferred being perfectly quiet to anything else.

Fanchon closed the door, and went off to supply her own wants. It was very quiet below in the cabin. Everybody had gone to supper. Agnes heard a low knock at her door.

"Signorina," whispered Antonio, "are you there?"

Agnes opened the door. Antonio spoke eagerly—"He has come, signorina! the Signor Murray! I gave a note for him to one of my acquaintances on shore, there at Civita Vecchia. He promised me to go on board the Lucia as soon as she landed, and give it to the gentleman, if he was on board,

in his own hands. So he did, the good Graciano, and the signor followed us, just in time, in the mail boat. Signor Murray never got my last letter until the day he started for Marseilles.

"He left in a half hour after receiving it. Praised be the Madonna, he was in time! Now, signorina, he must see you; and how can that be managed? There will not be time now before the people leave the table, and the signor must not be seen by Mr. Elmsworth or Il Conte. He cannot come here on account of Fanchon. Could you meet him on the deck, after all have gone to sleep, signorina? I will come down for you, say near midnight. That would be safest!"

Agnes had no choice but to assent to whatever Mr. Murray thought best. Antonio went therefore to tell him that the signorina would meet him near midnight on the deck. Mr. Murray was lying upon his berth, his travelling cloak thrown over him, his face full of anxiety and care. Agnes was too sad. He was too perturbed to eat, though he had travelled day and night, and even when on the Lucia had spent his nights in pacing up and down the deck of the vessel, which, although running with all the velocity of her engines, seemed to his excited mind making scarcely the speed of a tortoise. Now that he had reached the spot in which he knew Agnes to be, still safe, yet his heart and brain were throbbing with great pulsations, alternating between despair and hope. He refused the food Antonio brought him, and asked after Serimia and Elmsworth. Antonio said they were at supper, which he had taken care should be such a meal as they liked, and that he would try and get them off early to bed.

He quitted Mr. Murray, and a minute after placed before the two epicureans a smoking dish of fine ortolans, which drew from Mr. Elmsworth a hearty encomium upon both dish and bearer. Antonio remained in attendance upon them, serving them most efficiently. Mr. Elmsworth, in high good humor, pronounced him "the very prince of couriers." Count Serimia, satisfied with his success in his plans in regard to Agnes, was in a most cheerful mood, and agreed in all that Mr. Elmsworth said or did. Antonio brought a bundle of very fine cigars, which, he said, "he hoped their excellencies would try. They had been presented him by a friend as something very superior, indeed." The fact is, Antonio had asked Mr. Murray for them, and as that gentleman, like all Southern men, was a judge of cigars, and imported them always directly from Cuba from particular growers for his own use, they fully deserved all that Antonio said of their merits. Their "excellencies" showed their appreciation by smoking two apiece after they had finished

their supper, then jocosely appropriated the whole package. Mr. Elmsworth called for cards and proposed a game, but Serimia complained of being rather wearied from the early rising and travel of the day, and proposed they should retire early. This was a pleasant decision to Antonio. He attended the gentlemen to their respective rooms, aided them officiously to prepare for their berths. Bidding them "buona notte," he took their clothes to brush, in readiness for the next morning. Returning in an hour, he found them both fast asleep. He laid their clothes in their places, and going out carefully, locked each state-room door on the outside, and put the keys in his pocket. He went then to Fanchon's room, and satisfying himself by putting his ear to the key-hole, and listening to her regular respiration, that she, too, was sleeping, he turned the key in the lock, and taking it out deposited it with the others. Nearly everybody had retired by this time; only a few stewards and servants belonging to the ship were to be seen moving about the vessel; the deck was deserted except by the officers on guard and the sailors on duty.

Antonio knocked gently at Agnes's door. "It is time, signorina!"

Agnes came out, her bonnet and shawl on, and her crape veil falling over her. She motioned Antonio to precede her. The light shone in her face, as they passed a shaded lamp which hung in the narrow passage-way. It was blanched to marble whiteness; but her glance was proud and high—the brave spirit shone there. I have seen a wounded hawk, confined and caged day after day, refusing food from the hand of its captors, rejecting all sympathy; not even moistening its beak in the water a compassionate hand placed in its prison-house; languishing, helpless, starving in the depths of its anguish; dying; yet at the sound of the footsteps of its stronger conqueror lift up its brave head, ruffle its haughty feathers; and starting into an attitude of defiance, fix its bold, bright eyes upon its enemy with an expression of undaunted, hopeless, unconquerable courage, almost heart-breaking to witness, overpowering to human sensibility. So Agnes Graham felt and looked. The bold blood of the vikings, the noble spirit of a Southern woman born to command—her heritage; her birthright, honor and courage; her step fell firmly and fearlessly, her queenly head erect upon her shoulders, betrayed, alone—it was still Zambia in chains.

Antonio set a chair for her in a sheltered nook behind the paddle-box. The officer of the watch, as he lounged over the railing, looked curiously at the slender, black figure which noiselessly passed him.

"A sick lady, who wants the air," whispered Antonio to him, as he drew near. The

officer thought he had never seen a paler face than that which gleamed on him as Agnes glided past.

In an instant Mr. Murray stood before Agnes, grasping her hands in his own. He was too full of emotion to speak, at first.

"I did not get Antonio's letter until the day I started," he said, when he felt he could command his voice sufficiently to speak, "else I would have come earlier."

"Antonio told me," replied Agnes, in a low voice.

"How you must have suffered!" exclaimed Mr. Murray; "I, too, have had letters from Louisiana."

"Don't, don't speak of that!" gasped Agnes; "I cannot bear it now!"

Mr. Murray put his hand over his eyes and turned away; the agony of the woman he loved was hard to witness. So brave, too, he could have almost fallen before her and worshipped her.

He was recalled to the present by Agnes saying, earnestly:—

"But now, Mr. Murray, time presses. What is to be done now? Has Antonio told you of the dreadful plot?" Agnes shuddered at the remembrance.

"He has, Agnes! Miss Graham! I have been thinking all the night, ever since I quitted Paris. There is but one way to deliver you from this thralldom; but one; and I have not the courage to propose it to you!"

"Mr. Murray can have nothing to propose to the daughter of Edward Graham that he can be ashamed to avow before the world!"

"No shame to avow before the world, or still more before God; but dread to cause further grief to the heart of Agnes Graham!" said Mr. Murray, tenderly. "Listen! Agnes, child of one dearer to me than any brother could ever be—listen to me, patiently if you can, Agnes, with pity for me and for yourself. Mr. Elmsworth is your guardian by your father's appointment. Your father endeavored to make provision that that guardianship should cease when you reached your present age; but you cannot take advantage of this clause out of Louisiana, where, at any rate, you would have the right to select your own guardian legally, even before you attained your present age. Here, or anywhere else out of Louisiana, the clause is null and void. Mr. Elmsworth knows that he deceived you when he professed otherwise. Your father was English, but you are American, and the laws of England, so far as I can ascertain, are those of common, not civil law; you are still a minor out of Louisiana. The English ambassador could not protect you if he would; no human hand can release you, situated as you are, from this outrageous, infamous tyranny; not even Dr. Leonard;

not even your cousins, Agnes! No man's hands can break this galling chain which will and is dragging you down to misery more fearful than death; for, Agnes, dearly as I love you—and you know that life itself is not so dear—I had rather see you dead at my feet than the wife of Serimia—a wretch whose ultimate end, I doubt not, will be the scaffold. Agnes, you are sold, betrayed by your uncle to this scoundrel. For two years longer—if it were possible to escape him now—must you be subject to Mr. Elmsworth's whims and tyranny. Do you think you can bear this? Do you see any way to escape him? Child! child! there is but one hand that can free you—but one arm that can protect you! That hand must clasp yours as his own! That arm must be your husband's."

Mr. Murray paused. Agnes had sunk back in her chair, her hands were clenched together, and pressed against her breast.

"Agnes Graham!" continued Mr. Murray, passionately, "do you see now why, though not afraid to avow this before God and the world, I trembled before you? Poor, heart-broken child! Agnes, I know all—all! Your Aunt Emmeline told me all when we first met in Paris. You know full well that I know the love between your cousin and yourself; I had a bitter night before I quitted N—, Agnes! I thank God that I have never had a thought but of esteem and admiration for you, and it has given me comfort, even in my darkest hours, to know that the woman I so passionately loved was worthy of the devotion I could not help but lavish at her feet; and, Agnes, it was also pleasant to me to think I had conquered myself so far, that though my heart was crushed, you would be happy—so happy with him! It was not my hand that parted you, Agnes! God knows that I prayed for him and for you as if you had been my children. It was God's hand that separated you, and your own right judgment! Do you think I have not suffered, too, in seeing you suffer? Never should word or look of mine have disturbed the bitter waters of sorrow in your heart, that I saw were growing calmer and smoother, reflecting the image of God, as they had never done before, though I knew, far down in the depth, among the wrecks, lay the image of one who had been dearer than your Creator, your idol that God had broken from its niche! Never, Agnes, under ordinary circumstances, would I have spoken to you of other love than a friend's or brother's again. But now, I must speak, poor storm-tossed bird! I must hold out my arms and plead that you will take shelter there! Give me the right, the power to protect you from further wrong and insult! My wife, or Serimia's, you must be, Agnes! Beloved—for your father's sake, for your own, for

mine, come to me!" Mr. Murray knelt before Agnes; he seized her hands, his hot tears fell upon them; they were cold as ice. Agnes might have been a statue of snow, so cold and still she sat. At length she spoke—the words sobbed out from her scarcely-moving lips.

"Mr. Murray! you sacrifice yourself for me—too generous. But, ah! if I could only die."

Mr. Murray only replied, holding her hands more closely—

"Agnes! I love you!"

"But I!"—and her voice sank so low, so dying in its cadence, he could only hear—"Robert, Robert! Oh, Robert!"

Mr. Murray's hands trembled as he still clasped hers.

"Yet because it was right, Agnes! you put his love from you!"

"His love—but not his remembrance! not all thought of him! Mr. Murray, such thoughts would be sin in your wife!"

Mr. Murray dropped her hands; then, clasping them again, said solemnly—

"Agnes, I have nothing else to live for; I cannot save you else; I can, I will trust you with my name, my honor!"

"If I could but die—only die!" was the low reply.

"Mine or Serimia's, Agnes, you must be; there is no alternative. I must protect your good name in spite of yourself; that you love me as a friend, I know."

"Yes, yes!" Agnes sobbed.

"I will trust you, Agnes! Let me save you, now!"

All through the storm of passion which surged through her soul, she heard Robert's voice chanting the refrain of the legend—

"Trust not the false winds; trust not the falser sea."

Agnes felt as if she must go mad—she was scarcely conscious—tried beyond her strength—she was helpless, passive—she drifted on the sea of circumstance. Mr. Murray's was the only hand she saw extended to aid her—she seized it without will, as any drowning wretch would.

Mr. Murray persuaded himself that there was no other way open for him to protect Agnes than to marry her. He might, perhaps, have escaped with her, and secreted her with some friends until he could have communicated with Dr. Leonard, or even with Robert. But he did not want to do that. He silenced such suggestions of his conscience by sophistry; even the best of men fall sometimes in moments of supreme temptation.

Mr. Murray believed he was doing right—right for Agnes—for himself—for all; he was not conscious of selfishness at the core of his heart; he thought he was doing a meritorious work—he was saving Agnes

from evil—he would place her in a position to be useful. It was better than to let her grieve her noble life away, hopelessly. Time and his devotion should do wonders for her. He congratulated himself upon the restoration of this wounded soul to prospective health and usefulness. Her love for Robert was a girl's first fancy. It would pass. Mr. Murray was very content with everything, so far. Agnes remembered her aunt Eleanor's last letter. "*Was it best for Robert, too?*" Oh, God! let her drink this cup, then, to the dregs!

Agnes hesitated; the struggle was dreadful. At length, lifting up her clasped hands to heaven, she said, passionately, as if reproaching heaven—

"It is God's will! Let it be as you wish. May God help us both!"

"Amen," said Mr. Murray; leaning over, he kissed her brow. It was the seal of the compact between them. He went on then to tell her his plan for their escape: The vessel would touch the next night at Naples, for a short time; he had a friend in that city, an English clergyman, who was living there with his family, whom he had known intimately for many years. They would receive Agnes, and there they should be married as soon as possible. Agnes could only agree to whatever he proposed. When he had concluded what he had to say, she said, faintly, "that she would like to return to her cabin and lie down, her head was so dizzy!" Mr. Murray drew her arm through his, and supported her to her state-room. She closed the door, drew the bolt, and fell upon her narrow couch almost senseless with the intensity of the emotion she had endured. Wild prayers went up to heaven that night from her lips. They were answered as was best for her and for all.

The night wore away, and the day came and went; hour by hour, Agnes counted it as a wretch does the passing of the minutes before he stoops beneath the headsman's axe. But no miracle was vouchsafed her. Fanchon came from time to time with a glass of water, or some vinegar for "made-moiselle's headache." She would wet a cloth and lay it upon the burning brow. Agnes never felt it; her head seemed to have turned to stone. Night came—everybody at rest—and Agnes slept, a heavy profound slumber, such as criminals sleep their last night on earth, without a dream, or the slightest motion to show she lived. She was startled by the steamer giving the signal to land. Her senses were so dim and so confused, she could not recall to herself where she was or why she was so suddenly awakened. "It is Napoli," said a watchman to one of the sleeping stewards in the cabin. The word recalled all to Agnes. "Napoli!" Antonio knocked,

"Are you ready, signorina?" Agnes's lips moved, but they uttered no sound. Mr. Murray entered the state-room, lifted her up in his arms to her feet. She was lying dressed as she was when she quitted Rome; he tied her bonnet upon her head, threw her mantle around her; motioned to Antonio to take her valise and dressing-case. Agnes submitted helplessly. Drawing her arm through his, he placed his other arm around her and almost carried her upon deck. The cool, fresh air revived her. She breathed freer—not a word was spoken by any of them—the officers of the ship looked yawningly at the sleepy passengers, as they thought, disembarking. Antonio had secured Elmsworth and Serimia, as well as Fanchon, in their state-rooms; they had no interest in Napoli—they turned over in their berths and went to sleep after the boat landed. Mr. Murray soon placed his trembling companion in a carriage, and seated himself by her side.

Antonio had gotten out all the trunks, and now came to learn the hotel to which they were to go. Mr. Murray gave him the address. Antonio came back to the carriage door—"and now, au révoir, signor—a rivederci, signorina! all happiness be yours."

"Why, Antonio! don't you accompany us?" asked Mr. Murray, surprised.

"Not yet, signor; not yet; I go with Il Conte to find the missing witness," Antonio laughed his bitter, mocking laugh, as he always did when he spoke of Serimia.

Mr. Murray drew out his well-filled purse, and put it in Antonio's hand. "You may need this; write to the old address, and remember your oath."

"I will, signor; thanks." Antonio sprang off the wharf back into the skiff. The carriage drove quickly away. The morning was dawning as they drove up to the door of the hotel de A—, and they saw the smoke of the steamer floating back, as she moved out of the bay, towards Messina.

Antonio stood on the deck, looking back towards Naples, singing, in a low voice, this canzonnette, so often sung about the streets there. He had unlocked the state-room doors, and stood with his hands in his pockets, in a joyous, easy attitude, as he sang gayly—

With fierce flame my poor heart burns,
Yet fondly still to thee it turns,
Wasting like a taper's light,
Flickering 'neath those eyes so bright.
When thy sweet name strikes mine ear,
I forget all care, all fear.
Dreaming, then thy form I see,
Fairest, dearest, gay Lucie.
Think how white and cold the snows
On the mountain top now glows;
Oh! so fair, so cold to me
Art thou ever, stern Lucie.

Closed window, still cruel girl,
Heedest not either gem or pearl.
Love me now, or set me free,
Fairest, coldest, gay Lucie.

Love shall from me a lesson learn.
A young lad, laden with an urn,
To hold the water clear, I'll be,
And wandering slow, I'll come to thee.
"Fair maiden, wilt thou have to drink?"
Then from thy window tall, I think,
Will come the words, "Poor lad, I will;
Now let thy weary feet be still."
Then wilt thou hasten down and say,
"Where now the water-seller, pray?"
Then will I answer, "Hast me forgot?"
'Tis I, beloved. Oh! seest thou not
That this which water now appears
Is warm and briny—Love's sad tears."*

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE Reverend Lewis Carlton was much surprised to have his morning nap disturbed by his servant bringing up to his chamber door a card from his old friend, Alfred Murray. The man said the gentleman begged Mr. Carlton would rise and come into the parlor immediately, as he wished to see him on urgent business. The Reverend Mrs. Carlton, as the Germans would say, had by this time fairly wakened up, lifted her head, in its ruffled night-cap, from the conjugal pillow, and taking the card from her obedient husband's hand, read the name on it.

"Alfred Murray! Why, I did not know he was on this hemisphere!"

"I shall verify the fact and inform you, my dear, whether he comes in the spirit or the flesh, as soon as possible," said her husband, who by this time had risen, made a hurried toilet, and was in the act of throwing his dressing-gown over his shoulders preparatory to his descent to obey his friend's urgent summons.

"Mind you make him stay to breakfast, Mr. Carlton," screamed his wife, as he hastened out of the room.

Mrs. C. was not deficient in womanly curiosity. Mr. Murray was an old favorite of hers, and—another bright idea flashed across her motherly head—she had now quite a pretty marriageable daughter, who was a great pet with Mr. Murray in former days, used to sit on his knees, and pull his whiskers, when they were black and glossy. He was in every way—"eligible," a good "beau" for Fanny anyhow—good Mrs. Carlton had some imagination under the ruffles of her night-cap—so she began to reckon the difference between Mr. Murray's and Fanny's ages, and to think of "probabilities." She

* The Italian of this can be found in "L'Italie Pittoresque"—this is rather a free transcription of the original—in Legouve's "Naples."

wasted at least ten minutes in this manner; then, fearing that her careless husband might forget to deliver her message, and really liking Alfred Murray, independent of all ulterior motives, she sprang up and began to dress as fast as she could. Before she had progressed very far, however, with the copious ablutions which are essential to the well-being and comfort of cleanly English people, she heard the house door open and close upon the retiring guest. She waited for Lewis to come back, in order to give a conjugal lecture for his neglect of her request; her husband did not return, however, but went to his study, much to her discomfiture. She hurried on her clothes as fast as possible, and hastened after Mr. Carlton as soon as she could.

"Goodness me! Lewis, what are you about? And why did not Alfred Murray stay to breakfast?"

"About, my dear?" said the Reverend Lewis, laying down his pen and looking up, with a comical smile upon his usually grave face; "drawing up a certificate of marriage, which I wish you and Fanny, and the Hewitts, and Lord Elkington to witness in half an hour; so please send off these notes to that effect, immediately."

Mrs. Carlton took the notes dutifully—rang the bell—gave the necessary orders to the domestic, who answered it, and then came back to her husband's desk. The Hewitts were the American Consul and his family, who lived next door; Lord and Lady Elkington, English people boarding over the way, members of Mr. Carlton's fold.

"And now, Lewis, who is to be married at this unchristian hour?"

"Alfred Murray, of Louisiana, to Agnes Graham, spinster, daughter of the late Edward Graham, also of Louisiana," said her husband, reading the names from the certificate he was drawing up.

Mrs. Carlton threw up her eyes and hands—"Well, I never! Mercy on us! Alfred Murray! Tell me all about it, do, Lewis?"

And, Lewis being a good-natured husband, told her all about it—as much at least as Mr. Murray had told him.

"So it is a runaway match? To think of Alfred Murray's being so romantic—at his age, too. Why, he must be forty-five at least, Lewis?"

Unkind Mrs. Carlton. When she had been planning for Fanny, she had put Mr. Murray down as not over thirty-eight. He really was in his fortieth year, though he did not look over thirty-five.

"Going to marry the daughter of his old friend, too! Don't you remember that Mr. Graham who was here with Alfred Murray in 18—, the year they came from the East—who gave you the Syriac manuscripts?"

"Bless my soul! so he was, Lucinda. I

had forgotten him. A very gentlemanly person he was, and a very valuable copy that is—of St. Matthew. But," said he, taking out his watch, "you have but little time for any preparations you may desire to make. They will be here presently. Get Fanny wakened up, while I make myself more respectable."

Mrs. Carlton appreciated the wisdom of her husband's advice, and bustled about like Eve, "on hospitable thoughts intent." She was so pleased at the idea of Alfred Murray's making an elopement, she almost forgave him for getting married and toppling down her castles in the air.

The witnesses soon arrived. Mr. and Mrs. Hewitt—his manly son, and three daughters—all grown up—all clever people—and all on the *qui vive* for the wedding. Lord and Lady Elkington also made their *entrée*. His lordship's wig a little awry, and her ladyship's collar not quite straight in its pinning—showing rather unseemly haste; but everybody in high good humor, which was wonderful, considering the sun himself had just gotten up, and he ordinarily rose several hours before they did. Last of all, stole in pretty Fanny Carlton, with "her shining morning face" looking as fresh as a rose, in her pink gingham morning dress, with its little white ruffles close around her sweet throat. Mrs. Carlton beamed like another sun. The Reverend Lewis in his white surplice, and the prayer-book open at the marriage service, joked and chatted in a wonderful style with his friends. Suddenly, a carriage dashed up. Mr. Murray aided his bride to alight, gave her his arm, the door was thrown open by the waiting lackey, who ushered them in with a broad grin. They walked forward and stood before the clergyman.

Agnes's head drooped upon her bosom—her long mantle and heavy veil fell around her like a pall; but steadily and distinctly, though very low, her sweet voice made the responses after Mr. Carlton. Mr. Murray's full tones trembled more than hers. Agnes had spent the intervening hours of that morning well, in prayer to God, that since it seemed her fate to be the wife of this noble, generous man, she might be able to fulfil her duties faithfully, as a Christian woman ought, to the utmost.

The past was dead. Let it be buried now and forever. No weak repinings—no girlish sentiment for Agnes Graham—no shrinking—no looking back. If her path lay over the burning ploughshares, there she would walk unflinchingly, looking to God for strength for herself—for him to whom she in full understanding of the words now "gave her troth." So her voice never faltered in its calm, even tones; and when the service was ended, and the clergyman stepped forward to congratulate the bride,

she swept the veil back from her face, and Mr. Murray's eye filled with pride and admiration as he observed the lofty grace and gentle courtesy with which she received the greetings of his friends. The witnesses took their leave. Mrs. Carlton had ordered breakfast to be served immediately after the ceremony was concluded, and insisted upon the newly wedded pair partaking of her hospitality before they left—especially as Mr. Murray designed quitting Naples that very day. Mr. Murray looked at Agnes, fearful that this would be beyond her strength. He knew how severely it had already been taxed. She had taken no food that morning, he knew; he suspected, none the day before. He little knew *how* small had been the portion of nourishment which had passed her lips lately.

"Mrs. Carlton is very kind—but I fear Mrs. Murray—" he began.

Agnes turned quickly towards him—"Mrs. Murray will be glad to do whatever may be most agreeable to Mr. Murray, and will be pleased to become better acquainted with his old friend Mrs. Carlton," said she smilingly, extending her hand to that lady.

Mrs. Carlton, charmed with the words and the beautiful smile, as well as pleased at having her own way, took Agnes's hand and led her to the breakfast-table—seating her by herself, leaving Mr. Murray to Fanny and Mr. Carlton. Agnes talked, smiled, ate a little. Mr. Murray had enough to do in watching her, and replying to the Rev. Lewis's innumerable questions. He looked with surprise at the sudden transformation of the pale, weeping girl of last night into this self-possessed, stately lady, who now sat talking with Mrs. Carlton. He was delighted, and almost stopped several times, in the midst of a reply to Mr. Carlton, to listen admiringly to Agnes. Mr. Carlton forgave his preoccupation. The Murrys left immediately after breakfast. The Carltons were charmed, and unanimous in their praises of the bride.

"So beautiful! So graceful! Such exquisite manners!" It was a perfect chorus among them.

And Mr. Murray, when they were alone, took his wife's hand, pressed it to his lips, and thanked her for the efforts she had made, for his sake, to gratify his friends. Agnes Murray smiled her peculiar Davenant smile. There were heights in her nature even he could not understand, none but a poet could. To make an exhibition of feeling before "people," at any rate, was impossible for Agnes. She had learned self-command too early and too thoroughly for that. *Impassioned* natures soon do, but not *passionate* ones. Pride was the heritage of Agnes Graham. It takes protean forms. Besides, it was probably more agreeable to her that they should have been among strangers at

that trying hour. Would it have been so—would Agnes have been so calm, so self-possessed, had she loved her husband with a different love? Did Mr. Murray forget the shy, timid, blushing, trembling girl whom he once saw bending like a flower beneath the ardent glances of Robert Selman? No. He had not forgotten it; but he admired more this noble woman who now stood beside him, as his life's companion—this strong wrestler who had come out from life's battle-field purer, grander than ever, and he was content. His "heart trusted in her," nobly did Agnes meet his trust. She devoted herself to her husband. She conformed herself in every way to his wishes. She studied her duties—her husband's disposition and tastes. Hers was the larger nature, the artistic. It is catholic in its sympathies, in its powers of adaptation. Agnes was no hypocrite, only a woman of the highest type. One of her first acts was to take all the letters—all the souvenirs that, girl-like, she had carefully cherished before her marriage, and put them in the fire—all but one—that was the broad, gold-linked bracelet, with its ruby clasp, which she had unclasped from her arm just before she went to be married. This she took and sealed in a box, and put it in a secret drawer of her dressing-case, locked the drawer and put the key away; during her husband's life that drawer was *never unlocked*. She guarded her very *thoughts* jealously—for her own weaknesses she had no mercy. Every talent her husband admired, she cultivated, even her music—that was a trial at first; but if she showed some consciousness of weakness in her careful avoidance of sentimental music; if she never sung love-ditties, and there were some operas she "never liked" now; if she avoided all passionate expression in music, conversation, or reading, yet who saw the change or missed these chords? not those who listened with rapturous delight to the rich voice in the music of the severer higher masters, or wondered over the brilliancy of the wit and intellect displayed in the conversation of the beautiful Mrs. Murray; "the admired of all admirers," the envied one. Mr. Murray never repented his marriage. Agnes seemed always satisfied to please him. The name of her cousin never passed her lips; she asked no questions about him in her letters to the Rectory. Agnes understood, though, they had not, Robert's bitter words—"all or nothing!" That was true and right! So those who had begun life's journey, so closely united, were now "*nothing*" to each other. Agnes wrote to her friends at the Rectory, announcing her marriage, without any explanation. She felt she had no right, even to them, to violate the confidence which should be sacred. None should ever know that she had been an unwilling bride

—her husband's honor was concerned there. She could not make that return to his noble generosity. Let them misjudge her. Let them think her inconsistent—inconstant—politic—untrue to womanhood; better that they should, than ever know the truth from her. They *did* think her marriage *strange*—*sudden*—but they knew her too well to doubt her. Dr. Leonard wrote to Robert, telling him of her marriage without comment. Robert replied to the business part of the letter, but made no allusion to Agnes, nor to his own life in South America.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The spring had passed at Davenant Rectory, and the long hot summer had begun his tropic reign. Dr. Leonard had just returned from visiting a patient, and, tired with his dusty ride, was sitting on the shaded gallery, outside of the glass door of Mr. Danvers' study, enjoying a cigar, petting his little black-tan English terrier, which had clambered upon his knee, occasionally exchanging a word with the occupant of the study, who was reclining upon a couch near the door, with a book in his hand. Mrs. Clark suddenly appeared within the study, evidently somewhat agitated, or what she called "all in a flutter." This responsible individual had been induced to take up her abode at the Rectory after the burning of Davenant Hall. She attended to the house-keeping for the two confirmed old bachelors, while her husband found such occupation as pleased him in the garden, or in pretending to look after the boy who had charge of the Doctor's horses. They were very well satisfied—had little to do—good wages, and their own way in everything. Mrs. Clark, to do her justice, was really attached "to the poor dear gentlemen," as she called them, and looked after their interests with great fidelity, even if she did principally consult her own comforts a little more, perhaps, than was right. Mr. Danvers and the Doctor, however, knew no better, and were very grateful for such attention as Mrs. Clark chose to bestow upon them. Mr. Danvers rose politely and put down his book as the housekeeper approached him.

"If you please, Mr. Danvers—if you will be so good, Dr. Leonard, I have a favor to ask of you gentlemen!"

Both gentlemen assured her she had only to mention what she wished to have her request granted.

"I have a friend just arrived from France—in Europe, gentlemen! Mrs. Lucy that was—that is, I mean, though she says she is going to marry that furrin courier of Mr. Murray's when he comes over next fall; the

respectable woman, I mean, who went over with poor dear Mrs. Elmsworth—Miss Emeline that was!" Mrs. Clark put her apron to her eyes—she *did* love the Davnants! "Mrs. Lucy has just returned with a gentleman's family to New Orleans, and has come up to see me for a day or two. She came up here about an hour ago—off the boat—and went to the Hall, expecting to find me; but you know how it was, gentlemen, when she got there—poor thing!" Mrs. Clark sobbed. "So she came on here. She has been at Nice (Mrs. Clark pronounced Nice long as an adjective), all winter, she says, though, to be sure, that is a strange name for a place. If you gentlemen have no objection, I could take Mrs. Lucy in my room, and make a shake-down for my old man in the spare bed-room, if Mrs. Lucy can stay!"

The gentlemen assured her that they had not the slightest objection to her making Mrs. Lucy as comfortable as possible, and would be glad to have her stay as long as she liked.

"Perhaps, Mrs. Clark," said gentle Mr. Danvers, "perhaps Mrs. Lucy might prefer having the spare room herself, so as not to disarrange you and poor John. Pray, use the house as suits your convenience."

That was just what Mrs. Clark wanted; so she accepted the proposition graciously, and thanked the gentlemen for their consideration.

"And, Mrs. Clark," said Dr. Leonard, "when Mrs. Lucy is rested, and it is convenient for her, we would be much obliged if she will come to the parlor and allow us to ask some questions about Mrs. Elmsworth and Mrs. Murray!"

Mrs. Clark was sure Mrs. Lucy would only be too proud to come immediately and give the gentlemen any satisfaction in her power. A short time after Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Lucy made their entrance into the study—the latter considerably excited by the unexpected interview, very fashionable and elegant in what she called her "Paris dress and cap."

Mr. Danvers placed chairs for them. Like all true Southern gentlemen, the tenants of the Rectory had the utmost reverence and courtesy towards all *women*, and were as polite and deferential to the poor washer-woman as they would have been to a duchess. [I have seen a Southern gentleman of the purest blood and a poor emigrant woman to walk the stage of a steamboat and carry her little child for her, as he stood accidentally near her, and saw how overburdened she was; and there were no smiles upon the faces of the crowd of men assembled upon the gangway—no jeers at the act of politeness. It is a *matter of course* among Southern men to help any, every woman, if she is in need of their

strong arm or hand, independent of *color* even.]

After Mrs. Lucy got a little over her nervousness, by dint of answering the questions in regard to her voyage and recent arrival, reassured by the gentle amiability of Mr. Danvers, she plunged *in medias res*, and set off full tilt in a narrative of all her personal trials, privations, and vexations since she quitted Davenant Hall. Her inquisitors were too glad to learn in this way all that had occurred, to interrupt her minute detail by word or look. Of course Mr. Elmsworth and Count Serimia, Mr. Murray and Antonio filled important places in her long, parenthetical, episodic narration. For the first time the gentlemen learned what persecutions their darling had endured from Elmsworth and Serimia. From their previous knowledge of Agnes's life, they were enabled to gather up the broken links scattered by Mrs. Lucy in her ignorance, and make one united chain of the events and incidents which had led to Agnes's sudden, unaccountable marriage. They appreciated the generosity of Mr. Murray, the steadfast consistency of Agnes. Dr. Leonard threw away his cigar, and stood with folded arms leaning inside of the study door, his heart burning with sorrow and indignation. Mr. Danvers bowed his head upon his hand. Mrs. Clark was sobbing outright. When Mrs. Lucy concluded the recital of what she herself had witnessed up to the time of her own discharge, and the substitution of Fanchon, "an artful minx," as she called her, she went on to tell how, when she returned to Paris from "Nice," she had gone to visit La Madre, and had met with Antonio, who had just gotten back from Sicily with "the missing witness," whom he had discovered secreted on Serimia's estate, and had bribed to escape and accompany him back to Paris. She repeated all he had told her, which brought her story up to the hour of Agnes's marriage at Naples. "Antonio said the fury of Serimia," or "Il Conty," as she called him, "was beyond description when he found Agnes had escaped; but he never suspected Antonio's complicity, but trusted him to the last. Oh! sirs," observed Mrs. Lucy, "them Italians is frightful cunning; though Mr. Antonio is a good man, and a honest one—and a Christian, though a Papisher! But a woman ain't obliged to be a Papish because she may happen to marry one," said she, casting a side-long glance upon Mrs. Clark, who shook her head ominously at the announcement of Antonio's faith.

"Mr. Antonio," continued Mrs. Lucy, "rubbed his hands and laughed when he told us how he waited on Il Conty, and how he manœuvred until he got off the man he went there to look for. He said Mr. Murray had sent Mr. Elmsworth a copy of the

marriage certificate, and Mr. Elmsworth stamped and swore and tore it to pieces, he was so dreadful angry. Mr. Antonio got his discharge from Mr. Elmsworth, and he got off with the man in a fishing smack to the mainland, and then brought him to Paris, and the police had taken his evidence, and Il Conte would be hung if they could catch him in France. Mr. Antonio said it was the 'vendetta,' some of their outlandish talk, but La Madre, that was the good woman that I stayed with, that kept house for Mr. Antonio, she nodded her head and said yes in Italian. She did not speak any English, but I learned some French and Italian while I was gone. [Mrs. Lucy gave the long Latin *z* to all her French and Italian.] 'La Madre' means 'mother.' She wasn't Mr. Antonio's mother, nor no relation to him; but she brought up his sister, so they called her 'mother' for fondness. Mr. Antonio speaks English, though; he is a very nice man, Mr. Antonio! I saw the man he brought over; he was an old man—the 'croupier'—I suppose that's the barkeeper of the gaming house where the English nobleman was killed. Mr. Antonio stayed a short time in Paris, then went to join Mr. and Mrs. Murray, and I came away. Mr. Antonio is coming over in the fall to New Orleans."

Mrs. Clark cleared her throat significantly. With all her gratitude to Antonio for his fidelity to her "dear Miss Emmeline" and to Agnes, the fact of his being "a Papish" was extremely distasteful to her. She feared Mrs. Lucy was periling her soul in such a union. But Mrs. Lucy was obstinate in her predilection.

Dr. Leonard smiled at the little by-play he saw going on between the two good women.

Mrs. Clark made a sign to Mrs. Lucy. The latter rose hastily, made a profound courtesy to the gentlemen, and sailed out of the room, followed by the admiring Mrs. Clark.

"This accounts for all," said Dr. Leonard to Mr. Danvers, as the last vestige of the ribands and flounces disappeared out of the door.

"Yes! Agnes would never write that to us!"

"Noble creature! Danvers, our adopted daughter has never failed us yet!"

Dr. Leonard wiped his eyes.

"No; she is what we hoped she would be—a large-hearted, true Christian woman."

That night Dr. Leonard wrote a long letter to Robert Selman, ending it with this sentence:—

"I write this in justice to Agnes and to you—that you may not lose your faith in woman—that you may rightly estimate her noble nature!"

This letter must have crossed, on its way, one from Robert, telling of his marriage with Amita, the only daughter of a Brazilian nobleman, Don Pedro de Guzman. One line only showed Robert's true feeling: "Please inform Mrs. Alfred Murray."

Dr. Leonard did. That was the only mention ever made of the consins to each other in his correspondence with either of them for years.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OLD CATICHE sat in her chair by the kitchen-fire. Catiche had grown so fat and heavy, taking on flesh as the creole negroes often do, as she advanced in years, that she had given up all ideas of activity in body, though her tongue would still hold its own in an altercation either with her subordinates, her ever-wearying grandson, or even Mrs. Clark, who, in spite of her dignity as "white housekeeper," Catiche never forgot was only promoted to the care of the pantries and keys of the rectory, when it was evident even to Catiche herself that she was incapacitated by age and obesity from the charge. Mrs. Clark was housekeeper, vice Catiche, self-deposed and retired—disabled, not discharged; and Catiche never allowed Mrs. Clark to forget this fact. Mrs. Clark was good-natured and willing to humor the faithful old servant who had been true, as herself, "to the family." So she would come frequently to Catiche, as she sat in her huge rocking-chair, a small mountain of solid flesh, close by the fire, in summer and in winter—Catiche loved warmth like a cat—and would ask the old woman's advice about certain dishes or points in housekeeping. This gratified Catiche very much, and made her happy for a whole day. She felt as if the scepter had not entirely departed from her hands, although they had grown too feeble to hold it upright. Catiche was a picture to look upon: her large face, yellow and shining, without a single wrinkle; her flat African soft features; her mild blue eyes beaming with benevolence and kindness; her short, white, half-straight hair (not wool) in little ringlets all over her low forehead; her bright bandana-handkerchief, flaming with color; bound in a high turban, with ends falling low behind; her brilliant gown contrasted with a spotless white apron and kerchief pinned close about her neck (what she boasted of a neck: it consisted of two huge rolls of fat); her large gold ear-rings and rings on nearly every finger; and her feet in gay carpet-slippers, resting on her wooden footstool. When a little child, I used to

think Catiche was beautiful; and when I remember now, I think so still.

Jerry and Lelie were discussing Mrs. Lucy—her news, and her visit. The housekeeper's apartments were of course good subject for gossip in the kitchen among the lower or colored domestics. Catiche still reigned supreme here, and kept a vigilant eye over the culinary effects. Such muffins and rice batter-cakes; such gumbo flet in winter, and ochra gumbo in summer, could never have been concocted, as issued out of that kitchen, except from under her experienced eye and exquisite *gout*; Savarin himself would have been glad of a few lessons from Catiche. Stoves and ranges were abominations to Catiche. Lelie had an ironing-stove, and there was a bake-oven for bread, &c.; but Catiche would have had an apoplectic attack if Lelie had ever dared to cook any meat except in the tin kitchen or on the spit, before the old-fashioned fireplace. Catiche had a horror of baked meats as a general thing; there were some dishes, such as a daube or spiced round, which could be lawfully baked, if carefully swaddled in dough, and skewered and tied up with tape; but they could be more safely done, Catiche declared, in her big Dutch ovens. "Lelie shouldn't have any new-fangled stove in her kitchen; no! not while the Lord spared her, she shouldn't!" and so Lelie didn't. The Dr. and Mr. Danvers, although they were tyrannized over and victimized by their servants, were well fed and well cared for. Jerry wore all their clothes now, occasionally; but he kept their garments clean and carefully brushed, and could see his face, every morning, in their polished boots, while Mrs. Clark, though she borrowed the best bed-room for her friend's use, kept the house linen to perfection, all folded and strewed over and over with lavender, vanilla grass, and rose leaves. The linen closet was redolent of fragrance and purity.

"So," remarked Jerry, "Miss Agnes and Mars Robert both done gone; got married over yonder, and no fun and no carryin's on at their weddin's. It warn't so in ole times, granny—with the Davenant weddin's."

"No, I believe you! splendorn enuff there was in ole times; with the ole house all flamin' with wax candles, an' music, an' daucin', an' what not! There never was nuthin' too good for the Davenants. Proud people they was; but the Lord brought 'em low, often times—low enuff," replied Catiche, slowly shaking her head. "Mor's the pity! mor's the pity! I 'member when they was gettin' ready for Miss Alice's weddin' to this same Dr. Leonard. What a providen', an' cookin', an' sewin' o' laces and flounces; an' it all come to nuthin'—to nuthin'." Miss Alice, she says to me in her

sweet, purty voice: 'Catiche, you must come to be my cook when I get married; nobody can cook like you.' An' I says: 'that I will, Missie,' 'cause I always loved that child the most, tho' they was all good, every one of them. So, after the poor, purty creetur' was shut up, an' there was no more hope of a weddin' for her, I axed Miss Eleanor: 'Miss Eleanor, ef you please, I would like to go and cook at the rectory for Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers, long as Miss Alice wanted me to.' An' Miss Eleanor she cried an' shook my hand an' tell me to go; an' so I come; an' here I bin, goin' on nigh twenty years now; I loves 'em, the Davenants, an' I'm glad them two chillun done married out o' the family. Mr. Murray is a good man, and I s'pose Robert's lady is nice an' purty an' good, if she is a Berzillian."

"I dun know," observed Lelie; "Aunt Catiche, Miss Agnes had a heap o' trouble, I 'spec, according to Mrs. Lucy."

"Trouble comes from the Lord," said Catiche; "it don't come from out o' the yearth; an' I on'st heard Miss Eleanor say: 'Agnes means a lamb—lamb—lamb—were offered in burnt sacrifice for the sins of others in ole times.'"

"Sacrifice here, sacrifice there," said the irreverent Jerry; "I dun know what Miss Agnes seek in Mr. Murray better 'an in Mars Robert!"

"There's no accountin' for gals' tastes," observed Catiche, looking severely at Lelie, who had the reputation of being somewhat coquettish among her own class. Lelie hung down her head.

"Well," continued Catiche, "I have got trunks o' silks, an' good close, gived to me by my ladies, that Jerry's wife 'll get when I'm gone; they's all grewed too little for me, this many a year."

Jerry laughed, glancing slyly at Lelie. "Take good care of 'em, Granny; I am tryin' to make up my mind betwixt Rosanne, an' Catharine, an' Lelie."

Lelie tossed her head. "It takes two to make that bargain, Mr. Jerry, I'd have you to know; I ain't beggin' for company from nobody. There's Jake, an' Bill, and Joe!"

"Joe! O Lord!" screamed Jerry, in a loud guffaw; "don't talk about that fool nigger, Lelie. Joe! What you think, Granny? Joe, he thunk he'd git religion; so he goes out in the woods yonder arter dark, an' he climb up in a low spreadin' tree, an' he begin to pray mitey loud. He say, 'Lord, see here I is, in de tree-top a-prayin' that you'd look down on my sinful soul; an', O Lord! save me from the eternal, never-dyin'-out fires o' Satan! an' keep conjurin' way from me an' de Devil!' An' Joe he's afeard o' de Devil. He keep a-squintin' out o' de tree branches all round, to see if de old Satan wasn't arter him. He's a scary nigger, anyhow. So I sees Joe

a-goin' off into the woods, an' I follers him, an' I hides in another tree close by, an' when Joe stops in his prayin' and looks round sorter scared, feard o' wisions, I im-mics a owl, an' I cries out loud, 'too-whooh! too-whooh!' an' Joe he jump almost out o' de tree-top, an' he trimbled; I could hear de tree limb a-shakin' under him; an' Joe says, wery scared, 'to me, Lord, an' send my mammy, what's gone to Vicksburg on a wisit, safe back to me!' 'Too-whooh! too-whooh!' I sings out, louder an' ever. Joe he begins to quiver, an' last he begins to cry, 'to me, Lord, to me, send my poor mammy back to me—boo-hoo, boo-hoo! I believe de Devil's arter me now, boo-hoo, boo-hoo!'

"'Twas much as I could do to keep in a laughin', but I screeched out again, 'too-whooh, too-whooh!' an' de fool niggah drop out of de tree down on to de ground, an' fallin' on his knees, he held up his hands—'To me, Lord, to Joe Brown, Lord! I tho't you knowed me!'

"Then, you better believe it, mammy, I laughed till I most dropped out o' my tree right on top of Joe; an' Joe, soon as he heard me laughin', he took to his heels, an' he never stop till he got into de Marter street; an' now Joe swears he had a wision, an' saw Satin hisself in the woods, an' talked wid him. I'd have a beau wid more sense than dat, Lelite."

"Umph!" retorted Lelite, "you better stop your tricks, Jerry, immickin' owls, which was ole-time people worst before the flood, and was so wain o' their beauty the Lord turned 'em into birds. You'll have feathers a-growin' over you for a judgment—always laffin' an' makin' fun. You is a *Piscopal* nigger. Let me tell you—a man I saw tuther day, he says: 'I am thinkin' o' ligion; I don't like the Methodys, cause they believe in fallin' from grace; I don't like Presbyterereens, cause they believes in 'lection; an' I don't like Baptists, cause they believes in immer-shun. I think I'll jine the Piscopals, cause they don't believe in *nuthin*.'"

Lelite, having discharged her shaft, made a Pythian retreat into the obscurities of the kitchen, leaving Jerry to digest and apply her anecdote. Jerry recovered himself, however, and calling out, "I believes in de creed, I does, an' says it every Sunday," then departed the precinct, whistling as he walked—

"I called little Missie,
An' she wouldn't come along,
She wouldn't come along;
I called little Missie,
An' she wouldn't come along
To bid us all good mornin'!"

while Lelite, raising up her rolling-pin, began to beat her biscuits on the board while she sang—

"Ole Saytin come along,
Keep movin'—
Ole Saytin come along,
With the black book under his arm,
Keep movin'—
All on the left side mine,
Keep movin'!"

"My dear Agnes," wrote Dr. Leonard to Mrs. Murray, "I am compelled to break through the silence you seem to have imposed on yourself in regard to your cousin Robert. I have just had a brief letter from him announcing the sudden death of his wife; and his determination to leave immediately for Europe, 'for a while,' he says. The letter is only on business, requesting me to forward his rents and other moneys to Paris, care Messrs. Rothschild & Brothers. The sole mention of you is a request that I would deliver the inclosed sealed note. I hope, my dear child, this may be the beginning of new and kinder relations between Robert and yourself; that the old feelings of blood and childhood's love have come back to you two, so near to each other and so alone in the world. I send you Robert's address in Paris, if you want to write him. I fear the poor boy was not very happy in his marriage, but he is young yet."

Agnes opened the little sealed note in the handwriting so long now unfamiliar to her eyes, opened it with trembling hands, and dropped it with a cry.

Robert wrote: "Agnes, my wife is dead. Poor wretch! she had a miserable time of it, for I did not love her, though I tried to, and Anita had a jealous spirit. Another life you have to account for. I had no right to marry her as I did. However, it is all over; the poor jealous child is at rest, I suppose; you Christians say so. Now that I am released from this burden, and am free, I am going to Europe to find Serimia, and kill him. It is what Murray should have done instead of forcing you to marry him. I don't suppose it will detract from your happiness to know that I consider your husband a d—d coward. However, he is your husband, so be it. Though, Mrs. Alfred Murray, you are nevertheless my cousin, and Agnes Graham; and I shall kill the man who insulted you if I can do it. Agnes Graham, when you sent me from you, did you dream how many lives you were destroying? Think over it all. I do not forgive you! I never shall. Never, never!"

"ROBERT."

Agnes read these mad words with dilated eyes, and lips compressed in bitterness. Seizing her pen, she wrote a line to Dr. Leonard, re-inclosing her opened note.

"Read this," she said; "if possible warn Serimia, and save Robert from this murder of his soul and mine. It would be useless for me to write to Robert. There is nothing for me, nothing I dare to say to

him, that would soften his heart, or change his bitterness towards me. I have duties towards my husband, and those duties I will fulfil to my utmost. So help me God."

Dr. Leonard wrote to Mr. Elmsworth, to his old address in Paris, a few brief lines, warning him of Robert's purpose.

Some months later, Agnes received a packing-case from Düsseldorf. On being opened it was found to contain a beautiful copy, by Hildebrandt, of the "Knight's Return," taken from the ballad of the Bridal Ornaments of Rubies. Around the frame were gilded the words,

"I fear not the false winds nor the falser sea."

Agnes knew then that Robert was in Europe. She wept and trembled over him; she feared greatly for him. She knew what desperate madness filled his morbid soul; but what could she do except to pray for him? She was bound by duty and by honor. She prayed for Robert passionately; she wrestled with the angel of God over his reckless soul. She felt sometimes as if it would be a relief if Robert would come back and literally fulfil his threat, like the knight, by plunging a dagger in her heart and so ending all. But that was not Robert's plan. He could not harm Agnes, physically; he loved her too much; but she should know that she had wrecked him, soul and body—that should be his vengeance, worse than a dagger in her heart. But God weaves wonderful fabrics on his loom of time and circumstance. He brings all floating, tangled warp-threads straight at last. Experience is his—skilful, skilful weaver. Agnes and Robert were clay in God's hands to be moulded eventually to the liking of the omnipotent potter, who meant them to be "vessels of honor" in His holy temple.

After following Elmsworth from place to place, Dr. Leonard's missive reached his hands at Palermo, where he was with Serimia.

Serimia quitted the gay city and took refuge, with Elmsworth, in his old castle, over the Valley of the Dead, at Ispica.

Two men were now seeking Serimia's life, Antonio through the law, and Robert with his own vengeful hand.

Robert went all over Europe. He frequented all the famous gambling-houses, everywhere that he thought it probable he might meet Serimia. He went to Sicily—to Ispica. He tried to watch for Serimia; he bribed the peasants to tell his whereabouts; but these children of the soil were true to their feudal instincts, and would not betray the young Count.

Robert meant to attack Serimia, and force him to defend himself; he did not wish to assassinate him. Serimia was a "gentleman," according to the code of honor, so Robert meant to force Serimia to fight him, and he intended to kill him if he could.

But Serimia did not want to fight, though he was not physically a coward. So, warned by Elmsworth, he succeeded in dodging Robert's pursuit. At last, weary of playing this hide-and-seek game, one day he suddenly announced to Elmsworth his intention to return to Paris. Elmsworth expostulated. "The missing witness" had very mysteriously escaped recently from the castle and gotten off, it was conjectured, in one of the boats of the fishermen. Elmsworth feared Serimia would find a more dangerous enemy in Gabriella's brother and in the law, than in Robert Selman. The French police were fearful detectives on the track of any criminal. Serimia was obstinate, he would go back to France; Elmsworth accompanied him. They got off without difficulty in a fishing-smack of one of the Count's retainers, and were safely landed in Marseilles. There Robert succeeded in overtaking them, followed them by rail to a station-house near Paris, met them face to face on the platform as they were about to step into the railway carriage. Robert recognized his uncle, of course, and Serimia, also, from description. He sprang past Mr. Elmsworth, seized Serimia by the arm, and broke his travelling cane over the Count's shoulders. Serimia grappled with him, but the police rushed upon the combatants and separated them. Serimia struggled with the men who held him, got one hand free, and dashed his glove in Robert's face, demanding, as intelligibly as rage permitted, "Who it was that dared to insult him?"

"The cousin of Agnes," was the stern reply.

The Count was no coward, but he turned lividly pale now. He had an almost superstitious fear of this man, whom he knew now was the one who had been seeking him like a sleuth-hound for months. He quieted down immediately. He and Robert were forced to give bonds to keep the peace. But, as usual among men of his stamp, Serimia challenged Robert as soon as they got out of the justice's office. They adjourned to a garden behind a hotel, and pistols were brought by Mr. Elmsworth, assisted by a French officer, whom Robert saw standing near him at the time of the fracas. A French officer of course never refused a service of this sort to any brave man; so the stranger examined the pistols; after exchanging cards with Robert and Mr. Elmsworth, he measured off the ground with sang froid, and pulling out the handkerchief had begun to give the word—"one—two—" Before the fatal three was called the door of the garden was burst open, and the police, headed by Antonio, rushing in, seized Serimia upon the grave charge of "murder." Mr. Elmsworth recognized Antonio and slunk aside. Robert's pistol sunk down in his hand.

Count Serimia, dragging himself away from the police, snatched up the pistol they had forced from him, and putting it to his temple, touched the trigger and blew his own brains out. It was done in an instant—so quickly that no one had time to prevent the dreadful act. Serimia's body swayed and fell heavily, he breathed once and then was still, lying in a pool of his own blood, at Robert's feet. Robert covered his eyes with his hands in horror; a sensation of pity mingled with his fast evaporating anger. He gave his address to the police that they might know where to find him, and walked away as swiftly as he could, with the French officer, from the horrible scene.

He had neither spoken to nor noticed his Uncle Elmsworth. This affair made a deep and painful impression on Robert; he could not shake off the remembrance of it. As soon as he could get free from his embarrassment with the police, he quitted France, and continued his aimless travels. Agnes was revenged, but not by his hand; and Robert, for the first time in many years, was sane enough now to thank God that he had not sent that rash, wicked, but courageous soul into the presence of its Maker, unsummoned and unannealed.

Robert wrote briefly to Dr. Leonard that Serimia was dead by his own hand—and once more the black pall of silence fell down between the cousins. For years again Robert's name never passed Agnes's lips.

Agnes had lived through many phases of psychological progress by this time. She had set herself to work to conquer her own being. First she accepted her fate, then she left it to God to decide whether she was to be in full possession of her reason or no throughout her life. "At any rate, I will serve him, if I can, while I am sane," she resolved. Then she watched her own mind, she analyzed it, critically—"self-control, discipline, calmness, were essential; a repression of enthusiasm, an avoidance of singularities, peculiarities, extremes, monomanias—all were essential to her. Her mind was active, it must be supplied with food—it must be kept wholesomely at work; no morbidities, no holding of the hands in lethargy for her; healthful motion, active charities, intellectual expansion, philosophy, broad tolerance, were needful for her; she must live out of herself entirely. If sorrow came to her, and she felt the fatal lethargy creeping over her, she roused herself; she began a new study, or a new charity. Ever onward, Agnes pressed forward, though sometimes waveringly, sometimes almost despairingly—yet ever onward, strengthening, developing, broadening her soul and her whole nature, till the dreadful shadows passed away, and she smiled herself over her fearful imaginings, so calm, so strong, so true, so tol-

erant she had grown; she walked straight on, with the light of Eternal Providence and perfect trust in God streaming over her; she no longer feared the strait-jacket and fetters of insanity.

Thus she wrote:—

"There was a time when in the madness of anguish and despair I prayed God to let me die. But that paroxysm of delirium is over. I am ready now to live if God will only show me my work—any work—in this good world of his. My time must be of some value, and my life; for see how many hearts and hands are laboring on this plantation that I may have ease, and food, and leisure! Oh, these 'advantages' of such a life as mine! they press on my soul as great crushing responsibilities. This time God gives me—this wealth—this using up of hundreds of laboring lives, that my days may be free and untrammelled. What answer have I to give for all this? Domine, Domine, miserere me! I have got to perfect myself in every way that I may be useful to God's creatures, and make some payment to his universe for all he and they—his creatures—do for me. At least I have got to *try* to do it, and as I shall most probably *fail*, after all, I have got to lie down in the dust before God's throne and beg for mercy. But I will try—I will try—peace will come perhaps then. What right have I to demand joy? I will not fret my life, which must be valuable—if not to me, to others. I will work. In all antiquity no character impresses me like that of Prometheus, and in later days we have Christ! 'both sufferers on account of giving gifts to men'; what have I to give to man?"

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE Murrays remained about three years, travelling everywhere throughout the East and Europe. Agnes studied and improved herself in languages, in the knowledge of fine art—becoming familiar with the glorious masterpieces of human genius assembled in that favored portion of the earth—her whole nature developing under these high influences; as she cultivated in every possible way the advantages afforded her by travel and intense study. She found herself happiest when most occupied. Mr. Murray, though no artist, had a cultivated taste for art, and a most passionate admiration of the genius and talents of his gifted wife. It was happiness enough for him to sit by her hour after hour, watching the skillful fingers as they plied the magic pencil—to see the large eyes dilate with enthusiasm, as the meaning of a great work of art would become clearer and clearer to her—to listen to the vibrating voice, as it poured forth in

eloquent words the interpretation of such works to his sympathizing ear, or to hear the rendering of the great musicians by her magnificent voice. And day by day, hour by hour, Agnes learned to appreciate this silent, deep companionship—this friendship so pure, so disinterested, so ardent, which her husband proffered her. She was very, very grateful, and began to turn towards her husband with a calm content. If a thought of "Love's young dream" ever came over her, it was banished, except when she prayed night and morning God would bless Robert, and Robert's wife.

Agnes's Diary.

KEPT WHILE IN EUROPE AFTER HER MARRIAGE.

"To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy power which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor flatter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan! is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory."

How I have loved this poem ever since — Ah! how far, far off those days seem when I sat in Aunt Eleanor's warm, bright library, and listened to Shelley read aloud! I am working out a sort of moral creed for myself. I can't take words, mumble them idly, with a glib tongue through careless lips; I believe with Kant: that is not only hypocrisy, but, as he calls it, "idolatry." I believe all true, instinctive, natural love is good, and intended for our good; I believe it is always involuntary. "We can't love where we ought, but where we must (Kant again); we love what is naturally admirable to us—what we respect and value and desire not to be parted from. So then itself—a priori—love is not wrong, but by the mortal condition of our being it seems to be ordained here that we should often be parted from what we love, either by accident, change, fate, or death. The good, beneficent God parts beloved ones every minute; he calls just one soul, then the other, into the next stage of existence, which hope, analogy, science, natural and revealed religion, teach us is better and more beautiful than this. We ought not to weep so over death; as we call it! And yet while I regard this strange arrangement—Death by the side of Life, walking hand in hand—pain and joy—twins of humanity, if not of eternity—I get so confused; life seems so perplexed, so misty—"all a muddle." Of course, seeing this as only an educational period, one gets a sort of idea of what is meant by all this trial and suffering. If one only could be strong; no paltering with temptation; no weakness!

"Act so that thy particular rules might

become universal maxims." Oh! what a hard, hard measure! And yet it is the measure of *right*, and must be done, and *shall be done!* *Miserere me, Domine!* I have put myself all wrong with thy beautiful world; help me to act rightly in this false, artificial position! I will remember—

"Life may change, but it may fly not;
Hope may vanish, but can die not;
Truth be veiled, but still it burneth;
Love repulsed, but it returneth!"

NAPLES.—Just come from the opera—"Don Giovanni." Wonderful, immortal Mozart, who drew his perfect harmonies right straight from their divine source! How poor these later composers are in comparison! how fade and commonplace! They steal their melodies second-hand, then work them up; for instance, Verdi. Burke says: "Art can never give the rules that make an art." "The true standard of the arts is in every man's power, and an easy observation of the most common, sometimes of the meanest things in nature, will give the truest lights where the greatest sagacity and industry that slights such observation must leave us in the dark, or, what is worse, amuse and mislead us by false lights." Beethoven used to go out in the fields and woods, and listen for hours to the cries of the ploughmen, the songs of the birds, and the murmuring among the trees. Some of his most beautiful "*themes*" he caught up there.

Burke says again: "So far is a clearness of imagery from being absolutely necessary to an influence upon the passions, that they may be considerably operated upon, without presenting any image at all, by certain *sounds* adapted to that purpose, of which we have a sufficient proof in the acknowledged and powerful effects of *instrumental music*." And Jean Paul says to music: "Away, away! thou speakest to me of things I have sought, but never found!" Everything has its utterance, its music—at least all organized matter has. Stones have each their distinct sound when struck. Metals have—trees have. I remember a pretty sketch of Henry Ward Beecher's, where he describes himself lying under the trees on a warm midsummer day, listening to the murmurings of the waving boughs. The elm, the aspen, the oak, the willow, and the pine—all the trees had their several individual whisper, each different but all harmonious. After them come the cries of animals; after them the song of birds, and last, the voice of man. "The modifications of sound which may be productive of the sublime are *infinite*." (Burke.) I don't wonder the Greeks, particularly Pythagoras, insisted upon the cultivation of music as so essential a part of good education. In nothing within the range of our faculties are the fixed principles of number, propor-

tion, order, and beautiful, intricate, infinite development so stamped as in this science. The law of chords, of harmonies is eternal and unchangeable—one single tone struck firmly will faint away in fixed proportion and die on the octave. Only some notes of the scale of nature are put in our hands; not the highest, not the lowest, not the complete diapason. For the key-note, our "concert pitch," is always changing; it is higher now than in the days of our ancestors, or of the Greeks—higher in pitch and lower in extent of base is our modern scale! So to accord with our limited humanity, God gives us a few chords, only eleven octaves—that is all we have; and the inspired composer sits down alone in his solitary chamber, with only those bare tones lying before him. Without musical instrument, seizing his pencil, he writes—knowing (only partially) the certain laws of harmony, its accords and discords, and so lovely tones weave themselves together and flow from his enraptured pen—chords whose sources are divine—whose secret governance rests in the thought of the creator. If a discord drops accidentally, unless for the sake of a "resolution" into a different key, it shocks his whole nature with a feeling of pain, because discord is disorganizing and alarming to humanity as suggestive of what we call *death*, and yet even here a parallel may hold, because even that incomprehensible faulty seventh, which is imperfect in our human scale, may only be a beautiful difference of proportion in the universal scale of music, which of course is more immense than our few notes. That's like pain and sorrow in our lives. We will understand better in the next life! But in the mean time God gives us these few chords and bids us develop all the beauty and the wonder in them. This is even too much for us. For centuries man has been arranging and rearranging, combining these few sounds, and he finds ever new, ever varying protean change and loveliness, and sits mute with astonishment and delight before this seeming infinity in this limited number of notes.

Ah, yes! one may trust God.

Certain tones produce certain effects on the nature of man. I wonder what people sing operatic music for, which is generally intended to tell a love story and excite emotions which are *certainly* human. I wonder what they use that sort of music in their churches for? There is Handel, Bach, Mozart, Pergolesi, and the thousands of Latin and English masters who have written music for the worship of God; tones which these great souls drank fresh from the eternal fountain of harmony with reverence and prayer, and gave to mankind, fitted to awaken the proper emotions of

awe and veneration and humility with which man should approach his Maker; and people turn away from "the Messiah" and sing "Mira, Norma" in their worship. That is meretricious. It is like the singing of Bacchantes! Christians ought not to imitate pagans. Love-songs are all right in their place, but that place is not in the worship of God, I think.

FLORENCE.—What a tendency there is in things in nature to crystallization, to concretion in certain forms—the making of archetypes. This law seems to me to pervade all things, even human thought, human art. I suppose it springs from the limitation of our "conditioned" nature. Already I have grown familiar with the types of ideal beauty which crystallized themselves in the souls of these great masters of art. I no longer need a catalogue to tell me which is the work of "Carlo the Sweet" or the more sante Correggio, or the sterner Leonardo. Every one of these men formed their ideal from the woman they loved the most. They idealized nature—the nature about them; only Fra Angelico and the pre-Raphaelites painted the apotheosized, impossible humanity they saw in their holy ecstatic visions. Those pious dream-pictures certainly have a strange influence over one. They are a most highly refined and rarefied "materiality," those angels of Fra Angelico! I sit before them hour after hour, striving to penetrate the secret of their wondrous calm beauty. But yet they are still *material*—not *spirit*. Ah! that incomprehensible Psyche—no more visible to us than to the thought of the ancient Greeks! Perhaps the simple-winged heads come nearer to expression of spirit in our sign language of human art. They remind me of the fanciful thought of Plato's, that the human soul builds a sphere for itself, which is the head, and the other members of the body are but created to serve it. Of all painters I think Ary Scheffer suggests soul-spirit most effectually, even though he does paint, as Heine says, with "snuff and verdigris," the proof of this is in the fact that his pictures retain so much of their expression and peculiar beauty even when engraved. The sentiment of his pictures is—must be—in the *lines*, the anatomical drawing—not certainly in color or shadow. I wonder if the action of soul-intellect is not always stamped on the muscles, the nerves, the lines of the face? Color and shadow give brilliancy, roundness, softness; but not intellectual expression. Rembrandt cannot be altogether right: "The countenance is the index which thought writes of itself." After a certain age—when the nerves have been in use long enough to have traced their lines on the countenance—this must be true. Then comes spirit beauty. But I should

suppose the soul would scarcely write its story under thirty-five or forty years of age. How lovely Ary Scheffer's old women are! I think that picture of Momia and her son Augustine surpassingly beautiful; I keep it always near me—it elevates my soul. The worn, pale, serene face of that mother, looking with such calm, exalted, firm faith beaming from her eyes, right straight into the immortal life opening before her; and the wistful, eager gaze of St. Augustine, trying to follow this noble, inspired Christian soul into the foregleaming light of the coming life. This is very beautiful to me. It may be enthusiasm—"sancta simplicitas, sancta stultitia," but I would no more than Momia resign the Christian faith. There is also a beautiful spirit breathing from Albert Durer's Knight, Death, and the Devil. I don't wonder it suggested to La Motte Fouquet that charming story of Sintram; and in Albert Durer it is certainly only *lines*, not color—lines drawn by nerves and muscles on the face. How soft, and tender, and womanly are Carlo Dolce's women! Young, the body full of fluid, such small bones and rounded contour—sentimental, loving, clinging women they are; no intellect about any of them. I know plenty of women just like them, and they are, I was going to say, perhaps the best sort for ordinary uses. Plato says: "If you wish to know the virtue of a woman, it is not difficult to go through the particulars; that it is to manage well the affairs of her family, to keep safe the things in the house, and to hearken to her husband." Well, all of Carlo Dolce's women would do that; and his ideal was his own wife, whose portrait hangs in the Corsini Palace, in Florence. How grand and stately, how haughty—almost fierce—are the large, nobly-developed women of Titian! Nothing petite or tenderly lovable about them; healthy, strong, Venetian queens; with their floods of rippling red-gold hair, and broad, white, solid, marble shoulders; perfect in feature, perfect in color; all the animal magnificently educed; delighting, of course, in rich, deep chords of color; no spirituality at all; but intellect and pride—plenty. (Ah! there was one who used to call me his "bella donna"—silence eternal!) Then Leonardo, the mathematician, poet, painter; how peculiar his style of beauty! It seems to me the face of that wicked, beautiful, serpent-like Joanna of Naples haunted his thought—all his women resemble her. Here the *lines* tell again. There is subtle intellect in his women. How firmly the outlines are defined! One can see the geometrician with his compasses there, so symmetrical are all his forms. It is of no use to run through them all to prove the truth of my assertion, that human thought crystallizes itself in men always: it is so among writers; every author, like every

painter, has his own ideal, which varies itself slightly through all his works. I speak now principally of types of *woman* in men's minds. They seem to receive their impressions of goodness and loveliness from one woman; and no matter how much they write, she always reappears in thin disguise—a change of costume, but the same. For every mind, then, beauty, like virtue, is a unity. So then we often hear writers unjustly reproached with "repeating themselves." It is a law of nature—they cannot help it. How far beauty is a unity in more than one mind I do not know, or that there can be formed one positive archetype of beauty, as there is of virtue, which would be instantaneously acknowledged by all minds. Titian never could have loved Carlo Dolce's soft, pretty, babyish women!

I wish I could absorb my whole life in art—or in anything. It would not matter what, so life *was* absorbed for happiness. But nothing interests me much. Hope and desire, as regards earthly life, seem dead in my soul. What can resurrect these dry corpses in my heart? Oh, faith, come, because love is fled! Why should Psyche droop her butterfly wing for ever? Is she not immortal? Twenty times a day I say to myself, "Love is not all of life!" My reason acknowledges this maxim, but—I think I am akin to Carlo Dolce's soft-hearted creations. An unthinking, weak woman, who, instead of lifting her eyes up beyond the stars, keeps them fixed longingly on a little spot of earth, where she thinks she could build a nice, temporary nest. Oh, folly! folly! How am I to get strong? How?

"A man reaches his limits as to thought long before he reaches his limits as to expression," says Alexander Smith, speaking of men of letters, "and it is just as true of painters and musicians as of poets. Our small mind-chalices only contain so much. We soon pour it out."

Verdi's music is one perpetual shriek. It will ruin any voice in a short time, in spite of the *progression* of the musical scale. And there is so little depth of passion in shrill, high, bird-like, soprano tones. They are thin, rushing, brilliant drops of water, tinkling, tinkling. Give me the smooth, thick, luscious, creamy contralto, or the wood-thrush notes of the passionate mezzo soprano in woman. I like harmony better than melody. The lovely sequence of tones in melody is a bird's song without *soul* (in spite of Shelley's "sky-lark"). I must have the suggestion of soul in all things to find them interesting. Every creature has a right to be, of course. I respect all vitality, but I care for nothing that does not suggest in itself—eternal life—immortality—*soul*!

The Murrys returned to Louisiana. Mr. Murray longed for Ail-lee. Agnes would have preferred remaining abroad, but she did not say so—she knew her husband had duties as a planter and a citizen, so they returned home. The family at Rosedale were delighted to see the long closed doors of Ail-lee thrown open for the reception of friends and neighbors once more. Rosedale was a much gayer place now than formerly; merry childish voices rang through its pleasant chambers, and Tom Adams, though a husband and father, was as joyous and light-hearted as ever. Elizabeth—now Mrs. Tom Adams—the proud mother of the darling three year old boy (who made the house echo with his shrill fife and toy drum, and kept his grandmother, who adored him, in constant terror lest he should break his head in his tumbles from his hobby-horse, which he always persisted in riding at full canter around with a coach whip) as well as of the crowing blue-eyed babe, rejoicing in the name of "Agnes Elizabeth Adams," was as fair, and looked almost as young as ever. Tom declared her handsomer than ever. Perhaps she was—a bit stouter, and with the sweeter, though more anxious expression of maternity and wifely care on that soft, fair face. Tom was still dreadfully in love with his wife, and had no trouble at all with his hair; Elizabeth combed it for him regularly. He was a very happy fellow. Mrs. Hudson grew young again in this atmosphere of youth, love, and joyousness. Perhaps one reason of her improved health was the quantity of exercise she was compelled to take in trotting after little Tom, who insisted upon his grandmother's accompanying and sharing in all his obstreperous amusements. She was the veriest slave to that boy! Elizabeth expostulated vainly, though she could not help laughing at finding good Mrs. Hudson officiating sometimes as coach-horse to Tom's little wagon, and seeing him pop his great whip, with a "Gee up, grandma!" But there was no use in talking to Mrs. Hudson. Little Tom was omnipotent in her heart—a despotic little tyrant!

"Rosedale was a charming place to visit," as Tom Adams' sister Emily said to her husband, Will Mathews, after a stay of a few days with these good people. Our old friend Emily rejoiced too in the possession of an infant daughter, and the only approach to a quarrel now-a-days between herself and Elizabeth was as to which baby was brightest and biggest, each mother thinking her own the most wonderful, though they were too polite to say so. The Murrys had invited them all to spend the day at Ail-lee. The Rosedaleites had returned home, and were all assembled around the fire after tea discussing the incidents of the day. Tom Adams had thrown himself in a very com-

fortable attitude on the sofa; Elizabeth sat near her husband on a low chair, sewing. Tom had one arm on the back of her chair, and was lazily drawing her long, golden curls through his fingers. Will Mathews sat near the centre-table, where the lamp was placed, with a newspaper in his hand, which he intended to read, but had not begun yet. Emily was watching Mrs. Hudson's skilful knitting of a pretty sock for Elizabeth's youngest.

"Ail-lee is a superb place," observed Emily, "and Agnes is handsomer than ever."

"I tell you what," said Tom, "Mrs. Murray is a far grander woman than Miss Graham used to be."

"What do you mean, Tom? I am sure we saw no difference," indignantly retorted Elizabeth. "She was the same dear old Agnes to us. Wasn't she, Emily?"

"Just the same," replied Mrs. Mathews. "What lovely things she brought the babies from Europe!"

"Well," persisted Tom, "you may have seen no change; but I did. She is as kind as ever. To be sure, it was very kind of her to remember my wish for an English saddle. And that Greener gun Murray brought me is splendid. But she seemed to me quieter, statelier, somehow."

"Tom is right," said Will Mathews. "Mrs. Alfred Murray is a statelier person than Miss Graham; but still, not unbecomingly so, I think. It is the difference between a married woman and a young girl—only womanly dignity. There is something about her now very like her aunt, Mrs. Selman."

"Agnes is changed," observed Mrs. Hudson, thoughtfully. "Such a change as is produced necessarily by care, experience, and suffering—the difference between the young, enthusiastic, worldly girl, and the calm, disciplined, watchful Christian woman—a change for the better."

"But, dear Mrs. Hudson, with all due deference, one cannot associate the idea of 'suffering, care,' and Mrs. Alfred Murray. What lot could possibly be brighter or more enviable than hers from the very beginning? It is surely a waste of sympathy to bestow it upon the wife of Alfred Murray."

Mrs. Hudson was silenced, but not convinced. It was hard to show when, where, or why Agnes Murray ever could have had sorrows in her apparently brilliant lot, but she knew such characters as Agnes now was, could only have been wrought out by the severest discipline—that

"Many a blow and biting scripture
Polished well those stones elect;"

but she did not say so—only smiled and showed Emily how to narrow the heel of the little sock.

"Emily," exclaimed Will, "do you remember the night that Robert Selman came home from Europe? You and Elizabeth and Miss Graham all attended a *soirée* at my mother's."

"Yes, indeed. How lovely Agnes looked that night!"

"She was radiantly beautiful. Mr. Murray was there too, but I thought he stood very little chance of marrying Miss Graham then."

"It was rather a sudden affair after all. Everybody knew of course that Mr. Murray was in love with Agnes, but I never thought she cared for him," observed Elizabeth, musingly.

"No accounting for a woman's fancies," put in Tom. "Murray is a fine fellow, but he is old enough to be her father."

"Agnes was much wiser in that respect than Elizabeth, Tom," rejoined Emily, laughingly. "She married a sensible man."

Tom nodded his head to his brother-in-law. "That's at you, Will, over my shoulders."

"What became of Dr. Selman?" asked Emily, turning to her husband.

"He went to South America, where he still lives. Nobody knows why, except that he was tired of this country and saddened by the sudden decease of his parents. He married out there one of those Spanish women. I met Evelyn in New Orleans, Harry Evelyn, who was in Europe at the same time that Robert and I were—one of the cleverest fellows in the world is Harry—a trifle too soft-hearted for a physician. He went to South America at the time Selman did—indeed, I think Selman accompanied him out there. Evelyn, who is poor, went out there for his health—to seek his fortune, and to study yellow fever in its native place. Evelyn only came home this fall; he got tired of it; Selman stayed."

"Is he not very wealthy?" asked Emily.

"Immensely so. He has all the Davenant estate now, you know."

"What sort of a woman did he marry?"

"I don't think he married happily—very hastily, Evelyn said, after a very short acquaintance with the lady. She was the daughter of a Brazilian grandee—very haughty—very vain—very pretty—graceful, like all those Creole women—with very little education. She knew how to dance, walk, play with her fan—was devoted to tertulias and the last new comb and mantilla. She was no companion for Selman, who is a man of fine abilities and highly accomplished. Evelyn said it was the most unaccountable match; he was perfectly thunderstruck when Selman invited him to attend his wedding. Evelyn seemed to think Selman had a hard time of it—his wife was pettishly exacting—desperately jealous and bad-tempered. Evelyn said it was really wonderful the patience with which Selman

bore all her silly ways. The poor foolish thing died though, at the birth of her first child—two years after her marriage."

"A blessed riddance," ejaculated Tom.

"Tom, you are perfectly dreadful tonight!" remonstrated Elizabeth, shocked at his cold cruelty.

"Did the baby die?" asked Emily.

"Yes, both mother and child. Evelyn tried to persuade Selman to return to Louisiana when he did, but Selman refused to do so. Evelyn himself has married that good little Mary Grant you knew, Emily."

"She is a very nice girl. I wonder what has become of Agnes's two 'old beaux,' Elizabeth—the physician and the clergyman?"

"They were here only a week ago to see her. I believe they live still at Davenant Rectory. They are as devoted as ever to Agnes."

"How fond Agnes was of them, and of her cousin Robert! Don't you remember at school, Elizabeth?"

"Yes. She seemed just to live in every way to please them. She idolized her cousin then."

"Well! the world and time have changed us all. I hear the babies crying—we had better go."

The two young mothers hurried out of the room, followed by Mrs. Hudson, leaving their "lords and masters" to take a smoke.

"Will," said Tom, "do you remember Fra Bartolommeo's proverb: '*Quale cosa è più lieve che la la piume? la polvere. E quale più che la polvere! il vento. E quale più che il vento? la femmina. E quale più che la femmina? Nulla.*'"

"Is that meant for your wife or mine?" asked Will, smiling.

"Neither, God bless them. Will, did Agnes Graham love Alfred Murray 'in the merrie days when we were young?'"

"I don't know, Tom, but she loves him now, Tom," said Will, gravely. "I once loved Agnes Graham, but in my heart of hearts I now love your sister Emily."

Agnes's Diary.

Ail-lee.—"It is a peculiar habit I have adopted, this of writing down, frankly and fully, all the secret impulses and motive powers in my woman's career—writing without reserve—because, as soon as the pages are so written, and my own soul laid bare before me, so that I can calmly examine its condition and springs of action, then I tear out the pages and burn them up. It is safest and best to do so. By this I have the advantage of surveying my heart *a posteriori*, as metaphysicians might call it—judging it, and yet preserving its privacies. It is a queer diary, though—composed only of blank leaves, half torn out, in the first

part. But I know what those missing pages stood for—and—God knows.

"Well, to-day I have had Elizabeth and Emily with me; their babes and their husbands. They are very happy; theirs are true marriages—such unions as God means men and women to make. I am conscious of this great truth, this universal maxim of Nature: I know—know false, artificial marriages are accursed—a strong word, but true—true. I know, and acknowledge with deepest humiliation, that I have sinned—a great sin—against womanhood, against humanity, against my husband, against myself—in my marriage.

"It was weakness in me, and want of faith. I ought to have trusted God still—still further. I ought to have waited for his deliverance; I ought even to have gone on to Sicily. There would have been some good way of escape opened for me, had I been faithful to myself. Ah! I was so weak, so frightened, and felt so helpless; and Mr. Murray was—is so good—I clung to him like a timid child; and so I made this great mistake; I try not to let him feel it. He is so good, so kind, so honest, so true. He deserves so much at my hands. But I have sinned—have sinned—I do not love him as I ought. In spite of all my efforts I know he is conscious of this—and this grieves me. I try, oh! I do try, to do all for his happiness, but my efforts do not spring intuitively from sacred love. Oh! how worthless they are to a true heart! I felt sorry for him yesterday, when he was playing with that little child of Elizabeth's. Yes! he should have his own children clustering about him. But a wise law of Nature forbids such imperfect offspring as would come from a one-sided marriage!—and yet I could have loved a little child very much—there is no doubt that the highest qualities of womanhood are developed only by maternity. I honor a true woman anywhere; but from the depths of my soul I reverence the true Mother. However, what is done, is done. It remains now for me simply to envisage my own position—the position in which by my own weakness I have placed myself in this earthly life. What must I do, as an "Intelligent"—as Kant calls it—to reconcile myself to the harmony of God's world?

"Emerson says (he is certainly a great thinker) that the lover passes from 'loving what is in itself excellent, magnanimous, lovely and just' in 'one soul, to loving them in all; and so is the one beautiful soul only the door through which he enters the society of all true and pure souls.' 'Thus are we put in training for a love which knows not sex, nor person, nor partiality, but which seeks virtue and wisdom everywhere, to the end of increasing virtue and wisdom.' 'There are moments when the affections rule and absorb the man, and make his happiness

dependent on a person, or persons. But in health the mind is presently seen again—its over-arching vault; bright with galaxies of immutable lights and the warm loves and fears that swept over us as clouds, must lose their finite character and blend with God to attain their own perfection. But we need not fear that we can lose anything by the progress of the soul. The soul may be trusted to the end. That which is so beautiful and attractive as these relations, must be succeeded and supplanted only by what is more beautiful, and so on for ever!"

"These are stirring words. I respond to them with my whole soul; I begin to see, faintly glimmering, what the ruling principles of my life must now be. Through the one beloved, I cannot progress as a true woman should, joyfully up to the highest; but, by self-abnegation, by patience, by exhaustless sympathy, by strict integrity in the fulfilment of the responsibilities I have so rashly assumed, by infinite charity and wide love to humanity, I may struggle up yet; I may find peace, if not joy. God, strengthen me for my work!"

Agnes was very right in her struggling resolves to put the past behind her, as something dead, not even to be remembered or wept over. Any sentimental dreaming, cherishing of souvenirs, or fancies of what "might have been" for her now would have been weak, sinful, hopelessly destructive of even a shadow of peace or usefulness in her life. She had made a terrible mistake. In an instant of weakness, she had succumbed to what seemed inevitable fate, had yielded to womanly fear, and put out her hand like a drowning person to grasp at what was nearest, that seemed to offer a hope of salvation. Fortunate for her that her want of faith in God's Providence and promises, though it had cast her into an artificial and constrained position in God's world, as she said, yet had been mercifully overruled. She had put her hand into that of a true, good man, one who loved her and would have patience with her in her strenuous, desperate struggles with her own soul. She had herself cast the iron fetters over her heart and soul. Henceforth her innermost heart became a sealed fountain, dumb, inarticulate, stifled—relentlessly—by her own hands. She deliberately surveyed her position, her husband's nature, temperament, needs; she sounded her own capacities; then took up her life and *his* life, and made the best, the highest of it. There was little real affinity between them. Mr. Murray's was a more phlegmatic, more sensuous nature than hers; he was not the type of man she ought to have married. Robert was more like that—quicker, more imaginative, more impressive, more sympathetic, with her—more poetic. Besides,

Robert had youth, vehemence, which the other lacked. *Genius*, true greatness of soul and character, is *not* smaller, but *larger* than ordinary ungifted nature; not peculiar, but more universal—not singular and unique, but orbéd, spheréd. It touches the full circle of Christianity at the greatest number of points of contact, upon a broader, wider, higher plane; it enfolds all more contracted, more limited existences—and so Agnes did her husband's soul and life. She developed him in every way; he was not sufficient for her. No; but the constant self-abnegation, self-examination, humiliation, discipline did for Agnes what perhaps even the full joy of prosperous life could not have done for her. It expanded, and elevated, and strengthened her soul. It made her a nobler existence in God's universe, and that, perhaps, is the only end contemplated for man in this state of being. All human relations, however lovely, however *woeful*, must fall from the spirit with the clay. It is what life has made us, what we *are*, that is important to the immortal being at the hour of change into the higher condition of existence; not what joys have been ours, or how smooth or how rough has been the path our feet have trodden. God has impressed on all creation, from a plant upwards, this instinct of development, this ceaseless desire—nay, this necessity—to grow to its fullest stature, to exhaust, to use every atom of vitality within us, mental, moral or physical—this is the instinct of all organization. So the tree presses up—up—every little leaflet and every branch as far it can in God's beautiful air and sunshine; in the effort of growth and development it finds joy, and the more perfect it is the more it adorns God's world; the more useful it is to all nature, the more joy it has. It fulfils the purpose of its creation for both man and beast; it gives shadow and pure atmosphere, and rain, and beauty. It is a blessing in proportion as it is more perfect, developed as God meant it to be; as he stamped upon every individual atom in it, that it ought to become. Trees are blighted, and so are human natures; but the tree always strives and makes the *best* of its adverse and unpropitious circumstances: if it cannot grow as far as it was intended to, nor is as fair as it should have been, it accepts the cold winds and tempests and does all it can to grow up a proper useful tree, and bless its little place in the rocky mountain's side. So should the human being act. So did Agnes; she accepted her fate, and set herself to make the best of it; she did not whine and weep over it, and blame the Creator for what she had done herself; she knew she had not trusted the Creator: she had grown frightened and tried to arrange her own life to suit herself—let Mr. Murray do it in her moment of weakness. She did

all she could with it now, and she struggled upwards—ever upwards to her ideal of right and truth and love, which was *God*.

"My *utmost*" was her limit in all right actions; she was severe and merciless to herself, but an incarnated charity to all others. Mr. Murray was very happy. But some persons thought his wife rather quiet and cold in manner; some people scarcely recognized the brilliant, impulsive Agnes Graham in Mrs. Murray.

By persistence in this safe and honest course of life, Agnes found that gradually there arose about her that complex and infinite system of compensation in life which a beneficent creator has ordained for his mutable and inconsistent children, so that in time almost any condition of life becomes endurable, and at last even agreeable from long habit. Some ascetics are said to have become so accustomed to the iron spikes with which their couches were strewn originally for mortification of the flesh, that after long years' usage they could sleep soundly and comfortably on no other. Repetition, monotony, habit soften all things in this life; and then, too, it is a law in physics that whatever one organization may have a superfluity of, becomes absorbed by another having a deficiency, if the two organizations are kept in close contact. Two strings on one instrument, one higher in tone than the other, undergo a mutual compromise; one is lowered and the other heightened in tone until they meet in accord, if left standing for awhile together. Two substances unequally charged with electricity, placed in couple, mutually affect each other and bring about an equilibrium. Osmosis is a phenomenon to be found in human as well as in plant life. So that in spite of man and woman's vehemence, self-will, and disobedience to God's primary laws of being and affinity, it comes from the beneficence of this great universal law of compensation that there is still much peace and comparative external happiness in this wild world of ours. God has so much pity for us all. There was one who sighed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" So much patience he had with us; and *we* have so little with each other!

Agnes's Diary.

I have just been to visit one neighbor Judge C—. He is dying of dropsy of the heart. He has not been able to lie down for months. He sleeps as well as he can, sitting in his chair, with his head supported by his weary hand. How sad it is! It is good for me to minister to physical suffering. I become calmer and more grateful to my Creator.

'Life has import more inspiring
Than the fancies of thy youth;
It has hopes as high as Heaven;
It has labor, it has truth.'

It has wrongs that may be righted,
Noble deeds that may be done!
Its great battles are unfought,
Its great triumphs are unwon.

There is rising from its troubled deep
A low, unceasing moan;
There are aching, there are breaking
Other hearts besides thine own.

That is a noble utterance of Anne C. Lynch's—that poem of "The Wasted Fountains." It always acts on me like the sound of the clarion, or the clash of cymbals. Judge C— is a Rationalist, a Rationalist who believes, or rather hopes in the immortality of soul as well as of matter. He holds the atomic theory of natural development, acknowledging, however, an unknown cause, a first principle—that is, God—as the ultimate beginning and end of all things. He is very attractive to me. I do search anxiously for truth, for myself; not to teach others, but for myself; I have read most of his books, and conversed much with him. His faith is more interesting to me, as I know Robert also held these opinions. Robert held even wilder ones, going so far as the utmost positivism in his philosophy. Naturally, by temperament and organization (especially being a woman), I am Idealist, but I think or try to think as broadly as I can, searching for truth. To-day Judge C— said to me, as I held his hand, looking with anxious affection into the dark brilliant eyes that must so soon close in death, now so full of life and radiant with intelligence; this noble man said to me, "Do not grieve over me, Agnes. I trusted my earthly father, and now I am not afraid to put my hands into those of my Heavenly Father, and go with him *into the Dark!* I have carefully sought for the truth. If I could not find it, God will judge me rightly and well—always well."

Oh! how sad, how inexpressibly sad it is not to be a Christian! I don't think I ever realized it before! My poor Robert! These analysts all acknowledge the eternity of matter, the persistence of force and its metamorphosis, but they reject preservation of identity. One is as reasonable to me, it seems, as the other. How long ago it was when Plato contended against this very *Epicurean* doctrine! I don't see that the analysts are greatly advanced in philosophy since the day of Lucretius. They think the acknowledgment of an archetypal idea in the Creator is humiliating to him, and reduces him to the position of a human machinist. I don't see the difference between their theory of cellular aggregation modified by infinite variety of external conditions, one simple law working decisively in infinite ways, and our common doctrine of design. In the first place, we know nothing about God, and never can, except what He pleases to tell us, here or elsewhere. But

in endeavoring to form a conception or idea of his attributes, we must acknowledge *his infinite* knowledge and *prescience*. God must know, and does know, when he creates the simple cell, and imprints upon it the laws of polarity which they say govern it in its affinities—God *must* know every possible form or aggregation that molecule can ever make or form under *any* condition of external forces. This knowledge is *infinite*—*infinite*; it extends to every possible combination. He could work by simple or complex laws. To some extent, what we call, and Plato calls, "ideas" must exist in Him, and He wills, either *then*, in the beginning of this existence "of forces" which make the cells, or in its development, all that it, the cell of matter, can ever become in *infinite* variation; or this force, which is persistent, must be God himself; and so we get to Pantheism, and there we have to stop; and humanity is an enigma. With all its unexplainable mysteries, Christianity seems to me to harmonize life better than this sort of philosophy; and with Strauss, if I did not believe in a personal Christ, I should have to take refuge in an ideal one. To me the central truth of existence is the resurrection of the dead and the immortality of the soul. To take away that hope from me would be to destroy me. Life would be utterly valueless, for with all the temporal blessings (*animal* and mental blessings), I am a very sad and sorrowful woman. Life to me is not happiness; and as a creature of God I have a right to joy somewhere—if not here, hereafter; for I know that "unknown" and "unthinkable cause" is beneficent and *prescient*, and that there is no past and no future for Him, but an ever-enduring *now*—no time, but eternity. Pshaw! we are too small-minded to understand eternal things, now or ever!

To deny this would make us less than "those bewildered Pagans of old time;"
* * * * *
For they had hopes which overstepped the grave."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

YEAR after year glided smoothly away at Ail-lee. The most bountiful hospitality reigned within its walls—peace and calm content dwelt there: Mr. Murray almost idolized his wife, whose sole study was her husband's happiness. They were entering upon the sixth year of their life at Ail-lee, when Mr. Murray was taken ill with a severe cold, which settled into pneumonia. A few days of watching and anxiety, and Agnes Murray was a widow. Her husband died, blessing her for the happiness she had given him.

Six months afterwards she sat in the li-

brary at Ail-lee, talking with Dr. Leonard and Mr. Danvers. They were not greatly changed since we last saw them. Their heads were somewhat whiter. Mr. Danvers had grown stouter; Dr. Leonard more wrinkled and weatherbeaten. They were listening to Agnes, who was speaking very earnestly. On the table between them lay a number of papers, which looked like legal documents, and there seemed to be some architectural drawings and elevations among them. Agnes was pale, but the earnestness and eagerness of her speaking had brought a faint glow upon her cheek. She wore the high-crowned, English widow's cap, and her black robes fell around her like a nun's. "You see," she concluded, "I have ample means to begin such a work, one so much needed; and also the inclination—indeed, it is my only hope of interest or happiness! and I have here"—she took up a letter from the table—"the appeal of the Bishop of Louisiana!"

"It is a noble work, Agnes," said Dr. Leonard, "and I think you have fully counted the cost of the undertaking. You know it will absorb your whole fortune, your time, and your life?"

"I know it," she replied.

"Then, my dear, go on, and I will go with you. I am not so old or infirm but that I can aid you with my medical knowledge, and I can look after you and make you take some care for yourself, for that will be the last thing you will think of doing; and you are but human nature, my darling, not made of iron or adamant; so arrange 'a little chamber in the wall' for me, and one for my books, that I can use as an office."

"And one for me, Agnes," said Mr. Danvers. "You must have a chaplain in such an institution; I shall appoint myself to the situation."

Agnes's eyes overflowed as she extended a hand to each of her devoted friends, while she said—

"At your age to give up your comfortable, quiet home! It is too much!"

"A threefold cord is not quickly broken, my child," said Mr. Danvers, smiling.

"Chut! chut! it is no use to talk; it is all settled." Dr. Leonard blew his nose vigorously. "We go if you do—you'll find use for Mrs. Clark and old John in the establishment. My partner can take my present business. Danvers will find a substitute for the Rectory. There is nothing for us to quit there now but graves! We will go with you, our darling child, in your good work."

"Then I will write to the Bishop immediately." Setting diligently to work, then, they discussed her plan in all its bearings, making suggestions and alterations as their practical wisdom saw fit; the morning wore away in their work. After all was arranged,

and they were sitting quietly thinking, Agnes suddenly asked—

"Have you heard from Robert, lately?"

"Yes! he is well. We informed you of his wife's death, you remember?"

"Does he ever ask about me?"

"Never!"

Agnes sighed. It was the second time she had mentioned her cousin's name to them since her marriage.

Mr. Danvers looked at hersorrowfully. He thought "*many waters cannot quench love.*"

"Robert is unforgiving," said Dr. Leonard. "He said, in his last letter, that he was weary of Brazil and intended to travel, he did not care where; all places were alike to him; all over the world, perhaps; beginning with South America—thence to the Sandwich Islands, to Australia—throughout Asia; anywhere that he might fancy to go. Life was objectless to him; he was well-nigh weary of it. He told me to continue writing to Rio; he would leave an agent there to attend to his affairs, who would know where to forward his letters."

Tears streamed down Agnes's cheeks. Dr. Leonard looked keenly at her.

"Agnes, do you repent the decision you made ten years since?"

"No," said Agnes, firmly; "it was right! I could not do otherwise. I weep for Robert! not for myself. I am content to abide God's will! I accept the fate He orders for me without hesitation!"

She was silent a moment, then, pointing to the papers, she said: "It is a great privilege to live—and greater still to *work for Christ!* Human love is not all of human life. As long as God is—as long as Christ exists—I have enough to live, to praise God for!"

Agnes's face glowed, as she spoke, with a holy, lofty emotion.

Mr. Danvers placed his hand upon her head, saying—

"Praise the Lord, O my soul—and all that is within me, praise His holy name."

"Not only with our lips, but in our lives," muttered Dr. Leonard, quoting from the general thanksgiving of the liturgy.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TEN years! a long time in anticipation, but very short in retrospection—ten years more since we met, and it seems but yesterday. Dr. Evelyn cast his eyes musingly upon the row of small heads whose proprietors filled the space between himself and his comely wife. There were no less than five occupants of high chairs, and low chairs—with cushions on them—all eagerly intent upon their breakfasts—receiving from their mother's hand the cups of milk and sugar

which she carefully mixed for their consumption.

"My dear," remarked the lady, observing the preoccupation of her absent-minded husband, "my dear, your coffee is getting cold."

Thus admonished, Dr. Evelyn raised his cup and drank off the contents hastily, as if fearful of sinking again into abstraction.

"Are any of your patients worse?" asked Mrs. Evelyn.

"None, except the arch-deaconess! I fear she is sinking!"

"It is a great pity! her death will really be a public calamity!"

"Yes, it will be a day of sorrow for all, rich and poor!"

"Does she know her situation?"

"Perfectly, and is content!"

"She has done so much good!"

"Yes, and she has had her reward in the blessing of the poor! her good works will follow her!"

"Mary," continued the doctor, very irrelevantly, "we have been married sixteen years!"

"Well, my dear, I know that! Harry was fifteen yesterday."

"And it seems such a little time! Is Selman's room ready, Mary? I see his ship is to arrive to-day! It is coming up from the Balize now!"

"Oh! your friend from South America, who you say has just returned from the Antipodes? Yes, his room has been ready for a week. Will you go to meet him? or shall I send John with the carriage to the wharf?"

"I will go for him myself, in my buggy; but you had better send John for his trunks. You will have to make a place for his servant Jim, who always travels with him. The ship will scarcely arrive before three or four o'clock this afternoon. Have a good dinner, Mary! I must be off."

Dr. Evelyn kissed his wife, patted his children's heads, took up his hat and went off to visit his patients.

At four o'clock he returned, bringing his friend with him, whom he presented to his wife. Robert Selman looked older than his years warranted; his hair was quite gray; deep lines about the haughty mouth and eyes gave an expression of sternness which did him great injustice. His manners were grave and quiet. Mrs. Evelyn was rather awed by her earnest, stately guest; but the children seemed to like him; clustered about him without fear; and she was satisfied when she saw the softness of his eye, as her husband pulled forward a chubby boy of two years, saying—"your namesake, Selman!"

"May God bless him! and make him a better and happier man than I, Evelyn!"

Dr. Evelyn looked surprised at the pious ejaculation.

Robert smiled sadly.

"You wonder at such words from my lips. I am no longer an unbeliever, Evelyn! I wrote you of my long, tedious illness last year. I should have died but for Jim, my faithful servant, who has accompanied me in all my wanderings. I had time to think then, Evelyn! to remember and to repent!"

Dr. Evelyn grasped Robert's hand—"Thank God! Your skepticism was always a bitter grief to me, Selman!"

Robert laid his hand caressingly upon the curling ringlets of a little four-year-old girl, who stood looking up into his face with her large soft brown eyes, holding fast to her little brother Robert's hand.

"And who is this little fairy? How does she call herself in this earthly sphere?"

The little girl smiled, and said bashfully, "My name is, Agnes! I am named for papa's friend!"

Robert put his arm around her and lifted her upon his knee.

"That is a pretty name! you must tell me about 'papa's friend.'"

"It must be after dinner then," said Mrs. Evelyn, gayly. "Dinner is ready, and if Dr. Evelyn once begins talking of the arch-deaconess, we will get no dinner. She is one of his enthusiasms."

Mrs. Evelyn rose as she spoke, and led the way into the dining-room. It was late before they got through with that important meal. At length the cloth was removed and the friends returned to the pleasant sitting-room. Mrs. Evelyn, who was a discreet woman, took the children off and left the gentlemen alone—she knew they had much to say to each other.

"Selman," said Dr. Evelyn, grasping his friend's shoulders with both hands, and pressing them warmly—"old fellow! it makes me young again to see you! I am so glad to welcome you 'home' again."

"And I am glad to be at 'home' again, Evelyn. After all, one's heart will cling to childhood's associations."

"But how did you make up your mind to come back at last, Selman? What change came over you? You were obstinate enough the last time I saw you."

"A great change came over me, Evelyn! the greatest—a changed heart! I forsook my country and abandoned all the duties I might have had, eighteen years ago, in the bitterness of my heart, because I was disappointed in the one hope of my life, in the woman whom I loved better than country—life—or my Creator! I flung away every ambition, every interest, when I lost her—and considered myself abandoned by her. I have been reckless, desperate, miserable, without hope, without God. Evelyn, I have found faith in Christ, and peace has come to me instead of hope. I mourn now over my wasted life—my useless, vain, idle rage

against the woman I professed to love—whom I still love. I have tried to revenge myself on her by letting her see the wreck she had made of my life, once so full of promise. I knew her well enough to know that thought would lie like heaviest lead upon her soul, and weigh it down where mine was, in the dust. But I think differently now. I recognize the justice, the nobleness of the sacrifice she made for both, and I am come now to kneel at her feet, and say humbly to her—"You were right; I have been cruel, mad. Take the remnant of the life that once was yours, and teach me how to use it as will be best for God's service, and for your happiness as well as mine. Give me back the right which is mine—let me be your best friend, your true brother, as we were in childish days—though no dearer tie can unite us. I am willing to live now for God and for you! And so, old friend, I am here."

Robert spoke excitedly; his heart was full. Dr. Evelyn looked at him with sympathy. He knew that proud nature well, and realized the great change the more in his friend's heart.

Robert continued. "I shall only spend to-night with you, Evelyn—to-morrow I must be off on my quest."

"Do you go far?"

"Not out of the State. The person I speak of lives in the State. I have not heard of or from her for years. If letters were sent me, I never got them. I did not write myself, for I was seeking the Fountain of Oblivion; I found the pool of Siloam instead. It is better than Lethe. I have a superstitious feeling that I am wanted—you will laugh at such puerility, Evelyn; but this secret persuasion has impelled me here sooner than I intended a month ago."

"You know I never laugh at real emotion of any kind, Selman, still less at any feeling of a friend so dear to me as you are," said Dr. Evelyn, gravely.

"I shall soon know," said Robert.

"You have entirely abandoned your belief in the theory of Lamarck and Oken, Selman?"

"Entirely," replied Robert emphatically, "in their religion; not in their physiology! their reasonings in theology are unsound, but not their knowledge of physics and science. I have been tracing the 'footprints of the Creator' all over the world, and am thoroughly convinced of the fallacy and irrationality of that theory even upon scientific principles. Would you believe it, Evelyn, I made a pilgrimage, last year, to the Loch of Stromness, to see where Hugh Miller dug out the Asterolepis."

"I should like to have been your companion; that is a great book of Hugh Miller's—poor fellow!"

"Why do you say 'poor fellow,' Evelyn?"

Because he died a martyr to science? The man was not accountable for the mode of his death, or the act of his human overworked brain. 'Poor fellow!' No, happy man, who lived so well and to such good purpose. Better die maddened by overwork in the service of God and man, than live a useless, wasted life as I have done!" said Robert, rising from his chair and walking to the window which looked out upon the street. The lamps were beginning to glimmer in long, straight rows, as they were lighted one after another.

Dr. Evelyn spoke cheerfully.

"You have not had time to notice the improvements in the city, Selman. This entire street has been built in the last ten years."

"I suppose so, from the fresh look of the houses. What large building was that which extended along the whole front of the square, at the end of this street? You stopped there a moment and sent in some medicine for a patient."

"Ah!" said the doctor, taking his cigar from his lips, and expelling the smoke with a long whiff, "that is the house of the deaconesses—a noble order of church women—who devote themselves to the nursing of the sick. They have been established here about ten years. They have done an immense amount of good. One of them is 'Papa's friend,' for whom my little Agnes is named."

"They are a sort of Protestant nuns, then, or sisters of charity!" said Robert.

"You know, or ought to know, Selman, that the order of deaconesses was, in the primitive church, a very useful and important one. This is only a revivification of an ancient custom."

"How many of them are connected with this house?"

"About forty ladies, I think."

"Do they have uniforms, vows, and so forth?" asked Robert, walking up to the mantelpiece and selecting a cigar from a bunch lying upon it.

"Sit down, light your cigar, and I will tell you all about it, and about my patient, who, as my wife says, 'is one of my enthusiasms.'"

"Evelyn, it is just because you are capable of enthusiasms, that one can open one's heart and acknowledge one's weaknesses, as I have just done, to you," said Robert, as he lighted his cigar and settled himself in an attitude of attention.

Dr. Evelyn, pleased to see that he had succeeded in drawing Robert's thoughts off from his own anxieties, laid down his cigar, crossed his hands on the arms of his chair, and began his story.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"I LEFT you in Rio sixteen years ago. You know all that occurred at that time in regard to myself—how I came home, married, and settled down in this city to try and make a living by my profession. It was rather trying at first. We were not rich—my Mary and I, and had some times of severe privation, but we managed to get along. She was very economical, and we kept out of debt, and were happy in each other and in our children—'Contented in little an' cauty in mair.' I got a small practice, but it was a growing one, and we hoped always for better times, which came at last. Ten years ago, there was a great deal of talk and gossip about that very house at which we stopped to-day. It was bought, that is the land, at a very high price, and the house built under the supervision of the Bishop of Louisiana. It was all done at the expense of one lady, who afterwards took charge of the establishment in person, and has lived there ever since, as the head of the sisterhood. She has devoted her life and whole fortune to the work. They had some difficulties at first to contend with, but the excellence and perfect disinterestedness of the admirable women who employed themselves in the work, have long since conquered all obstacles, and now there is no class of people in the city who do not bless the deaconesses. There is a hospital connected with the establishment, where they take in the poor and strangers to nurse. Also a certain number go out by day and night, to nurse such persons as are unable or unwilling to come to their hospital. They have some vows—I think they are taken only for a year; any one is at liberty to leave at that time if they choose. They have a peculiar dress—in summer of blue linen, as it is cool, and does not convey disease as woollen would. In winter they wear the same color in some thick material that will wash. White linen collars, white aprons, and a plain white cap compose their very homely, but convenient dress. It is cheerful and bright in a sick room. Their 'home' is pleasant; their own apartments comfortable, as I have had opportunity to see in visiting them when ill; everything scrupulously plain, but clean and neat. They are untiring in their efforts to alleviate suffering in every possible way. During the epidemics, they have been guardian angels to numbers of the poor and destitute. Ever foremost in all good deeds, in all manner of self-sacrifice, is the archdeaconess. It is she I called to see to-day. They had a physician and a clergyman in the establishment—both were old men. The physician, Dr. Leonard, died a few months since. But, what's the matter, Selman? Again not good? try another!" Dr.

Evelyn paused, seeing Robert throw his cigar away hastily, and that he was sitting with his hand over his eyes.

"No, go on with your story."

Dr. Evelyn continued. "I had become acquainted with the deaconesses, meeting them often at the bedside of the poor; and with the old doctor, who rarely ever left the house, confining himself to attending the sick in the hospital. He was a capital practitioner; a man of excellent sense and sound judgment!"

"I know," said Robert; "I knew him!"

"Ah! you did! Well! I learned to know him, having occasion to visit some poor patients of mine, who had been removed to the hospital of the deaconesses for better attention. I had a great esteem for the old gentleman, and there I also met Mr. Danvers, the chaplain, and the noble archdeaconess. What labor she did undergo! She always visited the patients herself—out of the house, when they applied for aid, and appointed the nurse for each one. They were regularly relieved—the nurses, I mean; two nursed together always, so as to alternate. She confined herself principally to the hospital! She is a grand woman, Selman! and still so handsome. She must have been a beauty in her youth and in a different dress. However, to cut short digressions, the old doctor was taken ill; I was sent for; he had taken a fancy to me, it seemed. It was beautiful to see the tender love and devotion of the archdeaconess and the good old chaplain to him. He died peacefully in their arms. His death was a great sorrow for the archdeaconess. Shortly after the old doctor's death, last summer, the fever broke out violently in the city. Never was there known a more fearful epidemic; even the Creoles fled from it. Acclimated persons were not safe. It was complicated with ship-fever of the most violent type. I studied the disease very closely, and kept a journal, during its prevalence, of the plans I pursued in its treatment. I will show it to you some day. There were some most curious, interesting cases. The deaconesses stood firmly at their posts. Several of them were very ill—among them the archdeaconess; I attended them. None died. One day I was summoned to see a man, who, it was said, was very sick at a low doggery in the worst part of the city. I accompanied the messenger, who led me to a wretched, dirty lodging-house, scarcely better than a dog-kennel, where I found my patient. He was very sick—the room was horribly filthy and miserable. He was a man of about fifty years, and though debased by drink and riotous living, had something about his appearance that told of better days. His clothes were old, but originally of fine material. He looked to me like a broken-down

gambler. His manner was strainedly polite to me, but he was the most profane man I think I ever met. His oaths were so fearful, especially coming from lips so burnt up with fever, and from a poor wretch laboring so for breath, that I could not listen without a shudder. I told him at last that, unless he ceased his blasphemous raving, I should leave. This quieted him for a time. After prescribing for him, I drove to the Home to see what could be done for him. I hardly liked to ask any of the ladies to take charge of such a profane creature, but I knew he would die without the closest care and nursing. I knew no other place to secure such ministering as he needed. The man had given me his name apparently with reluctance; it was Elmsworth. I really fear I am wearying you, Selman, by this long story!"

"No, go on!" replied Robert, drawing himself back so that the firelight would not fall upon his face or figure.

"Well! the archdeaconess soon joined me in the parlor of the Home. I stated my business; I wanted a nurse for a poor man. If it was feasible I would like to remove him to the hospital of the house; he was in such a wretched place. She said, 'It should be attended to immediately.' She felt so very weak, not having recovered yet entirely from her recent illness, that she would have to trust me to select the nurses for the poor man, as she feared she was unable to visit him first herself, as was her usual custom before appointing the nurses. I mentioned the ladies I thought would suit best for the case. She put her hand on the bell-rope to summon them, asking me for the name and address of the said person. I gave it to her—I had written it on a card and handed it to her. She read it—her face became pallid—then flushed crimson. She sank into a chair as if fainting! I seized a glass of water from a table near by and held it to her lips; she drank hastily, leaned back with her eyes closed for a few moments, then opening her eyes, said:—

"I will go myself, doctor, to this person."

"I remonstrated with her, and even forbade such an exertion on her part, but laying her hand gently on my arm, she said:—

"My friend, I *must*! This man has claims upon me, both by relationship and—Christianity."

"I saw she was determined, so could do nothing but wait to accompany her. We were soon on our way, followed by a litter, borne by men, in case we found it possible to remove Elmsworth. He was in a furious passion when we entered the room. One of the servants of the house was standing near, endeavoring to keep him quiet in bed, and well covered, according to my orders. Elmsworth was cursing and raving with passion and fever.

"'Oh, sir,' said the servant, 'I am so glad you have come. He wants the whole pitcher of ice-water, and is raving like a devil at me because I won't give it to him. I tell him it will kill him; but he won't mind. I have given him the broken ice, as you ordered, by the spoonful; but he is crazy.'

"I took the sick man by the arm, and spoke as sternly as I could—

"You must be quiet, and take what I order, else you will die!"

"He seized my hand—'Die, doctor, die! Oh no, not die! I tell you I can't die—I won't die. You shan't let me die! I suffer the thirst of hell now. I tell you I am not fit to die! No—no! no hope for me. I'll not die. I'll not go before God. I'll not meet Emmeline there! Oh, doctor, save me! save me!'

"The poor wretch began to weep and groan most piteously. He was thoroughly frightened and half insane from fever. I had thrown an old piece of carpet over the posts at the foot of the bed to break the draught of air on the sick man. The archdeaconess was standing behind it. I held Elmsworth's hand, and tried to soothe him, but he continued his agonized petitions and exclamations till I really was almost overcome by him. In the midst of his exclamations of horror and despair, the clear voice of the archdeaconess rose suddenly—

"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

"This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins!"

"Elmsworth started from his pillow at the first sound of her voice, but lay back until she concluded her words—then in a voice faint and weak as a child's, he said: 'Doctor, doctor! whose voice is that? Who dares to whisper comfort to such a wretch as I, and in that voice?'

"The archdeaconess stepped to the bedside, and looking down upon him said,

"I dare—I—*Agnes Murray*! I say there is mercy with man, and forgiveness with God, even for you, as for others!"

"Elmsworth covered his face with the ragged coverlet and groaned bitterly. The bed shook with his convulsive sobs. 'Emmeline! Emmeline!' were all the words I heard.

"The archdeaconess took a glass in which she prepared a strong lemonade, and lifted his head upon her arm while she offered the glass to his lips.

"Drink," she said gently, "drink. Cooling to your thirst, and peace to your soul!"

The man drank eagerly, as if he superstitiously received her words literally. She smoothed the rumpled pillow and laid him down. He looked at her with an expression of surprise.

"Agnes," he said, "can you forgive?"

"I do forgive, as freely as I hope to be forgiven!"

"Then God may," he answered, "Agnes, you were avenged; Serimia died—not by the hangman, though—by his own hand. He would go to France in spite of all I could say; that Italian, whose sister he had ruined, kept watch over his movements and informed on him. The police went to take him; he could not escape; he blew his brains out with his own pistol. It was dreadful, Agnes—*dreadful*!"

"The archdeaconess shuddered. 'Never mind,' she said, as if she was quieting a child—'Never mind; we will not talk of those things; try to be quiet and composed now.' She dipped her handkerchief in the ice-water and laid it upon his burning forehead. He drew the cover over his face again and lay quiet."

"The archdeaconess asked if it were possible to remove him in the litter which had now arrived. I thought it would be best to make the attempt, if he was willing."

"Mr. Elmsworth, will you permit us to remove you, on a litter, to Mrs. Murray's house, where you can have better attention, and be so much more comfortable?"

"Do you wish it, Agnes?" he said.

"Yes, I wish it," she said cheerfully, with a pleasant smile.

"As you will, then," he said humbly.

"So we wrapped him comfortably and carried him to the home. Mrs. Murray led the way to the room formerly occupied by Dr. Leonard. 'This way, doctor,' said she, as I was directing the bearers to carry the litter into the hospital ward. Mr. Danvers was waiting to receive us. Clean linen was spread out, and we soon made the man comfortable, and he fell into a profound sleep, which lasted several hours. Elmsworth was very ill for several days after we moved him; I thought he would have died; he certainly would, if he had not had such care and nursing as he received. The man's whole nature seemed softened and changed from the moment he recognized the voice of the archdeaconess in the words of Divine promise. He was very grateful to me. I went in one day to see him; he had been suffering greatly—was restless and excited in the morning; and I was considerably alarmed about his case; so I called in again in the course of the morning. I found him very calm, lying with his head turned so that he could see distinctly a small picture which was placed upon an easel near the bed. It was an ex-

quisite picture of a little child, a lovely little thing, apparently about three years old, with a face like an angel. She was represented as asleep; the pretty head, with its golden curls falling about it, resting on one tiny arm, and the other hand grasping some white roses and hyacinths. The small feet were bare and crossed carelessly, as natural as life. The child was lying upon a purple velvet couch. It was like a snow-drop among violets. Elmsworth saw me look at the picture—

"Is it not lovely and pure?" asked he; "and yet, doctor, *that* was my child?"

"It is very, very lovely," I said.

"Agnes painted it," he said, "from a sketch taken after death. She brought it here and gave it to me this morning. It will make me a better man, doctor, to remember my angel child, and her poor mother!" His voice trembled with emotion.

"Doctor," he continued, "did you ever know of anybody's forgiving another until seventy times seven?" pointing to a Bible which lay open on the table beside him.

"I don't know that I ever did, taking the text literally!" I answered.

"I know such a person, and you, too, doctor; her name is Agnes Murray!"

"That evening, after making the rounds of the hospital wards which adjoined Elmsworth's room, I came in to see how he was getting on. The case interested me. The man's mind really kept him ill, after the disease was subdued. I found the archdeaconess and Mr. Danvers sitting with him. She had just accompanied me in my tour through the hospital. We had a good many foreigners under our care. The epidemic was bad among emigrants, and the beds were full. I found the archdeaconess an admirable linguist; she spoke nearly all the modern tongues, and seemed to be familiar even with patois and dialects. She told me she had been a good while in Europe, and learnt these things there. It was a great help to me, and a comfort to these poor strangers. They looked up at her almost as if she was some supernatural being, and followed her with blessings as she moved from bed to bed. Elmsworth complained of being very nervous and restless—remorse, remorse—it is hell, doctor! I gave him an anodyne, and sat by him awhile. He said, suddenly—

"I think I could sleep, if you would sing, Agnes. Emmeline liked your singing."

"The archdeaconess drew her chair near the bed: 'I will sing her favorite hymn!'"

"She sang 'Jesus Saviour of my soul!' and some hymns of the same character. Selman! I never expect to listen to such a voice this side of heaven. Tears rolled down my cheek involuntarily. Elmsworth, too, wept; but at last dropped off asleep. I was told afterwards by one of the dea-

conesses that the archdeaconess frequently sang for the patients in the hospital; nearly every day they would ask her to do so; her voice had a wonderfully tranquillizing effect upon them. There is something exquisitely touching in the manner in which she employs all her magnificent gifts in the service of the poor and the sick. It is the box of precious ointment she breaks perpetually over the feet of her Master. The Lord will not forget it! I am drawing out this story very long, but, as Mary says, 'When I begin to speak of the archdeaconess, I never know when to stop.' She is a most wonderful woman! When Elmsworth had recovered sufficiently to leave the home, Mrs. Murray gave me some jewelry, worth about twenty thousand dollars, which she asked me to dispose of for her. She had retained it, intending to sell it and use the proceeds in enlarging the chapel of the establishment, which, being free, was crowded every Sunday with poor people, especially with those who had been nursed in the hospital. She was now forced to abandon this intention, in order to make provision for Elmsworth; the interest would make a yearly stipend for him. 'He preferred to live in Boulogne,' she said, 'he had no friends in this country besides Mr. Danvers and herself. It is the old story of the Prodigal Son. I think he will live rightly now.'

"I paid Elmsworth's passage to Boulogne, and forwarded him his annuity for this year. I hear he is doing very well. He is utterly unfit though to get along without some one to look after him; so I shall keep a watch over him as far as I can. He left here last fall. Mrs. Murray has never been well since. She had too much fatigue, and was too weak to stand it. It is with inexpressible pain that I have watched her growing weaker, day by day; her heart is the seat of disease. I fear it is organic; the valves do not close rapidly enough; the muscles grow more and more languid. She has no pain, suffers only from languor and debility; she is fully aware of her situation; she tells me she had an aunt who died from the same disease, she thinks. She is so cheerful and serene that her sick chamber is a pleasant place to visit. The end must come soon, now, I fear! She was so weak to-day. The hardest part will be for poor old Mr. Danvers, who dotes upon her. Yesterday she received the Holy Communion from the hands of the bishop of the diocese; all the sisterhood partook of it with her—I also. She made her parting charge to them; it was very solemn. The street in front of the door, and the steps are constantly crowded with people, seeking intelligence of her state. Her death will be a grief to multitudes. She seems very grateful for their affection. Yesterday afternoon I

mentioned to her the anxiety with which they besieged the hall door; she bade me open the door and let them enter the hall. She then asked us to wheel her chair to the open door of her own apartment, so she could see them for a moment. She has been unable to lie down, on account of oppression in breathing, for several days. We obeyed her. She looked with a bright smile upon the weeping crowd, who knelt before her; lifting her hands in benediction, she said:—

"God bless you, friends—to depart and be with Christ is far better for me!"

"She motioned us to draw back the chair and close the door; she could bear no more. I hastily drew her back; she had partially fainted. I gave her some stimulant; one of the ladies chafed her hands; her loose sleeve was thrown back—upon the left arm gleamed the most gorgeous bracelet, with rubies in the clasp, that I ever saw; I thought it impeded circulation, and wanted to remove it, but Mr. Danvers stayed my hand—'Let it be! She will prefer it!' I suppose some souvenir of her past life. I should like to know her previous history."

Dr. Evelyn paused. He had been so carried away by his own emotions, in recounting the story, he had almost forgotten his auditor; but he was startled when he looked up.

Robert Selman stood before him, his face writhing in agony, his quivering lips striving in vain to articulate; at last, by a mighty effort, grasping Dr. Evelyn's arm, he said hoarsely:—

"Come, let us go!"

"Go! where? My God, what ails you, Selman!"

"Go! to her! to Agnes! Oh, Agnes, my Agnes!"

With that passionate cry, Robert Selman threw himself prostrate upon the sofa, his whole frame shaking with convulsive sobs, regardless of the presence of his friend; regardless of his manhood's pride; conscious only of that bitter, bitter anguish; heart-broken, the proud man humbled his strength in the dust.

Dr. Evelyn sat with blanched face, looking speechlessly at his friend. He understood all. *This* was the woman Robert came to seek; he found her *dying*.

The first outburst of passionate grief over, Robert rose—

"Evelyn, let us go to her. Let me see her once again on earth!"

"Selman, I fear it will be too much for her, unless she is prepared to see you. Any emotion will be fatal."

"I will be calm! You can see her first. See Mr. Danvers. I *must* go, Evelyn! I must see her. Agnes! Agnes!"

Dr. Evelyn was fairly weeping. "I will go immediately—come, Selman!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHEN Dr. Evelyn and Robert Selman reached the hall door of the house, they found a gentleman standing on the steps waiting an answer to the bell he had just rung. He greeted Dr. Evelyn cordially, and began to question him about the symptoms of the archdeaconess's illness. Robert leaned heavily against the doorpost, listening to the advancing footstep of the person who was hastening to usher them in. It was one of the deaconesses who opened the door. She said the archdeaconess was calm, and seemed comfortable, fatigued. She had requested to be left alone with her old friend, Mr. Danvers, to whom she had been dictating a letter. She was considerably exhausted after the effort, and had fainted, but rallied again, and was lying quietly now in her easy chair.

The deaconess led the gentlemen to the small antechamber adjoining the archdeaconess's apartment, and said she would let Mr. Danvers know that Dr. Evelyn had come. She went out of the room after pointing them to seats. The door into Agnes's chamber was partly open for air. As they sat they saw her clearly. She was leaning back in a large reclining chair; a shawl thrown over her feet and lap. She was dressed in a simple white woollen gown, fastened close around her throat and wrists; her beautiful dark hair smoothed plainly under the snowy white linen cap worn by the deaconesses; her hands were quietly folded together; her face was pale, but not emaciated; her lips very red, one of the symptoms of her disease. She sat near the fire, for the spring nights were still cool; her whole attitude expressed peace and composure.

At a small table near her sat the venerable Mr. Danvers; his long silvery locks falling on his shoulders, his spectacles lying upon the large open Bible, and the heavy cane leaning near him, as well as the tremulous voice, showed the infirmities of age had come upon him. He was speaking as they entered, holding a folded letter in his hand.

"My dear, it shall be done as you desire. You know we have not heard from Robert for a long time; but I will try and procure his address through some of the houses who do business in Rio. He left an agent there, I know, and he must receive his income through some of them."

"That is all, then," said Agnes. "The bracelet you will take off my arm, after my death, and send him with the letter, when you learn his address. I have had an intense longing to see him once more; but God's will be done!"

Robert shivered as he heard these words from Agnes's lips. He staggered, as he walked, like a man intoxicated. His pun-

ishment was almost greater than he could bear. Involuntarily the bishop put out his arm to sustain him, and guided him to a chair. He sank into it helplessly. The bishop wondered who the stranger could be.

The deaconess entered Agnes's room and announced Dr. Evelyn. Grasping Robert's hand with a firm pressure, and whispering—"Be a man now, Selman," the warm-hearted physician went in, leaving the door still partly open behind him, that Robert might see and hear all. After making the usual professional inquiries, he took Agnes's hand as if to feel her pulse. Mr. Danvers sat holding the letter he had just written. The doctor looking at it—

"Writing letters? My dear madam, I must forbid that."

"Not I; Mr. Danvers wrote at my dictation," replied Agnes, feebly smiling as she spoke. "It is the last piece of wilfulness, dear doctor; but it had to be done. The letter is to a friend—a very dear friend—" Agnes uttered the last words softly like a caress.

Dr. Evelyn brushed a tear from his eye. Mr. Danvers spoke—"Perhaps, doctor, you can help me about this. He knows what houses in New Orleans do business in Rio, Agnes."

Dr. Evelyn extended his hand for the letter. Agnes fixed her eyes upon him eagerly. The doctor read the address, feeling himself tremble as he did so—his mouth would quiver in spite of himself.

"I can help you, Mr. Danvers, better than any one else. I am glad you applied to me. I know this gentleman's address—he is a friend of mine. I lived in Rio at one time."

Agnes's eyes were burning his face almost—he thought so, so fixed, so intense was her gaze.

He continued—"But Dr. Selman is no longer in Rio. I had letters from him recently. He expected then to sail soon for this place. He may even now be here!" The doctor hesitated.

Agnes interrupted him—"Dr. Evelyn! good friend! He is here. I see it in your face—here—in this house, perhaps—you know all—I see you do. Tell Robert to come—delay no longer—my minutes are precious and numbered."

Dr. Evelyn rose and went into the adjoining room. He did not hear the cry from Mr. Danvers, nor see that Agnes had suddenly risen from her chair and followed him; her feet had not touched the floor for weeks; but superhuman strength seemed given her now. She cast aside the shawl, and walked steadily, briskly after him, as if in good health; her cheeks glowed with rich bloom; her eyes radiated joyful light; never was she more beautiful than at that moment. Her face always wore its fullest beauty for

Robert only, and it came back to greet him now. All the grief of life had vanished. Robert had come. He saw Agnes coming—sprang past Dr. Evelyn, and clasped her in his arms.

"Agnes, my Agnes, my darling!"

"At last, Robert, at last!"

Agnes's arms were clasped tightly about his neck; her head rested on his bosom—conscious only of each other's presence. She whispered words of sweetest endearment in answer to the wild entreaties for forgiveness, and passionate expressions of deepest love which fell from Robert's lips.

"All forgiven—all forgotten, darling! I loved you always!" She smiled in his face—the beautiful smile which was his only.

"I am happy—so happy, my Robert!"

Her arms relaxed their hold; her head sank lower upon his bosom. She would have slid like a snow-wreath from his arms, but that he held her with that strong, passionate embrace,

"Evelyn, Evelyn, she has fainted!" Robert lifted her and carried her to a couch. They brought restoratives. Robert held her head upon his arm, nestled upon his breast. He applied the stimulants to her lips. Her breath came back once, twice; she opened her eyes, looked in Robert's face—smiled again—onelong, deep, trembling respiration—a slight gasp—one tremor—Agnes was dead! They all saw it; Robert saw it; he laid her head upon the pillow; he closed the sweet eyes with his own hands; he drew his own handkerchief from his pocket and carefully bound it round the oval face; he put his arm over her, and buried his face by her side, leaning his brow upon her shoulder. The friends stood around mute and silent. The deaconesses crowded weeping into the apartment. Mr. Danvers's venerable head was bowed down upon his hands. Soon the chapel bell began to toll. The poor people without knew their noble benefactress lived no more on earth. Then the bishop lifted up his hands. In an instant all knelt down with him. He repeated the thanksgiving in the burial service of the English Church.

"Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of those that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; we give Thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this, our sister, out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching Thee that it may please Thee of Thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom; that we, with all those that are parted in the true faith of Thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen."

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Rising from his knees, he pronounced the benediction.

Dr. Evelyn touched Robert's shoulder—"Selman, you must go."

Robert rose to his feet; he bent over Agnes; kissed her brow, eyes, and lips; folded her hands upon her bosom; unclasped the bracelet from the white arm; taking his hat from Dr. Evelyn, he walked firmly through the rooms to the hall-door. Dr. Evelyn's carriage waited there. The bishop and Dr. Evelyn followed closely behind him. Robert put his foot upon the carriage step, reeled backward, and fell fainting in the arms of his friend. They lifted him in the carriage and drove rapidly homewards.

CHAPTER XL.

EASTER fell late in April in the year 18—. The land was lovely with bloom and brilliant with verdure; people congratulated each other when they met upon the beautiful spring. It was Easter eve, just before sunset, that Dr. Evelyn, accompanied by two venerable gentlemen, walked along the pavement in front of the Home of the Deaconesses. He was talking with earnestness. The persons they encountered bowed respectfully as they recognized the tall form and strongly-marked features of the well-known Bishop of Louisiana, and the snowy locks and delicate beauty of the good Diocesan of Mississippi. The three gentlemen were on their way to see the splendid new church that had been built at the end of the square belonging to the Deaconesses, which was to be consecrated on the morrow. They had to pick their way along the pavement, which was encumbered with piles of brick, and huge blocks of stone and finer marbles. It seemed as if there were extensive additions going up to the Home. As they drew nearer the church, they got along more pleasantly; all obstructions had been removed here; that portion was complete.

"And Dr. Selman, you say, has built the church, and is doing all this work at his own expense?" It was the Bishop of Mississippi who spoke.

"Yes," replied Dr. Evelyn. "He has devoted himself to the work of carrying out Mrs. Murray's designs. It seems to be his great consolation to do so; and it has really kept Mr. Danvers alive. Selman is like a son to the old man. The church is superb, as you will see. Selman occupies the two rooms he had built in the north tower—the upper as a chamber, the lower as a place for his books—thus keeping a perpetual watch over the spot where the archdeaconess rests. She is buried in the church. He has his office in the main building of the Home, and takes his meals with Mr. Dan-

vers, in the old gentleman's rooms. Selman has taken Dr. Leonard's place in the establishment, and devotes himself to the sick. He is an able physician—above all, a capital surgeon—and the poor like him very much. He seems contented and cheerful, but keeps himself as much occupied as possible. It is difficult to get hold of him, I find; he is always so busy."

They stood by this time in front of the church—a noble, Gothic structure, built of brick, faced with native marbles—no sham work about it. Every bracket, finial, and spire was of elaborate sculpture in stone—some of it rough, but all real.

"This must have been very expensive," remarked the Bishop of Mississippi.

"Not so much so as you would suppose," replied Dr. Evelyn. "The stone and marbles were brought entirely from Mississippi and Tennessee, and worked by native stonecutters. Selman is very severe in his tastes."

The door was open; they entered the building. The same richness and exquisite taste pervaded the interior. The clearstory was supported by solid shafts of native marble; the walls faced with a buff-colored marble; the floor laid with tiles of dark maroon and black, alternating in mosaic; the chancel-screen and pulpit, which was at one side of the chancel, were of beautifully carved black walnut; the lectern, an iron eagle with outspread wings, supported the Bible and prayer-book; the altar of white marble, large, and exquisitely sculptured with appropriate symbols; the font, made to correspond, stood upon a raised platform beside the door of entrance. There were no candelabras or chandeliers to be seen; but Dr. Evelyn said, "When the gas was lighted, it made wreaths of living flame around each capital, and a crown of glory above the altar; above the pulpit, a flaming cross of light." The east window, of the richest, stained glass, was a copy of Raphael's cartoon of the Resurrection of our Lord in the Vatican; the nave windows, and those of the clearstory, were splendid in harmonious color; the sittings were open, and had carved ends. In the centre of the northern wall opened a small sepulchral chapel, inclosing a space of twenty feet, built on to the church in a kind of half octagon. The nave windows on each side of this represented, one, the anointing of Christ's feet by Mary Magdalene, with the words below, "She hath done what she could;" the other, the scene of the good Samaritan. The octagon itself was faced with the bright, tender, green marble of Tennessee. The light fell from above, through thick rose-colored glass set in the half dome. The floor of this chapel was raised two steps above that of the church, and covered with tiles of solid reddish

brown. In the midst, upon a white marble tomb, fashioned somewhat like a couch, with a drapery sculptured as if thrown modestly over the lower part of the body, concealing the feet and end of the couch, lay the marble semblance of Agnes. The likeness was marvellous. She was dressed as she was when she died—the close-fitting gown, the plain cap of the deaconesses; the beautiful face smiling with sweet content; her hands folded upon her breast, clasping a small cross. Peace and beatitude beamed from the figure.

"How lovely!"

"How like!" burst simultaneously from the lips of the two prelates.

At the side of the tomb were the words, "*Agnes—In Pace,*" carved on a panel of the couch. Close under the drapery, concealed from a careless observer's eye, Dr. Evelyn showed them the sentence, engraved in small letters, "*Agnes dulcissima—Tu vivis in Deo.*"

They stood looking at the tomb, conversing in subdued tones about the church and the next day's consecration, until the church grew dusk in the rapidly glooming twilight. As they turned to go, casting a lingering look at the lovely image of the peaceful sleeper, the soft, low tones of the organ rose from the side of the chancel concealed from all eyes by the high screen. Dr. Evelyn grasped their arms, and whispering: "It is Selman; he has entered without seeing us," drew them into a seat, so as not to disturb the musician. The sobbing notes of Mozart's Lachrymosa crept wailingly through the air; then the piteous Agnes Dei, from the Requiem. A change seemed to come over the thought of the musician. The trumpet stop pealed out, and Robert's grand voice rose with the music. He chanted an Easter carol:—

"The foe behind, the deep before,
Our hosts have dared and past the sea,
And Pharaoh's warriors strew the shore;
And Israel's ransomed tribes are free!
Lift up, lift up your voices now—
The whole wide world rejoices now—
The Lord hath triumphed gloriously,
The Lord shall reign victoriously!
Happy morrow—turning sorrow
Into peace and mirth;
Bondage ending—Love descending o'er the earth!
Seals assuring, guards securing,
Watch his earthly prison;
Seals are shattered, guards are scattered—
Christ hath risen.
No longer must the mourners weep,
And call departed Christians dead;
For death is hallowed into sleep,
And every grave becomes a bed.
Now once more, Eden's door
Open stands to mortal eyes;
For Christ hath risen, and man shall rise.
Now at last, old things past,
Hope and joy and peace begin,
For Christ hath won, and man shall win.

It is not exile—rest on high;
It is not sadness—peace from strife;
To fall asleep is not to die—
To dwell with Christ is better life.
Where our banner leads us, we may safely go;
Where our Chief precedes us, we may face the foe;
His right arm is o'er us, He will guide us through;
Christ hath gone before us—Christians, follow you;
He shall soon deliver from every woe. Alleluia.
If his paths you tread,
Pleasures as a river shall round you flow.
Alleluia.

When you see your Head,
With loins upgirt, and staff in hand,
And hasty mien, and sandalled feet,
Around the Paschal Feast we stand,
And of the Paschal Lamb we eat.
So shall He collect us—direct us
From Egypt's strand;
So shall He precede us, and lead us
To Canaan's land.
Toils and foes assailing, friends quailing,
Hearts failing—
Shall threat in vain,
If He be providing, presiding, and guiding
To Him again.
Christ our Leader, Monarch, Pleader, Interceder,
Praise we and adore—
Exultation, veneration, gratulation,
Bringing evermore!"

The music ceased. The silent listeners heard the quick, low slam of the organ top; they saw Jim gliding away from the bellows with a lighted candle in his hand, which glimmered like a star in the darkness. As soon as Jim had left the church, Robert Selman issued from the chancel, walked swiftly to the tomb of Agnes, pressed a kiss upon the cold, white brow of the statue, and quitted the church by the small door in the tower which led to his apartments above. The moonbeams struggled through the stained windows. The gentlemen rose from their seats, and walked softly out of the church. The stars were brilliant. The Bishop of Louisiana looked up and said:—
"And they shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

"Amen!" responded his companions.
It was dark on earth, but so bright in Heaven. Peace, stillness, and repose, and God's love over all, as they walked on in the night.

CHAPTER XLI.

"*Εξουρθη.*" "He fell asleep." All over the world they sleep so well, in Christ. What life of any Christian can fail utterly in God's good universe? The angels are watching anxiously the ever evolving experience of the atoms of human vitality in the grinding mill of time and circumstance, till their guardianship may end over the dissolved dust of the once struggling,

developing, but now reposing body, and then

"Leaning from the golden seat,
And smiling down the stars—they whisper sweet."

For they know how good that boon of life has been, however grievous here, that ends in the lovely land the Christian longs for.

O sine luxibus, O sine luctibus, O sine lite,
Splendida curia, florida Patria, Patria vita—
Urbs Sion Incluya, turris et edita litore tuto,
Te peto, te colo, te flagro, te volo,—canto, saluto.*

"*Εξουρθη.*" The Christian only "sleeps" a little, a very little while, and sleeps so well—whether in the midst of Bienville's crowded city, or in the deep Valley of Tombs in Sicily, where the shepherd still plays upon his pipe, and shelters his bleating lambs near the sepulchres of the dead, while the tall Tower of the Serimias frowns from the summit of the overhanging mountain. The race of ancient counts is now extinct, but a better man has come into possession of the small heritage of lands, and the peasants and the earth rejoice in the sunshine of his generous care and Providence; nature hangs her garlands of rose-laurel and myrtle continuously around the portals of the sombre caverns, and the soft Sicilian winds wave the slender tendrils of the vines, making changeful light and shade over the Greek inscriptions carved in the living rock. "*Εξ ἕως τῆς θανάτου ἐκ θανάτου εἰς ζωὴν.*" "Out of Life into Death, out of Death into Life."

CHAPTER XLII.

ROBERT SELMAN sat by the fire in Dr. Evelyn's parlor. It was after tea, and the children were gathered about their parents and their friend; little Agnes sat on Robert's knee and stroked with a gentle tiny hand the silver gray locks from his temples, as he bent his head over her. "I love you, Uncle Robert," whispered the tender child. Robert kissed her softly. "Now, Uncle Robert, tell me the story of the beautiful Princess Sunray, you promised." Robert smiled, and told the favorite fairy-tale to his petted darling for the twentieth time.

"The beautiful Sunray lived in a palace that shone brighter than gold, or even diamonds. It was built of woven light, and the walls were so thin, one could look beyond the changeful gleams of red, and blue,

* Oh stinless, oh tearless, oh land without strife,
Temple of splendor, Land of flowers, Country of Life,
City of Zion—glorious with towers so safe and so high:

I crave thee, I love thee, for thee still I sigh;
I burn for thee, I long for thee, I meet thee,
I sing thee, I fly to thee, I greet thee!

and yellow, and purple, and green, and orange-colored, invisible air-silk, with which the palace was hung, out into the whole universe around, and if one had good eyes, well anointed with the magic balsam of the Fairy fancy, one would see, there, most wonderful things. There were millions on millions of bright, lustrous balls whirling along, crossing each other's pathway in, apparently, the most dangerous manner, seeming at the first glance as if they were all flying helter-skelter, so fast, so fast, that one would really be very uneasy lest these beautiful glowing fire-balls should hit each other, and knock each other into a million pieces; and what made it look more alarming was the frequent whizzing of some oblong balls, which every now and then flew faster than the lightning itself through the innumerable groups of revolving, circular star-balls. But the beautiful Sunray was never frightened, because she knew that there was no danger of these balls of hers ever hitting each other. She just threw them out of her hands, one after another, far out into the great black space of the universe, without fear. She knew that every ball had its own little invisible string, which she had carefully fastened to the outer walls of her palace, and that every string was of a different length—even if only by a quarter of an inch—and as her palace slowly turned around once a year, these balls of hers whirled fast, fast, each in its own pathway, around it. The Master of light, who made Sunray, had taught her all about that, so she knew very well how to play ball with her brother, Prince Icecold. He lived far, far off on the very edge of the kingdom of the Master of life. He was much older than Sunray, but being immortal he did not show his age. He looked as young as she did, but very different, and his clear, cold, glittering blue eyes had no light nor expression in them, because he had been blind from his birth. Sunray's eyes, on the contrary, were dark, and shot up laughing flames of fitful fire out of their depths. Sunray was beautiful—"The beautiful Sunray" she was called in the whole universe—she was the prettiest thing that had ever been made by the word of the Master of Life. She was tall, and slender, and graceful; her feet were so small and so light, that her steps were noiseless, and she had a way of sliding about in her lovely crystal slippers that was charming to behold. With one step she could slide many million miles, which was a great convenience, as she used to take very long walks in performing the tasks given her to do by the Master of Life. For she did not play very much; whenever she did, she found she would get into mischief and trouble. It was dangerous for her to look too closely at anything, for if she laughed (and she was so gay and merry-

hearted she always did laugh when she was pleased), the fitful flames would flash up out of her lightning bright eyes and burn everything to cinders. This was sometimes a grief to Sunray, and sometimes she was tempted to wish she had been made blind like her brother, Prince Icecold. But nothing and nobody has *everything* exactly as they think they would like to have it, in the universe of the Master of Life; because, in the wonderful wisdom of the Master of Life, everything is intended to work with and for every other thing, and all to help each other, and so to make a happy universe; because nothing can be happy that lives only for itself. The Master of Life never levied for himself, but—forever—for all. So it came Sunray discovered, as she grew older and wiser, that it was right she should not be able to do everything and know everything, by herself. The task of Sunray was to make star-balls, and to set them whirling all over the universe. She never could have accomplished this in the world, if her brother, Icecold, had not helped her. Sunray would gather the materials for her balls upon the outside of her palace garden; she would gaze steadily on the pile of earth and rocks, and water, and gas, until the pile would take fire from her laughing eyes, and would melt all together; then she would take a handful, of the glowing stuff and wave it in her gleaming white hands till it became a large burning ring, soft and smouldering like melted gold; then she would make one slide through space of a million miles, her rock-crystal slippers glittering like boats of diamonds, and people would say: "See! the lightning," not knowing it was the sparkle of Sunray's slippers. Then Sunray would throw her fiery ring as far as she could send it, and whisper, "Breathe, Icecold! breathe, my brother!" And Icecold would lift himself up from his couch of snow, with its counterpane of icicles fringed with hoar frost, and Icecold would breathe strongly, blowing his breath in the direction of Sunray's ring, and the ring would shrink and collapse into one solid mass, then it would whirl off, a round, firm star-ball, cooled on the outside, but hot and soft yet in the inside; then Sunray would tie the invisible magnetic string by which every ball was attached to the outer walls of her palace, and leave it to whirl. But her work would not be finished yet. Upon each ball she had to put such creatures and plants as would live on it, suitable to the decree of the Master of Life. So Sunray would sit on her throne of dancing rainbow-shimmering lights, and make all sorts of things and put them on the balls. She had to use the material gathered from each ball to make the creations on it. Where there was most water she made fish; and she would make of the earths, plants, trees, and flowers and

grasses; then she would make animals, reptiles and wild beasts, and men and women. And when she had formed anything at all, she would whisper, "Breathe, Icecold!" and Prince Icecold would sit up on his couch of snow and breathe upon her images and harden them. Then the Master of Life would speak or will it, and the plants would begin to grow and to blossom, and the reptiles would begin to crawl, and animals and men and women would open their eyes and be alive. Sunray could not harden her images; Icecold had to do that, and neither she nor Icecold could make anything live. The Master of Life had to do that. Sunray could destroy—one glance from her laughing eyes would burn and melt up any mortal thing; and Icecold, too, could destroy—when he breathed gently, he hardened and stiffened any substance; when he breathed strongly, he froze everything fast; when he touched anything with the tips of his fingers, it turned cold and black, and fell all to pieces. Men called Icecold, then, by the name of "Death"! But he was no more Death than Sunray, who was so apt to burn up things if she was heedless. But one thing was also certain: if they, either of them, accidentally destroyed or displaced the life given by their great Master of the universe, they were always very sorry, and set immediately to work to make all over again into something better and new. This was very wise in the beautiful Sunray and Prince Icecold. It had been taught them, by the Master of Life, not to sit down and weep over misfortunes of their own causing, but to rise up and go to work and try to make better things of what they had destroyed. So they always did. Indeed, sometimes Sunray would watch the things she made, and finding she had put too much of her own fire in them, that the plants grew rank and poisonous, that the fish were fierce and outrageously destructive to each other, or that the animals were too abundant, fighting and preying upon each other, and that even men and women were violent, cruel, and selfish to each other and to all nature; then Sunray would look sad for the five-thousandth part of a gleam of lightning, and would say to Icecold, "Touch them, Icecold!" and Icecold would rise up from his couch of snow, and stand erect in his glacier boots, and extend his fingers, that looked like long, slender, sparkling sapphires, they were so cold and so transparent, and Icecold would touch the images made by Sunray, and vitalized by the Master of Life, and they would all stop breathing, turn black, and crumble to dust. Sometimes Sunray would say, "Touch the ball!" and Icecold would touch the star-ball, and every living thing would harden and stiffen upon

it; and it would whirl for a while, empty and black—until Sunray seized it in her gleaming white hands and laughed on it—then it would melt, and she would make it all over again, better than before.

Sometimes, too, if Sunray saw the images she made sick and sorrowful, and troubled or unhappy, she would also look sorrowful for the ten-thousandth part of a gleam of lightning, and say, "Touch them gently, Icecold!" Then Icecold would lean from his couch of snow and wave his sapphire hand over these poor images of Sunray's, and then they would sink softly down in deep dreamless slumber, and other men would bury them in the warm earth, on Sunray's balls, and say, "They are dead!" But Sunray would laugh then, and throw a comet-ring as far as she could send it, for Icecold to harden. And Icecold would laugh and shake the icebergs off the fringes of his glacier slippers, into the oceans, like a man shaking off dew-drops; and the Master of Life would smile, and whenever He smiled the whole great universe would rejoice, and all flashed into larger beauty and bliss; and the whole universe would sing—for they all knew no life *could* be lost, once given by the Master; all life was safe in his Eternal, Infinite hands—all was right in the great universe, always. It was only to wait! all would be well. So Sunray and Icecold sang aloud:—

"All that has life and breath, praise ye the Lord."

And every star-ball whirled back the answer, "All that has life and breath, praise ye the Lord."

And the angels and archangels, and all the hosts of heaven throughout all space, caught up the same strain of music, and they sang: "All that has life and breath, praise ye the Lord."

And all the tiny creatures everywhere in the earth, or in the seas, even in a drop of water, sang with such weak, weak, fine voices, that no mortal ear was delicate enough to distinguish; but the Master of Life heard every one of them, even amidst the angel chorus, "All that has life and breath, praise ye the Lord."

And then the whole wide universe joined together in one thundering outburst of praise, and the great waves of music gathered and rolled on, and upward, and around like ten thousand million thunders all over creation, and fell in one immense billow of praise at the very footstool of the Master of Life; and for the space of that single second, everything and everybody was happy. For once more the Master of Life smiled upon his works, and His smile was life and joy.