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EMMA WALTON:

OR

TRIALS AND TRIUMPH.

BY

MISS E. A. DUPUY,

AUTHOR OF

"THE CONSPIRATOR," "THE SEPARATION, THE DIVORCE, AND THE COQUETTE'S  
PUNISHMENT," "CELESTE, THE PIRATE'S DAUGHTER," "FLORENCE,  
OR THE FATAL VOW," ETC., ETC.

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*Handwritten note:*  
The following pages are inscribed

TO  
THOMAS H. SHREVE, Esq.,

OF LOUISVILLE, KY.,

The following Pages are inscribed,

BY

HIS SINCERE FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

# EMMA WALTON:

OR

## TRIALS AND TRIUMPH.

### CHAPTER I.

THE evening was very cold; a slight mist, which froze as it fell, penetrated the thin covering of a woman, who moved slowly and wearily along the lighted streets of the city of Baltimore, holding a child by the hand; she was thin to emaciation, and there was an expression of heart-broken wretchedness upon her features, which indicated sorrows even deeper than physical suffering could have stamped there.

The girl who clung to her, seemed as if she had fared little better than her companion. There was none of the bloom or buoyancy of childhood in her appearance, and she moved as if weak from hunger, or wearied with the length of the walk she had taken; yet, under more favorable circumstances, that child would have been the pampered darling of her parents; for hers was beauty of a soft and exceedingly winning character. Large blue eyes, which in their clear depths looked like "shaded water," beamed from beneath a mass of golden hair hanging in short curls over her finely-formed brow—her beautifully-curved lips looked as if made for smiles, but they were nearly colorless, and wore an expression which makes the heart ache over the childhood of the very poor. It brought forcibly to mind Charles Lamb's quaint sentence—"The children of the very poor are not brought up, they are dragged up."

"Mother, where are we going?" she asked—"Oh! I am so weary."

"Going,"—repeated the woman vacantly—"God knows, little one—Ah! now I remember. Yes, darling, we shall soon be at the end of our journey, and you shall be placed where you will never feel want nor hunger again."

"That must be in heaven, then," replied the child, "for you said this morning, that in this world you had no more hope."

The woman clasped her hands convulsively, and large drops rolled down her sunken cheeks.

"In heaven I have no hope; 't is that which breaks my heart. My poor babe is gone where I can never—never see him more. Yet God is just—I deserve the punishment."

"Poor Willie," murmured the girl, while she also wept.

"And you mourn him, too! you, who—but it is God's judgment; yet, as he is merciful he will forgive me, when I have made restitution; then will come repentance, and—death." She presently quickened her pace—

"Come, child, move faster—we shall soon be at the end of your walk, and then you will no more want—your tears will be wiped away by the hand of affection. Hark! there is the roll of a carriage; we can cross the street before it comes up."

As she said this, she attempted to cross where two principal thoroughfares intersected each other. They were but half

way over, when the carriage, driven with great rapidity, dashed around the corner, and but for the presence of mind displayed by the driver, the wretched pair would have met with a speedy end to all worldly care. The man gave a sudden and violent check to his horses, and in another moment the two stood in safety, immediately beneath the glare of a gas light.

Within the vehicle, sat one of the children of fortune, arrayed in a magnificent dinner costume; but paleness was on her brow, and sadness in her heart, though she had just left the brilliant halls of fashion, to which a select party had been invited in honor of herself. She put aside her richly-furred mantilla, and lowered the window to ascertain the cause of the sudden halt—the light flashed on the costly gems which glittered on her bosom, and a pang of bitterness shot through the heart of the gazer.

"One tithe of her wealth, and my babe had not died," she muttered—

The driver was about to go on, when a sweet voice spoke—"Stop, John! what is the matter? Heavens!—a child out this freezing night, in such a garb! here my good woman—I have no money about me—take this card, and come to me tomorrow."

After a slight glance at the occupant of the carriage, the woman had turned away, as if to proceed on her course, but the sound of the voice arrested her; she she looked again, and darting forward exclaimed—

"It is—it is herself! Oh God, I thank thee! here"—and she raised the child in her arms—"behold the long sought one! take her—save her from starvation—she is yours—I give her back at the risk of life, but that is nothing—take her!"

"What is this? open the door, John! quick—"

A furious lash was given to the horses, by an unknown hand; they reared—dashed forward, and the lady sank back on the seat insensible.

The woman felt a rough grasp laid on her shoulder, while a volley of bitter curses were hissed in her ear. A man of coarse and brutal appearance, dragged her forcibly along with one hand, while he grasped the child with the other. A crowd had begun to collect, but their attention was absorbed by the imminent

danger of the carriage, and they did not heed the wretched cause of the disaster.

The man drew her toward a cross street, faintly lighted, and she felt a cold thrill through her frame as she looked down the gloomy avenue, and saw not a living creature beside themselves. She felt that she was in the power of one who knew no mercy. He compressed her arm beneath his iron fingers, until a faint, involuntary cry escaped her lips—

"Hush! or I will lay my hand on your throat, you miserable whining devil," said he in a tone of suppressed rage. "A fine mess you were about to make—giving me up to the halter for your foolery."

"Oh no, Dick; we would have fled together, if that had been necessary. I meant to have told you, as soon as she was safe with—"

"Hush—will you, jade! The girl's no fool; and she is listening with all her ears. Let us get home, and when once there, I will teach you how to play me such tricks, madam."

He heard a stealthy step behind them, and turning quickly, saw a tall man wrapped in a heavy overcoat, with a fur cap fastened snugly over his ears. They passed a lamp at the moment, and the light shone upon a broad vulgar-looking face, with small eyes, a heavy chin, and that expression of moroseness about the prominent lips, which is a sure indication of the habitual temper of their possessor.

The stranger spoke politely, and made some remarks on the inclemency of the weather.

"Hum—if it's bad why don't you stay at home then," replied Dick, in a surly tone—"I never abuses the weather, when I'm walking out for pleasure, as you seem to be."

"You are mistaken, friend; I have business which brought me out on this inclement night, and that business is with you," was the calm reply.

"Business with me!—well that's rich now. What may it be? for I'm blessed if ever I seen a chap of just your figure afore."

"Perhaps not, but that is of little consequence. I have seen all that passed in the street yonder, and I suffered you to leave without calling the attention of the mob to you, for purposes of my own.

This child is not yours; whence, then, your anxiety to retain her?"

"What's that to you?—and how do you know she is none of mine? The mother's a weak fool, and because we're too poor to provide dainties for it, she thought she would give her away—that's all of it."

"Pooh! do you take me for a fool, to be humbugged by such an improbable story? The lady recognized her—that was evident enough; beggars may be quite willing to give their brats away, but it is not so easy a matter to find people ready to take them off their hands. The child, I repeat, is not your own; I will not probe you too closely, as your motives would probably not bear exposure. I merely followed you to make a proposition which, from your appearance, I should think you will decline."

"What may that be?" growled Dick.

"Sell her brat to me."

"Sell her!" repeated the other, in surprise—"Why, man, she is n't black! you could n't no how make much on such a speculation."

The person he addressed laughed aloud.

"You mistake my calling friend; I am not a slave-dealer, but a rope-dancer. I have just lost the best child in my troop; this little girl is light, well formed, and active; when properly fed and clothed she will have beauty enough to interest an audience, and she will be profitable to me. I will pay you a good price, and you can still receive the same pay from those who placed her with you."

The ruffian started—"How do you know that I receive any thing?"

"Pooh, man!—my profession has given me much insight into the motives of mankind. You would as soon think of repenting of your past life, as of giving this poor child the miserable pittance that just keeps her from starving, if it were not for your own interest to do so."

The woman had listened thus far in trembling silence, but she could remain so no longer.

"Oh, Dick, for God's sake! do n't be tempted to this new piece of wickedness. Let me keep the child—my own is dead—I can work now, and she shall not burden you."

"Hold your peace, you jade. I know very well what you are after. Some fine

day when I am out of sight, you will be taking her to that madam flaunting in her carriage. I hope the horses broke her neck, I do. I'll part with the child, just to pay you for playing me such a trick."

In vain the woman wept and entreated. The little girl too much frightened and exhausted by her previous sufferings, to make any resistance, was transferred to the rope-dancer, for one hundred dollars, with a promise from him to depart from the city on the following morning. Her new purchaser lifted the child in his arms, and wrapping his cloak about her, strode away. The man and his wife proceeded in utter silence, occasionally broken by a faint, stifled sob from the woman. They reached their own abode—a miserable squalid cellar in the poorest part of the city, into which he thrust her with an imprecation, and looked the door upon her.

With his ill-gotten gains, the ruffian then went to a neighboring drinking house, and took several glasses of brandy. Under their influence, he staggered home, and gave his wretched wife so severe a beating, that in less than a week she expired from the effects of it.

## CHAPTER

In a small and comfortably-furnished room, whose thickly-carpeted floor, and blazing fire contrasted cheerfully with the snow which fell without, and the blustering wind which roared around the house, sat a venerable man, whose mild countenance and silvered hair commanded the respect of all who looked on him. He had evidently but just returned from the performance of some duty which had taken him from his comfortable home on so inclement a day, for he had not yet laid aside his great coat, and his wife, a woman near his own age, was holding to the fire the furred slippers which he usually wore when in his own sanctum. An unusual expression of seriousness was upon the countenance of the good old gentleman, and he stood before the blazing fire wrapped in a deep reverie.

He was the Reverend William Wilson, pastor of one of the Episcopal chapels of the city for more than forty years; thirty-six of which time the old lady had been his kind and affectionate helpmate. He

had that morning been called to the bedside of a dying woman, to hear an unusual confession, and to witness the terrible departure of a guilt-stricken soul.

"It was an awful day to leave home, my dear," remarked Mrs. Wilson. "I am afraid your rheumatism will not be much benefited by such a jaunt; and then you stayed so very long, I really began to feel uneasy."

"The day was not half so awful, Rebecca, as the duty I have had to perform. Poor creature! many death-beds have I seen, but never one so terrible as that of this poor woman. Do you remember Mrs. Garwood, who came here about a month since, to ask assistance for her sick child?"

"Yes; I shall not soon forget that she was promised all she required, and when I went myself to her pretended abode, she was not there; she had actually removed before I could get there. Well, what of her, my dear?"

"Poor woman," said the pastor sadly, "she was not to blame for that. Her brutal husband, by some means found out that she had applied for assistance, and fearing that she might divulge a secret of some importance to him, took her away before you had time to reach her abode. The child was a few weeks after the removal of her mother, and she sent for me in the morning, that I went to her immediately. It was well I did go at once, for she is now dead, herself a victim to her husband's ill-treatment."

"Dreadful! and the other child—the girl—what has become of her? and where is the miserable husband and father?"

"Be patient, my dear, and I will answer all your questions. The little girl turns out to be no child of theirs,—but I have Mrs. Garwood's confession in writing, and I will glance over it, and give you the outline of the story."

So saying, he drew from his pocket, a paper closely written.

"But first, tell me what has become of the husband," said the impatient lady.

"You will be grieved to hear that this wretched man, in a fit of intoxication, so inhumanly beat his wife that she died from the effect of her wounds. He has fled, and there is no clue to his retreat; a reward has been on his track for the last two days."

"Ah, this is horrible! poor woman,

how unjustly I blamed her. But the child, my dear—the girl—let me hear all about her."

"You will be still more grieved my dear Rebecca, when you hear that the little girl has become the victim of this man's villainy, and has actually been sold by him to an itinerant rope-dancer. You may well look horror-stricken at such villainy, but the vulgar actor in this affair is not debased, in my opinion, as he who sold his creature in his power. Just give your attention, my dear, while I relate a story of common occurrence, ending in a most uncommon manner, however.

"An old gentleman, who lived in the city, had two daughters, coheiressees to a vast estate of immense value. Both married at an early age; the eldest, a man beloved by her father; the younger one, the petted darling of his old age, eloped from the parental roof with one he considered unworthy of her. Her letters were returned unopened; her name an interdicted sound in the home of her youth; and the father, who had loved her with such trusting fondness, seemed to have forgotten that such a being had ever existed, as his exiled daughter.

"Her sister who loved her fondly, dared not breathe a word in her defense. Once, when she made the attempt, her words elicited such an explosion of wrathful and injured feeling, that she never again hazarded the mention of her name. Letters occasionally came to her from the poor exile, but their reception was carefully concealed from the father. In the second year of her marriage her husband was forced to leave her, and take a voyage to the West Indies, in the hope of bettering his circumstances; a few months rolled away, and news came that he had been killed in a fray in a gambling house in Havana. The wife who adored him, sank under the blow, leaving her young child to the protection of her father, in the hope that her death would open his heart to the friendless orphan.

"Before the news of the decease of his discarded daughter reached him, the old father was himself called away. On opening his will, to the great delight of his surviving child, and the bitter disappointment of her husband, it was found that the unhappy parent, though too

deeply wounded ever to receive his erring child, had long since forgiven her. The half of his property was settled on her children, the income of which was subject to the mother's demands during her life; if she died without heirs, the whole estate reverted to his eldest daughter.

"On her elopement, the younger daughter had accompanied her husband to this city, and here died. Letters were immediately written to the persons in whose charge the child had been left, and a man and his wife employed by the uncle to come to Baltimore and take the little girl to her relatives. That man was Garwood, the husband of this poor woman, and he was bribed to keep the child as his own, that she might never interfere in the succession to her grandfather's estate."

"Mercy, what villainy! Surely there was enough for both. I never heard any thing so dreadful."

"He was a man of pleasure, my dear; was a consummate hypocrite, who managed to keep fair with his father-in-law, and, so long as the old gentleman lived, acted so as to make his wife believe him all that was kind and excellent. But so soon as the property was in his possession he showed that he considered himself her master. He sold the beautiful home, which had been so highly prized by her father, and removed to this city—even here where his niece lived in poverty; but he did not intend that she should remain where there was danger of her being recognized. Garwood was ordered to remove before their arrival in the city, but the illness of his own child delayed his departure, and was near being the cause of the detection of their villainy. His wife had participated in his detention of the girl, but on the night of her infant's death, she was struck with remorse, and made an attempt to restore her to her aunt. Her husband unexpectedly encountered her in the street, and frustrated her attempt, almost in the moment of its consummation. He afterward avenged himself by the blows which caused her death. Garwood is a miserable profligate, and dissipated the funds he drew from his employer in a short time, while his wife labored to support herself and the children. She appears to have been much attached to Garwood, in spite of his brutality, and, to the last made excuses for

his conduct to herself. At the time she applied to us for assistance, her infant was lying at the point of death, and she had not seen her husband for a week. He casually saw her as she left the house, and, as you know, rendered unavailing our efforts in her behalf. In his anger at his wife's attempt to restore the little girl to her natural protector, Garwood sold her for a trifling sum to a rope-dancer, who promised to leave the city immediately."

"He stopped—Mrs. Wilson looked up—"But you have not yet told me the name of the miscreant who betrayed the poor child to such a fate. Furnished with that, you have a clue by which to discover his villainy to the world."

"Unfortunately the name was not given to me," said the minister sorrowfully.

"Not given! How was that, my dear?"

"Listen with patience, Rebecca, and you will see how I am situated in this perplexing affair. The poor, dying creature seemed to shrink from uttering names; she requested me to write down her confession, and she would then tell me the name of the chief delinquent. I did so. Just as I had concluded, she fainted. I awaited her revival with great anxiety, but the power of articulation had failed her—nevertheless, such efforts made, but the power of articulation was gone. It was heart-rending to behold the expression of anguish upon her features, when she felt that life was ebbing rapidly away, and the word unsaid which might snatch an innocent child from destruction. I gave her a pencil, hoping she might have the power to write; but her fingers were already stiffened by approaching dissolution, and she could only scratch a letter, which was intended for an I, or a T, or perhaps part of a W, and with the effort life passed away."

He drew the paper from his pocket, and presented it to the inspection of Mrs. Wilson. She peered at it through her spectacles some moments, but could make nothing of the nearly imperceptible marks, traced by the palsied hand of the dying.

"This is too illegible to be a guide to the truth; but what is to be done, my dear? The child must be found."

"If possible—certainly I will use an advertisement to be inserted in the

papers, offering a reward for her restoration. That may bring some communication from the uncle, and I may gain a clue to her family by that means."

"A very good thought, my dear—very good—but bless me! here am I so absorbed in your story, that I have forgotten all about your slippers, and the fur is actually scorched."

"Never mind, my dear; it will keep my feet just as warm as before."

Mr. Wilson laid off his great coat, thrust his feet into the warm slippers, and drawing his arm-chair toward the comfortable fire, those benevolent old people discussed the chances of discovering the lost child.

### CHAPTER III.

A MAGNIFICENT dwelling, on one of the principal squares in Baltimore, was the scene of sickness even unto death. In a spacious apartment, carpeted so thickly that not a footfall could be heard, on a bed whose velvet drapery was drawn aside, reclined the attenuated form of a lady, from whose brow the light of existence was rapidly fading.

The room was cautiously darkened, and some moments elapsed before a person, suddenly introduced into it, could distinctly see the object within. The windows were hung with full curtains of violet-colored velvet lined with crimson silk, and trimmed with heavy fringe of the same color. Two immense mirrors adorned the walls, so placed that the lovely occupant could behold the full effect of her toilet at a single glance. They now reflected the bed, with its pale burden of mortality, destined never again to arise to the pomp and vanities of existence. White as the sculptured marble, and nearly as motionless, the mistress of this splendid mansion lay buried in a deep, almost breathless slumber; the dark hair drawn back, and confined beneath a cap of delicate lace, but the features thus deprived of their usual ornament, were not the less critically beautiful; deeply, mournfully sad was their expression, but very lovely in the death-like trance they still

maintained on the head, received in an attempt to jump from a carriage

in rapid motion, had so severely injured the brain, that a violent fever, attended with delirium, was the result of the accident. Many days had since passed, and on that morning she had first awakened to the consciousness of her situation.

A middle-aged woman sat beside the heavy screen which closed the light of the fire from the apartment, with her eyes fixed immovably on the patient; several times the door leading into the next room, was noiselessly unclosed, and inquiries in dumb show, made of the nurse, regarding the invalid. Finally, the person who appeared so anxious concerning her state, entered the room, and motioned the woman to leave.

"I will watch over her," he whispered; "I wish to be beside her when she awakes. She may then know me."

The woman bowed, and left the room. Softly placing himself in a large chair by the bed, he bent his eyes on the marble face before him, and shuddered as he thought of the faint hope of life which remained to her. Yet it was not affection which caused that cold thrill to agitate his heart; it was but the natural terror of the worldly-wise man, of the scoffer and unbeliever, at the visible presence of the stern conqueror, who is not to be propitiated by the offerings of human anguish; who alike mocks the fears of the coward and the supplications of the grief-stricken! Even in that hour, he looked upon his wife, and thought of another! His first love, freed from other ties, came to his memory in the calm loveliness of her early youth, and he said to himself; "I shall soon be free to woo her. The favored child of fortune may succeed, where the poor student was rejected;"—

and so entwined was this affection with the bright memories of his youth, that he was willing to purchase the consent of its object to be his, by the brilliant fortune he could lay at her feet. To do him justice, he tried to banish such thoughts, for he felt that they were a sacrilege to the death-bed of the wife, who had lavished on him warm affection, which had met with no return, save that studied courtesy which chills, while it leaves no tangible cause of complaint. The inner life of that dying one, had long been as a sealed book to him—the deep mysteries of her soul unfathomed; darkly beneath the chilling

weight of disappointment, lay her warm affections, her noble aspirations, in a torpor worse than death. The heart can not be deceived; affection is too keen-sighted not to perceive the want of sympathy, and Mrs. Ferris had long felt, that to her elegant and fashionable husband, she was not the one bright spirit, before whose gentle influence all others must succumb; but she had learned to bear it without a murmur, for she loved him in spite of his coldness; though the dark consciousness ever remained with her, that beneath this blighting indifference, her own soul must forever remain undeveloped, she betrayed to none the secret desolation, which weighed upon her spirit—a faint shade of paleness settled on her features, the lips wore a more subdued expression, and the graceful manner was perhaps a little more pensive, than before this conviction settled over her mind, but these slight signs were scarcely noted among those with whom she daily associated, and many considered her lot very enviable. To a woman, intended by nature for one of fashion's votaries, it would certainly have worn that aspect; for she was rich, childless, and was allowed unlimited control of a considerable portion of the fortune with which she had endowed her husband. But a mind gifted with the vivid sensibilities, and keen powers of suffering, bestowed on the higher order of her sex, rendered these worldly accessories of little value in her eyes. She would freely have sacrificed them all for a belief in the affection of the man to whom she had devoted her life.

He, who had thus assumed the office of nurse, was one well calculated to please the fancy of an imaginative woman. He was yet in the zenith of youth, being not more than twenty-seven years of age, and was a perfect model of manly beauty; his complexion, of a clear olive, glowed with health, and his magnificent dark eyes could melt with tenderness, or flash, as if with aroused feeling, even when the tide of emotion lay calm and stirless in his crafty breast. He was an admirable actor, and, had he thought it worth while, he could have enacted the tender husband to such perfection that his wife would never have fancied herself slighted, or coldly regarded; but, like many men of selfish and hard hearts, he abused the

power her affection gave him. He had married her for the wealth she brought him, and, as he detested scenes, he was guilty of no positive breach of matrimonial etiquette; he merely treated her with cavalier indifference. Yet this man had once loved truly—disinterestedly. Perhaps he wished to avenge, on his unoffending wife, the pangs another had inflicted upon himself.

He now had a point of much importance to carry, and he placed himself beside his wife, to take advantage of her first moments of returning consciousness. Half an hour passed in utter silence, and the watcher had scarcely moved his eyes from the pallid features before him. Suddenly a faint murmur escaped the lips of the lady, and he bent eagerly forward, to distinguish the words which she uttered at intervals.

"Poor, abandoned child," she muttered, "wretch,—wretch! kill her at once! she is sinless now,—take life, rather than leave her to such a fate!"

A dark cloud gathered on his brow, and his fingers moved nervously, as he said, in suppressed tones,

"Always speaking of that wretched girl: she never shall cross my path."

The lady unclosed her eyes, and gazed an instant on the working features before her. A gleam of intelligence lighted up her countenance, and, after a slight pause, she said, "Is it you, George?"

"Yes, dearest," he replied, in carefully modulated tones, "you have slept long; I hope you feel greatly better."

"As well as I shall ever be again. George, the dying usually have intervals of reason before the final change, and a merciful provision of Providence it is, as it enables them to perform those last duties, without which many could scarcely rest, even in the silence of the tomb; my last hour of usefulness on earth has arrived, and I would fain perform all that remain of my earthly duties."

"Do not speak so hopelessly of yourself, dear Emma, you may yet recover; but it is absolutely necessary that you do not exert yourself too much. Your earthly affairs are already settled; you surely would not cancel the accounts soon after your father's death?"

Mrs. Ferris looked sadly at him, and a faint tinge of color mounted to her cheek;

it soon faded away, and closing her eyes, the bitter tears, which this last proof of his selfishness caused her to shed, forced for themselves a passage over her pale face. He saw them, and, for an instant, felt something like remorse.

"You know, Emma, that if such is your desire, you have only to express your wishes, and they are obeyed."

"Alas! alas! thus you have ever said, George; and have I ever found my wishes fulfilled? It is now as it ever has been; you promise, but never—never—perform."

The excitement of her manner alarmed her husband, and he placed his fingers lightly over her lips.

"No more reproaches now, Emma, I can not bear them; and, besides, you are too weak. I promise you, on my honor—and you know I am an honorable man—that your wishes shall be fulfilled to the letter. Ah! here comes the excellent doctor; he will enforce obedience to my cautions."

There entered as he spoke, a small spare man, with a benevolent expression. He briskly approached the bed, and examined the countenance of the invalid, but his own face was inscrutable. "Ah, hum, less fever, and —"

"Less life," said Mrs. Ferris, calmly. "George, leave me alone with the doctor a few moments."

"Certainly my love. All goes well, I believe, doctor, but you see the dear Emma has ordered me away; my presence induces her to talk too much."

The physician bowed coldly, for he was well acquainted with the amiable wife of Mr. Ferris, and his penetration had enabled him to detect many of the peculiarities of her specious and selfish husband.

He turned to the patient,—"I hope you feel better, madam; I shall undervalue my skill as a leech, if it fails to save a life so valuable as yours. I hope we may yet raise you from a bed of suffering."

She sighed heavily. "There are few to mourn me, doctor; my parents—my sister, have preceded me to the grave. Do not deceive yourself, nor above all, seek to deceive me; my hours on earth are numbered. Do not, I conjure you, from any vain hope of saving me, refuse me the last consolation I can in this world

know. I must have an agitating interview with my husband; give me a cordial to sustain my strength; and tell him, that it can not essentially injure me. Make him understand that he must grant this last request, or he will refuse under the plea of destroying my only chance of life."

"My dear madam, is this interview absolutely necessary; it will be throwing away hope, if you are agitated in your present critical state."

"There is no hope, doctor; I feel that I shall not live until to-morrow morning; I must get this weight from my mind, before I can die in peace."

The doctor gravely replied—"Since your peace of mind depends on this interview, I must not refuse; but it is very hazardous—very."

"I only risk what I have little value for—life; I have long felt that. Well, doctor, let Mr. Ferris know my wish, and tell him from yourself, that it is our last confidential conversation."

"Certainly madam, if you desire it; but I beg you to spare yourself as much as possible in this interview. I will administer a cordial, which may enable you to go through with it without utter exhaustion."

She murmured her thanks, and, after preparing the medicine himself, he left the room to summon Mr. Ferris. He found that gentleman in the drawing-room, reading a newspaper, as calmly as though death was not hovering over the being he had vowed before God to protect and cherish.

He requested the physician to remain in the house, lest the excitement of this interview should fender his presence necessary to the dear Emma, and obeyed the summons. He found his wife propped up with pillows, and the nurse had thrown a rich cashmere shawl over her shoulders, the gay colors of which contrasted sadly with her wan face above it. She motioned him to a seat beside her, and said—

"Before I speak of what is on my mind, send for a lawyer to make my will; the other *must* be canceled."

In such a contingency, Mr. Ferris had already made up his mind what course to pursue, and he hastily summoned his own confidential servant, and commanded him to go at once for Mr. Hunter, a lawyer, who he believed for many reasons known

to himself, would not refuse to enter into his future plans.

"Now I must yield," he muttered, "but what does it signify? The child can never interfere with my prospects, for I need never care to find her—promises cost nothing."

He again assumed the air of profound affliction, which he thought would touch the feelings of his wife, and resumed his seat beside her bed. She laid her cold hand on his arm, and said with all the energy left to her—

"George, as I have faithfully loved you, will you grant my request? In this last hour of my life, will you deceive me as you ever have done—*can* I trust you?"

"Dear Emma, I should be a monster, and unworthy to live, if I failed to do your bidding now. I will, so help me heaven!"

"Enough—enough! I will not believe that you can deceive a dying woman, who puts her trust in your honor. When my last will was made, I believed that the grave had closed over both my sister and her child; but the night I received the injury which caused my illness, I saw that child. I knew her from the resemblance she bears to both Ellen and myself, in the portraits which were taken of us when we were children."

"Dear Emma, this is a delusion; you have dreamed it in your delirium; the child is surely dead; I have proofs of her death which are unanswerable."

"I tell you no—no—no! I beheld her with these eyes. Even in her wretched poverty-stricken garb, I recognized the soft beauty which distinguished her mother, at her age. I *know* it was the living child of Ellen, and in that belief I shall make a new will. There is some horrible crime about this, and my niece is made the victim. She must be put out of the way—for"—and her voice sounded deep and hollow—"for *gold* must come to me—*aye, to me*, from her destruction."

"What do you mean, Emma? I can not understand you,"—said Mr. Ferris, growing pale beneath the dimming eyes which were fixed upon him. She arose upright in the bed, and laid her cold hand upon his. He shrank beneath the light touch, but it was only for an instant; all the hardness of his soul returned, and he was ready to dare all, for the acquisition

of that fortune for which he had already periled so much.

"George," said Mrs. Ferris solemnly, "I shall shortly be before the eternal Judge—answer me, on your soul, are you innocent of all participation in this child's disappearance?"

"Assuredly, Emma," he replied with readiness. "Your mind must wander, or you would not bring so terrible an accusation against me."

She sank back, and a heavenly smile irradiated her countenance; he felt that she still trusted him; and he exulted in the thought. This confidence sealed the fate of the unfortunate child.

"Forgive me, George," she murmured—"this fear has nearly maddened me; it has been a terrible suspicion to harbor against one I have loved. I may then trust you still. I will now tell you my intentions, that you may suggest any alterations you may think for the best. My own estate, bequeathed to me by my father, goes without reservation to you; the half which came to me from my sister, I must in justice reserve, subject to the future claims of her unfortunate child. I shall leave it to your management; and it is my desire that a reward of five thousand dollars may be offered, to whoever will restore her to her just rights. George will you swear to me, to make every exertion to regain her? I can not die without your promise."

"I will, dear Emma; every thing in my power shall be done toward her recovery; and in my kindness to her, will I show my gratitude to your memory for your confidence in me."

Though this was said with great apparent sincerity, Mrs. Ferris appeared still to have some doubts; she sighed heavily as she said—

"I *must* trust you, George. I could appoint others to see that my wishes are fulfilled; but that would be saying to the world, that I consider my husband unworthy of confidence. I can not bear to do that, even to secure the future happiness of my niece. Oh George! I may now tell you how fondly I have loved you; amid all your slights, my heart has never turned from you for one moment—" Her voice died away in an unarticulated murmur.

"And I, Emma, have I not loved you,

too? I have not always been to you what I know I should have been, but it was not from want of affection. I shall grieve deeply when you are no longer with me."

Even these cold expressions of regard, affected the wife; she pressed his hand, and tears fell from her eyes.

"I believe you, and am happy," she said with deep emotion.

The door opened, and the lawyer was announced.

#### CHAPTER IV.

MR. FERRIS arose, and joined Mr. Hunter in the next room. He was a small, dark man, with a singular expression in his restless black eyes. He greeted the master of the mansion coldly, almost contemptuously, and remained silent until Ferris spoke.

"The contingency of which I have before told you, has arisen, Hunter. I need your services, and you know our bargain."

Hunter nodded his head, and said laconically—

"I remember. I am at your service."

Ferris left the apartment to ascertain if his wife was quite ready to receive the lawyer, and as the door closed on him, that person clenched his fist, and shook it in a threatening manner at the spot from which he was last visible; at the same time, distorting his features into many hideous shapes, intended to express his scorn and hatred of the man he was about to assist, in consummating a piece of villainy.

"I'll make the will," he muttered—"but I don't believe the girl's dead—I'll find her yet, and foil him. It would be rare to circumvent this infernal Ferris; he owes me a long account, and it will be a tough score to settle; but—"

The door unclosed, and Mr. Hunter divested his remarkable face of every shade of expression. He followed lightly into the sick chamber, and instantly applied himself to the fulfillment of his instructions. The will was executed in accordance with the wishes of Mr. Ferris; a schedule which had been previously prepared, was read over to her, and her failing senses did not perceive the papers were changed before the witnesses were called in.

That night Mrs. Ferris died, and by a sad fatality, the poor child lost the only friend interested in her restoration to her just rights.

While Hunter is employed in this iniquitous transaction, we will give a sketch of the previous connection between himself and Ferris.

The latter gentleman had been left an orphan, in destitute circumstances, when only a few months old. The mother of Hunter took pity on his friendless condition, and received him to her arms with her own son, who was a few weeks his junior. Captain Hunter was then in prosperous circumstances, and, with the characteristic generosity of a sailor, he resolved to adopt the boy as his own.

This arrangement gave satisfaction to all parties, until the children were old enough to disagree. Gilbert Hunter was of feeble organization, and exceedingly nervous temperament, and it soon became the delight of George Ferris to arouse his passionate nature, by every ingenious species of torment he could devise. These paroxysms frequently ended in convulsions; and finding all remonstrance ineffectual, Ferris was finally banished from the roof which had sheltered his infancy. He was placed at an academy in the neighborhood, and fortunately for him, just as a reverse of fortune would have rendered him a burden to his kind protectors, a distant relative, who had refused to receive him on the death of his parents, died, and bequeathed to him a few thousand dollars.

His vacations still continued to be spent at the residence of his foster parents; and his domineering spirit was occasionally brought into play, not so much from a desire to renew his old spirit of hostility against Hunter, as to arouse the sister of the latter to come forward in his defense. Caroline Hunter was mild and gentle, and could rarely be induced to exhibit any thing like quickness of temper; she was also very lovely, and the boy's heart acknowledged the full force of her attractions. As they grew older, his passion was, perhaps, lightened by the indifference of the girl; and his perseverance was certainly stimulated by the undisguised opposition of her brother.

To assert that Hunter detested him, would scarcely be strong enough; he

loathed his very presence; and when the three stood on the threshold of life, he found means to strike a deadly blow at the peace of Ferris.

Captain Hunter had reluctantly consented to Gilbert's wish to study the profession of law, when he found him unfit for the hardships of his own calling. In the same office was a fellow-student, of striking personal and mental advantages, to whom Hunter at once attached himself. He had marked the attentions of Ferris to his sister, and feared above all things, that he might succeed in making an impression on her inexperienced heart. To introduce a rival who, he knew, would peculiarly please a young and romantic girl, appeared to him the best thing he could do. Walter Murray was invited to the house, and his praises dwelt upon by her brother, until the mind of Caroline was greatly prepossessed in his favor.

Struck by her uncommon loveliness, Murray soon loved her, in spite of his better judgment, for he was very poor. Caroline, to the bitter mortification, the untold anguish of Ferris, returned his passion. The young pair were to defer their union until Murray had commenced the practice of his profession; but the death of Captain Hunter, following misfortunes which consummated their ruin, threw Mrs. Hunter and Caroline entirely upon the exertions of her son. Murray insisted upon relieving his friend of half his responsibility, by marrying Caroline immediately. Mrs. Hunter reluctantly consented, and her daughter became his wife.

For two years, in spite of poverty, the young couple were happy; but at the end of that time, the health of the husband failed. He had over-exerted himself, to keep want from their door; and after a lingering illness, he expired in the arms of his wife. Caroline aroused herself from the stupor of wretchedness, for the sake of her child; unwilling to become a burden to her brother, she retired to a small village, where she toiled unremittingly for the support of herself, and her beloved son.

During the brief period of her wedded life, Ferris had gone to the South, where his handsome person, and fine manners, soon won him the affections of a rich heiress, and he married her. The Hunter

family heard little more from him, until he came to the city in which the mother and son resided, for the purpose of purchasing a suitable residence for his family.

Naturally prodigal of money, Ferris would willingly have returned in that shape, the benefits Mrs. Hunter had conferred on his childhood, but she was too proud to receive his bounty, and gradually, nearly all intercourse ceased between them. When the accident happened, which proved fatal to Mrs. Ferris, he once more sought out Gilbert Hunter, with the purpose of making him his agent in the intended fraud. His ulterior designs would, he was persuaded, induce Hunter to be silent respecting the claims of the wronged orphan.

#### CHAPTER V.

NEARLY a year had elapsed since the death of Mrs. Ferris. Her husband had assumed the external trappings of woe; and his serious face and reserved manner, impressed all who saw him, with the belief that he was deeply grieved at the loss of his beautiful wife. Her will rendered him an object of some interest; for it was known that she had bequeathed to him a large and unincumbered estate. There was no one to dispute the succession, as Mrs. Ferris had no relatives to feel injured by the disposal she had made of her property.

When a decent time had elapsed, he again appeared among the youthful, and the gay, and many a bright glance was cast on the handsome widower, from eyes whose owners would have had few objections to share with him his princely income. Yet strangely cold and insensible Mr. Ferris appeared to every attention he received; sometimes so pre-occupied in the midst of a crowd, as to be scarcely conscious that he was not utterly alone. One evening he left a gay party, and wrapping himself in a heavy cloak, took his way toward an obscure street in the outskirts of the city. He approached a small, mean-looking house, and knocked softly at the door. A dog sprang from the neighboring yard with a fierce growl, but a word from him changed his menace into an affectionate caress.

"Poor Fidele," he said with a faint touch of sorrow; "you are faithful to

your old master. I have given away the only thing that really loved me, to one who hates and despises me."

The door of the cottage opened suddenly, and a head bearing a mop of stiff-looking black hair, was thrust forth. The owner of the head, held a tallow-candle in his hand, which glared on his swarthy features, and imparted a yet wilder expression to his face.

"Who is there?" he fiercely asked, "trying to entice away my dog."

"Gilbert, it is I," said Mr. Ferris, coming forward. "Fidele and I are old friends you know, and he would not permit me to pass without a greeting."

"I beg pardon, sir, I did not know you," said Gilbert Hunter, changing his manner to that of an ungracious welcome, to one whose presence never was agreeable to him. "My dog is very valuable, as no one knows better than yourself, since he was a present from you, and many attempts have already been made to steal him from me."

Mr. Ferris bit his lips as he followed the speaker into a small, sordidly furnished room, containing a wretched fire. His friend Hunter was too trusty an instrument to be lightly offended, and this favorite dog had been humbly requested as a present, when the owner was so much in his power, that the most trifling wish had all the force of a command.

Mr. Ferris threw himself into a chair with his cloak still wrapped around him, for the temperature of the room was not sufficiently high to invite him to lay it aside; while Gilbert stirred the fire, threw on more coals, and lit an additional candle.

"If I had expected you to-night, Ferris, things should have been more comfortable; but I am taken quite by surprise. Why did you not warn me as usual, that you would be here?"

"Because my determination was suddenly taken. I heard at dusk, that your mother had returned from ——. I wished to hear from there, and I came hither so soon as an engagement I had made for the early part of the evening, would permit me to do so."

Hunter laughed mockingly.

"Who would believe that the rich, the gallant, the much-sought-after man of fashion, would leave the most brilliant house in Baltimore, in which the very

queen of elegance presided, to seek the obscure dwelling of one like me, that he may hear news from the humble widow of a man whose poverty brought him to the grave? Ha, ha, ha! it amuses me vastly."

Mr. Ferris ground his teeth together, but he suppressed the expression of his fury.

"Gilbert, you are in a strange mood to-night. If I seek your sister, you should feel glad on her account. You know that from boyhood I have loved Caroline; she is poor—I will endow her with my wealth. Her child shall be to me as my own."

"Had n't you better look up the other child we wot of?" asked Hunter, sneeringly. "It will be much more to your credit to give your wealth to the lawful heir, than to endow with it my sister and her boy."

The wrath of Ferris, at this speech mastered him. He started from his seat, and grasping the speaker in his arms, shook his slender frame until he was nearly breathless. Then casting him away, he strode toward the door; his hand was on the lock, when Hunter raised his head, and said in a voice choked with rage—

"Pass that door, and I tell all; to-morrow you will be branded as—you know what."

Ferris approached him menacingly—

"What prevents me from taking your wretched life? We are alone, and you are no match for me."

Hunter slowly arose, and looked him steadily in the face, as he said—

"You forget that my mother is in the house, and besides, I have not neglected to care for my own safety; writers proof of your fraud exists, where others must find it, in case of my death. Kill me, and you will be held answerable for the double crime of forgery and murder."

A livid pallor overspread the features of Ferris; he sank on a chair, and covered his face with his hands. Hunter continued, in a tone that made his very heart quail—

"Yes; forgery and murder, will be the charges preferred against you; and yet you, so steeped in villainy, so blackened with ingratitude to those who trusted you, dare to speak to me of my honorable and pure-minded sister, as if you could confer

honor by giving her the name of a craven, and endowing her with wealth to which you have no just claim. You will answer that I aided your villainy; that I wrote the will; true, but I did it to get you in my power. Do you hear that? Do you hear me, George Ferris? Do you remember in our boyhood, you struck—you trampled on me, because I was weaker in body than you; now my turn to trample has come; now, do you know why I have acted the villain myself?"

Ferris listened, without the power to stop this torrent of reproach. Hunter continued in a yet more excited tone—

"Know, that 't was I who poisoned Caroline's mind against you. It was I who gave her to a poor, but honest man, and I will yet show you to the world in your true colors."

"But—but, Gilbert," at length faltered the guilty man, "this is very madness. You blast your own fortune; you bring ruin on all you love."

Hunter interrupted him, as if pursuing the train of his own thoughts—

"You are not now actuated by love for Caroline; it is only a dastardly fear that I may betray you, which leads you to secure the silence of the brother, by wedding the sister. It can not be, she is too good for such as you. I care not if I do ruin all; I gain vengeance, and—"

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord," said a low voice, and both turned toward the door leading into the next room. A tall woman, past middle age, and wearing the widow's deepest weeds, stood on its threshold—"My children, what is this?" she asked. "My son and my foster-child engaged in a deadly broil! What does it mean?"

Ferris arose, and advanced toward her with that grace which all found so captivating; while Gilbert cowered before the mild reproof of her glance. Ferris took her hand respectfully, and said—

"My dear mother, Gilbert is in one of his frenzies. I hoped that with manhood he had gained better control over himself, but it seems not. I came to visit you—he received me, and entertained me with taunts and threats; and, at last, spoke of avenging the petty insults, which one boy inflicts on another in thoughtless childhood."

"For shame, Gilbert," said Mrs. Hunter rebukingly to her son, who stood doggedly before the fire. "These outbreaks of temper are disgraceful; when will you control them, and manifest a proper respect for yourself? You might have some consideration for me; you know that I have always regarded George as a son, and it is as painful to me to hear contention between you, as between yourself and your sister."

"Mother," said Hunter seriously, "I will ask you one question, and your answer either opens or seals my lips. You have known George Ferris from infancy, you have had ample opportunity of knowing what he is; if you will conscientiously say that you think him worthy of Caroline, that he can render her happy, I will bury my feud with him. I will forget the past; as the husband of my sister, I will respect his rights to my forbearance."

An expression of pleasure passed over the features of Mrs. Hunter—she asked—

"Is this true, George? Do you really wish to marry my daughter?"

"It is the dearest wish of my heart. I prize wealth and station, only that she may share them with me."

Mrs. Hunter reflected a moment. For the last few years of her life, she had known all the bitterness of hopeless poverty; for her son was not one calculated to win the smiles of fortune. Her daughter was a widow in indigent circumstances, with a child to rear, and she foresaw for her a life of care and privation. The darker shades of her foster-son's character were too brightly gilded, to be visible at that moment. She replied—

"I consent, my son. The fate of Caroline will be a brighter one, than either she or I could once have anticipated. If you can win her consent, you have mine."

"I shall not fear for my success, if Gilbert will promise not to exert a sinister influence on the mind of his sister. He threatens me heavily, and may again injure me in her estimation."

"Gilbert, why is this?" asked the lady. "Can you give your sister as prosperous a fate as George offers her?"

Hunter had apparently come to a sudden decision, quite opposed to his former denunciations, for he said—

"It is true, madam, that I can not; and

by speaking of my causes of complaint, I should destroy such prospects as are before me. In a moment of passion, I forgot myself. I retract what I said to Ferris. He may win Caroline if he can, but I warn him, that if he is not to her all the most exacting affection can desire, I will not spare him."

"You need not fear for her fate," replied Ferris, gloomily. "The love that has survived so many vicissitudes can not be liable to change, when the object is gained. I shall ever seek to promote the happiness of Carbine."

An expression of malicious satisfaction crossed the features of Hunter; and, as his mother and her future son-in-law retired from the room together, he muttered—

"Ah, shall I not be avenged at last! This proud fool loves her with all the fervor of the only true feeling in his darkened soul, while her heart is in the grave of her husband. After the adoring love of his first wife, will he not find the coldness, the passiveness of Caroline toward him, an ever-present curse? Yes; I know it—it will be a slow consuming sorrow,—an ever rankling wound to his vanity, that where he loves he can not inspire affection in return. I leave him to this fate. I will seek the child once more; when found, sooner than suffer me to betray his iniquity to his wife, he will provide handsomely for her; I must see about her."

Thus this man, a strange compound of avarice and liberality, of pride and meanness, reasoned. Ever acting more from impulse than principle, no dependence could be placed on him. Those most interested in him, had arrived at the conclusion that he was a monomaniac, whose actions could not be accounted for. Perhaps it was for this reason, that Mr. Ferris had chosen him as the instrument of the fraud he had practiced. Even if Hunter divulged the affair, it might possibly pass as one of his wild vagaries, and could be of little injury to that person.

Ferris had one strong reason for keeping him in good humor, if it were possible to do so; that was the unfeigned affection he bore his sister. Strange and wayward as Gilbert oftentimes showed himself, he knew that his influence over Mrs. Murray

was great, almost boundless. The worst men sometimes have one drop of bright and sparkling truth left in the depths of a corrupted heart, and the love of Ferris for Caroline Hunter was that solitary jewel. On the waste of his hard and arid soul, was one memory of young affection and fresh feeling, which linked him in fellowship with the great brotherhood of nature. He had loved ardently; he had wept such tears as men weep but once, over his blighted hopes; and the memory of his young years was full of his first passion.

Ferris even reasoned with himself, that the pursuit of happiness was the first law of nature. His wife's portion had nearly all been absorbed by his extravagance; and without the wealth belonging to the little Emma Walton, he was a ruined man. He closed his eyes to the great injustice, the bitter wrong, he inflicted on a helpless orphan child. As the owner of great wealth, he could almost demand the hand of the impoverished young widow; but stripped of his property, what chance had he of success? So object was his passion for Mrs. Murray, that he was willing to purchase her consent to be his. "Let her be willingly mine," he thought, "and I will surround her daily paths with so many evidences of my absorbing love, that her heart must be won from the dead. She shall find in me an affectionate and considerate parent to her child. I will atone to him for the injustice I am compelled to practice toward the girl."

## CHAPTER VI.

At the end of half an hour, Ferris returned to the apartment of Hunter.

"If you have recovered from your passion," said he, "I have something of importance to say to you."

"Very well; say on. I listen."

"But I must first be assured that you have discarded your evil intentions toward me; for it is a matter of serious import."

"Pooh! my worthy brother-in-law elect, do you think I am ~~not~~ enough to endanger, by my imprudence, the man who is to make my sister a rich woman?"

Go on; I will serve you. Consider me as much bound to you, as if you were already her husband. But before we proceed, I should be glad to have your serious opinion on one thing: when we die, into what animals do you think our souls will be likely to pass? Do not stare so; you know that I am a firm believer in the transmigration of souls. You won't give your opinion, eh? Well, it's my private opinion, that yours will pass into the body of a fox; and mine—I do not know exactly into what; a mole, perhaps, for I always work in the dark. I should not, by any means, desire to be a magpie, or a parrot, and therefore you may speak out all that's in your mind, and I shall not repeat it."

"You are the strangest fellow, Gilbert, that I ever happened to encounter," said Ferris, in undisguised surprise. "Half an hour ago you were in the most tragic mood, denouncing me in such terms as made my very blood boil, and now you jest thus. I can never exactly comprehend you."

"Yet," replied Hunter, with much sarcastic emphasis, "the secret is read in one word—*expediency*. Now let's to business, I am ready for you; my word is passed to help you, and that should be enough."

"I am satisfied; read this."

As he spoke, he drew from his pocket a newspaper dated many months back, and pointed out the advertisement which Mr. Wilson had caused to be inserted there, concerning the abduction of the child. Hunter slowly read it over:—"A reward of two hundred dollars is offered to the person who purchased a little girl from a man called Dick Garwood, on the evening of the twenty-fifth of January last. The above reward will be paid, and no questions asked, if the child is brought to the house of the Rev. William Wilson, — street."

"Hem!—strange, very. Do you know who this Wilson is?"

"I have made a few inquiries. He is an Episcopal clergyman, who is much esteemed; but how he came to know any thing about the girl, is more than I can tell."

"This is an old paper; how did you happen to meet with it?"

"By the merest accident. I was looking over a file of papers at one of the coffee-houses, and found it. On turning them over, I saw that the advertisement had been continued more than six months. I took the number of the office at which it is published, and sent there for this paper. What am I now to do? I came to you for advice."

"If so, I say let the thing alone. This old gentleman has probably seen Mrs. Garwood during her last illness, and learned that the child was sold; but if she had betrayed the name of her relatives, he would scarcely have kept silent so long. You would have been compelled to yield up the fortune long since. Mr. Wilson probably wishes to rescue the child from the rope-dancer, to whom I have discovered that she was sold; and I honor him for his benevolence of heart. Allow him to do so, if he chooses. You will be glad to have her well taken care of, I suppose."

"But I can not be satisfied, so long as a doubt remains on mind as to the extent of his information. He may be only waiting until the child is recovered, to overwhelm me. I tell you, Gilbert, that if Emma Walton appears, to claim her just rights, I am a beggar."

"A beggar! Oh! that will never do; the husband of Caroline must be a rich man, or she'll none of you; and but for that bright-eyed boy, the living image of his father, she would sooner see herself waste away with want, than prove unfaithful to his memory. But you have her there; you will gain the mother's consent to be your bride."

Ferris leaned against the wall, nearly livid with contending emotions, while these mocking words fell from the lips of Hunter. He was speechless with anger, and that person said,

"Now do not get in a passion with your affectionate brother; do not, I beg of you, George, for you know its wrong; and my mother would again reprove us, like two little schoolboys. I am sure I am willing to serve you, even as I have served you, without scruple. So brighten up. I will go to-morrow to this reverend gentleman's house, and find out all he knows concerning the little girl. Never fear that my finesse will not be

more than a match for him, even if he should have his suspicions. I will go, while you, yes you will write a love-letter at home, ha! ha! ha! Tell Caroline I say she had better take you; that will weigh more with her than all your fine speeches."

Ferris listened with a frowning brow and writhing lip, to words he was conscious were intended to torture him, but he knew that anger was unavailing. He consoled himself with the certainty that Hunter would not fail to co-operate with him in his future concealment of the guilty course he had pursued. He at length said,

"You are incomprehensible, Gilbert, as I said before; but I forgive your taunts; the time will come when you will cease to utter them; kindness must disarm dislike."

"Kindness!" repeated Hunter, disdainfully. "Well, let it pass; I'll not break our league about a trifle. If you have said all that you have to communicate, I am sleepy."

Ferris, on this hint, wrapped his cloak about him, and went forth. Hunter mused for many moments, and then repeated aloud—

"Walton—Walton—the name comes back to my memory like a familiar sound. 'Tis strange, that until to-night Ferris never mentioned the name of this child to me; and I know so little about the family of his wife, that I—Heavens! can it be? Ah! now I see, I understand. Good God! that I, of all men, should have done this!" He arose, and paced the floor in great agitation.

On the following morning, Hunter, as he had promised, called on the Rev. Mr. Wilson. He would scarcely have been recognized as the same individual who had played so strange a part on the preceding evening. His hair had been trimmed in the latest style, and was carefully arranged over a low, projecting brow, beneath which gleamed his brilliant and restless eyes. His features were irregular, but not displeasing; and the expression, when not in one of his boisterous moods, was quiet and agreeable. He was dressed in a full suit of black, which showed his light and well-turned figure to advantage. He sent in his card, with

a few words written on it, which had the effect of bringing Mr. Wilson himself to the door.

"Walk in, sir, pray. Come into my own apartment," said that old gentleman; "we shall be alone there."

Hunter followed him, with a grave and sad demeanor. When they were seated, and the door closed, he turned to him, and said—

"Your manner, sir, contradicts the hope I had dared to form. You have not heard from the child who is the object of my present visit?"

Mr. Wilson's countenance fell.

"I had hoped—I— Indeed, sir, you are not the only disappointed one; I flattered myself that I was about to gain a clue to her present situation. Many months have elapsed since the fact of her abduction became known to me, but my interest has not decreased with the lapse of time. May I inquire the cause of your interest in this little girl?"

"Certainly, certainly sir. I was the college companion of her unfortunate father. Poor Saunders! we were inseparable friends."

"Saunders, then, is her name?"

"Yes sir; Jane Saunders. You will not forget. We left college, and our paths in life were widely distant; gradually our correspondence ceased. After several years, I learned that my old chum was killed in Havana, and had left a wife and child. Accident revealed to me only on yesterday evening, that this child and the one you are in search of are the same."

"And the mother's family, do you know them? Can the agency of the uncle in the fraud he has practiced, be proved?"

Hunter shook his head.

"I am unacquainted with what you allude to. The name of Mrs. Saunders' family was unknown to me. You will remember that I did not even know that my friend had been married, until after his death occurred. I am now, my dear sir, quite as anxious to discover this child, as you can possibly be. What steps can we take to ensure success?"

Mr. Wilson looked grave.

"Since the advertisement failed, I know of none. I have as yet found no clue to

her retreat. All we can now do, is to employ a man to keep a constant watch on all the rope-dancers who may come to the city. There is a faint hope, that her purchaser may, after awhile, venture to return here with his troupe. Had Mr. Saunders no relatives to whom we can apply for information?"

"None. He has often told me that the only relative he had in the world, was his old mother. She died soon after he left college; and I now have his letters, in which he feelingly depicted his grief for her loss."

Hunter here wiped his eyes. Mr. Wilson said, in a kind tone—

"You doubtless feel the greatest sympathy for the present condition of your friend's child, Mr. Hunter; and I will aid you with heart and purse, in seeking for her."

Hunter warmly thanked him, and their future operations were speedily arranged. When he arose to leave, he said—

"Here is my address, my dear sir. Whenever you need my presence, send for me, and I will be with you as soon as possible. I shall think with pleasure that I have this day made the acquaintance of a good man."

Hunter walked slowly and musingly through the streets. What he had told the clergyman, with the exception of the fictitious name of his friend, was simply the truth. The mention of the name of Walton in connection with a clandestine marriage, had, on the previous day, struck a chord in his memory; the truth flashed suddenly on him. The friend of his boyish years, who had been dear to him when his heart was unshaded with the cares of life, was the father of the unfortunate child he had assisted to disinherit. In his strange mind was instantly woven the thread of a romance which he would conduct to a successful termination. He would recover the orphan, rear her himself, and, at the proper age, inform her of the brilliant worldly position which was hers. His sister should still be the wife of Ferris, for that was necessary to the completion of his scheme; and that she was a cherished wife, it should be his care to see. The whole of the property in the possession of Ferris, he was resolved should be so settled, that it might

be insured against his future extravagance. Hunter knew that he could dictate his own terms; and he felt secure in the fulfillment of all his projects, if he could only succeed in finding the heroine of his romance, and yet conceal from Ferris that the heiress to his wealth was under his protection.

Had it seemed possible to him, he would have preferred seeing his sister in comfortable circumstances, without so great a sacrifice on her part, as the acceptance of a man he knew she had never highly esteemed; but he felt that his own delicate bodily organization, and irritable temperament, were great drawbacks to his success in life; and, added to this consciousness, was a terrible fear that sometimes crept over him—the fear that madness would, at no very distant day, prostrate his intellect, and deprive his infirm mother of all visible means of support. He knew her to be already broken in health, by the hardships she had endured, and he felt that he had no right to object to the means of future independence offered by Ferris, unprincipled as he knew him to be.

## CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Hunter had informed Ferris of the address of her daughter, and the morning after his interview with that lady, he wrote a long letter to Mrs. Murray, in which the genuine affection he bore her enabled him to portray his feelings with eloquence and truth.

"Caroline," he wrote, "we are both again free; you from a tie which strong affection formed; I from one which interest alone cemented; yet dream not that I was unjust, ungenerous enough to suffer my wife to know this. In my deep heart alone was preserved the dream of my bright youth—the passionate remembrance of the only woman I have ever loved. Even now, the drops start to my brow, when I recall the agony with which my shattered hopes weighed me to the dust, the despair that fell on me, when I saw you willingly given to another. Appreciate my love at its true worth, when I

tell you that it shielded him you preferred, from my hatred. I thirsted for his life; but you stood as a guardian angel between him and my madness. I left the spot on which you dwelt; I wished to break every association that linked me to the past; thinking that in so doing, I should cast from me the bitterness of regret. Alas! neither time, absence, nor new ties have sufficed to blot the past from memory. Ah, how could I hope to find forgetfulness, when my whole past was spent with you? From infancy we were together, and your mother was as one to me. I had no relatives, and to you and yours belonged my whole heart. When you married, I separated myself as widely as possible from the home of my boyhood. In my new sphere of life, my manners and education insured me admittance into the most refined society. I became acquainted with the family of Mr. Elwin, a wealthy planter, with but two daughters to inherit his fortune. I soon felt that the elder one preferred me before all her admirers. I did admire her; for she was surpassingly beautiful. You were lost to me; this marriage offered me wealth and high station; the small patrimony I had inherited was exhausted, and— you know the rest; I married her.

"Emma was amiable and generous; I was interested in her happiness, but I never loved her. She died, and I am free to offer my vows where my heart commands. I have wealth; the will of my noble wife bequeathed to me the whole of her estate, and I— Oh! Caroline, will you deign to accept the hand which can endow you with it? Your son shall be as my own; I will be indeed the kindest, the best of parents to him. For his sake, you will not refuse to share my prosperity; and I will hope that through my affection for him, I may be enabled to win my way to the heart of his mother.

"Caroline, I await your answer in fear and trembling; for on it depends the happiness or misery of my whole future.

"Ever yours, whatever your decision may be. GEORGE FERRIS."

He had just written the address, when the door unceremoniously opened, and Hunter inquired if he might come in.

"Certainly; I have finished my writing for this morning."

Gilbert came forward, and stood before the fire. After glancing at the letter Ferris held, he laughed silently, and said—

"So you have written to Caroline, sure enough? I thought that would be your morning's employment, and I have scribbled a few lines myself, as a sort of passport to yours. You know what influence I have always possessed over my sister; my advice will mar or win your suit, Ferris."

"All you have said is in my favor, I presume, Gilbert, as you gave your consent last evening."

"True; but I have thought of something since, which I consider of importance. We must have a clear understanding of our mutual position, before Caroline is personally implicated in this affair."

"Am I to understand that you retract?" inquired Ferris, haughtily.

"No; not exactly that. It depends on circumstances, or rather on yourself. Listen to me calmly, Ferris; I shall probably say some things to make you angry, but you must bear with them. My sister is very poor; since the death of her husband, she has been forced to support herself by her needle, and you know what a wretched existence that is for a woman—days of toil, repaid by the merest pittance to sustain life. I am a poor devil, barely able to find bread for my mother and myself; you took advantage of my poverty to tempt me to commit an act of wickedness which I now regret."

"Well," interrupted Ferris impatiently, "to what does all this tend? The act is committed, and you have been well rewarded for it."

"True enough; and I think you have been liberal. Let me see. A thousand dollars for forging a will; a thousand more for concealing the abduction of a child,—which last circumstance became known to me without your agency. If I had known that the little girl lived at the time I executed the will, it would never have been done. I believed what you said; that it was a mere hallucination of your lady's mind, which might be productive of much trouble to you in the settlement of the estate. You would

eventually get the property, I thought, and there could be no harm in practicing a pious fraud, which was of essential service to you, and could injure no other person."

Mr. Ferris was pale with passion—

"Why this recapitulation of what is well known to me, if you do not design to insult and torture me?"

"George, you were ever irritable, command yourself," said Hunter, patronizingly; "you will soon see the end I have in view."

"The sooner the better, then. I am calm; go on, your conversation is quite entertaining."

Hunter coolly surveyed him, and after a pause proceeded.

"Well, you have done this, and I, the brother of the woman you wish to marry—yes, I know it, and yet you expect me to aid you in winning her. Mark me; on one condition alone will I do this."

"Name it."

"Presently; do not be impatient. My sister, as you know, is very dear to me. She alone never became impatient with my wild whims when a youth. She alone consoled me in sorrow, and often shielded me from punishment. She is among the noblest of God's noble ones; and fallen as you are, 'tis this which binds you to the memory of your early passion. You are not so lost, as to be incapable of adoring the beauty of an upright and pure spirit."

"I know all this, already," said Ferris; "tell me something new. Develop what is in your chaotic brain, before my patience is quite exhausted."

"I will do so, forthwith, most impatient of men. Caroline has one child—a boy with the frank spirit, and noble brow of his father; that child, I love as my own life, and 'tis for him,—do you understand?—'tis for his sake I influence the mother in your favor. I must look to the future. The small sum I have received from you, could not rear the boy as I desire him to be reared. Long before the time arrives for him to receive the education he has abilities to adorn, my petty two thousand dollars would be gone; and the past has shown me unskilled in accumulating money. Yes, I must look to the future; for God help me! I may die

or go mad. My brain has had whirligigs in it at times."

"Have I not told you, Gilbert, and I have repeated the same to Caroline in this letter, that the boy shall be to me as my own? What can I do more?"

"Ferris, I do not wrong you so far as to believe that a being so dear to Caroline, as her son must be, will not be well cared for by you; but you have shown that you have no control over your own extravagant propensities. The magnificent fortune obtained by your wife is wrecked, and last night you acknowledged that, but for the estate of which you have just obtained possession, you are a ruined man. What has once occurred, may occur again."

"True; but I can not see what you would be at."

"Yet it is very plain. You must settle positively, and without reservation, the whole of your property on my sister, if she consents to become your wife."

"And render myself dependent on her!" said Ferris, haughtily. "Your terms are rather hard, sir, and I say at once, that I will not submit to them."

"As you please," replied Hunter carelessly. "I do not wish to abuse the power you have placed in my hands, but you agree to my proposal, or the property passes to-morrow from you into the hands of trustees, to be held for the benefit of the orphan child, to whom it rightfully belongs. Its preservation must be guaranteed at all events, for when the heiress is forthcoming, she shall not find her fortune spent."

"Are you mad, Gilbert? If I marry your sister, will it not be as much to her interest as mine to retain the estate?"

"Undoubtedly, if it could be retained; but it would not. You spent in six years nearly half a million of dollars; six more would probably see you again ruined. But what is the use of so many words, when my mind is made up? I suffer my sister to marry a man I know to be a villain, for the purpose of seeing her rescued from poverty. Do you think that after such a sacrifice, I would risk her being a few years elevated to a state of luxury, to fall afterward into a worse condition than before? No sir. She is a just woman—a meek-hearted one, and

will never abuse the power you give her. In fact, she need never know it so long as you live. It can be a transaction between ourselves."

"Suppose, after all, your sister will not accept me?"

"Poor fellow! I shall pity you in that case, for if Caroline is not to be benefited by my silence, I do not conscientiously think that I can consent to wrong little Emma Walton."

"What! After all, you would betray me?"

"Come, come; now be calm, George. I would not quite disgrace you. You should quietly disgorge, that is all. But never fear man; I will advise Caroline to marry you, and she has always acted as I wish. She might—yes—I think it very probable she might have loved you before she saw Murray; but I poisoned her mind toward you. Do not scowl so, my dear fellow, you make me quite nervous. I will tell her that I now know you better; that you are a more clever fellow than I thought; that she can not do better than link her fate with yours."

Ferris bit his lip till the blood came, in his endeavor to control the explosion of the bitter wrath struggling in his heart, as he listened to this cool avowal. He felt that he had given the being he had once lorded it over, and trampled on, the power to crush him thus; and, by a violent effort, he did control himself. Though his cheek was ashy pale, his voice was steady as he said—

"Let it be as you will. Prepare the deeds, and I will sign them. Your mother shall henceforth be no burden to you; I will receive her into my house, so soon as Caroline is its mistress."

"I will obey you at once. Here is my letter to my sister. Her answer will be favorable."

## CHAPTER VIII.

In a small house, in a quiet village in New Jersey, dwelt Mrs. Murray. She had preferred the most retired situation, as she would thus be enabled to exist on less; and since her great and overwhelming sorrow, she had felt no desire to min-

gle in the bustling world, or in her native city. The house only contained two small rooms, poorly, but very neatly furnished, and kept with a degree of care which indicated the refined mind, and delicate habits of their mistress. The widow herself was sitting beside the fire reading; but ever and anon her book was placed on the workstand near her, and her eye wandered toward the window, which opened on the street, as if anxiously waiting the arrival of some one.

There was an expression of mild resignation on her countenance, which seemed peculiarly to harmonize with her regular features, and soft languid eyes. Her complexion was brilliantly fair, and the plain bands of dark hair which were folded around her brow, were of singular silkiness and beauty. Her person was delicate, but graceful and finely proportioned. Mrs. Murray, at twenty-five, was still beautiful enough to inspire the warmest love; and Mr. Ferris was excusable for his unwavering affection, for hers was not a face, nor a form, to be forgotten or coldly regarded.

An unfinished garment lay on the table, and with a deep sigh she laid aside her book, and took it up. She was passionately fond of reading, and in early girlhood, before the misfortunes and death of her father, she possessed the means of amply gratifying this taste. During the brief years of her wedded life, this fondness for literature had been encouraged by one of congenial temper, and she found it difficult to forego its gratification in her daily struggle for the means of existence.

If her thoughts, as she plied her needle, could have been read, they would have run very much in this vein:

"My life is one continued scene of toil, stripped of every charm, deprived of every enjoyment, save that derived from the presence of my darling boy, my only treasure, my adored one. And he, with his noble nature, his fine heart, must bear, with me, the crushing weight of poverty. I can never, never give him the culture he should have. I know that he would be an ornament to society, a blessing to his kind, if his natural gifts were properly cultivated. But I must not repine; I am in the hands of God; I will

endeavor to make my son a good man, and leave the rest to him."

Just then the door opened, and a fine, manly-looking boy, about eight years old, entered the room. He was tall for his age; and the fair, open countenance, and sparkling, blue eyes, were very attractive. His face was bright with animation; and his rosy lips and cheeks showed the enjoyment of high health.

"What detained you so much later than usual, Walter?" asked his mother, as she caressingly put aside his waving hair from his brow.

"Ah, I forgot, mother; I was so glad to get to the fire. Mr. Brown passed by the school-house to-day, and told me that two letters were in the office for you, and, as the postage on them was paid, I might call as I came home, and get them. They are in my pocket, but my hand is so cold I can not pull them out."

"Never mind, my love; I will take them from your pocket."

She glanced at the address, and saw that the first was from her brother; the other was directed in a hand she instantly recognized, though she had not seen it for many years, and, almost doubting the evidence of her senses, she hastily broke the seal, and read the contents.

The letter dropped from her trembling hands, and her tearful eyes rested on her son. The lot she had first deprecated for him might be avoided; but how? She thought of the dead, and shuddered. No, she could not be unfaithful to his memory. She would still preserve the right to weep, unrebuked by the presence of a living husband, over the years of lost happiness spent with the one in his grave.

She opened her brother's letter, and behold! he, who had once detested Ferris, now advocated his suit, and used such arguments as were most likely to subdue her repugnance to a second marriage. He entreated her to sacrifice herself for the benefit of her child, and accept a man who had loved her throughout her whole life. Mrs. Murray leaned her head on the table, and wept. The boy drew near her, and stealing his arm around her neck, said—

"Mother dear, why do you cry? Is uncle Gilbert sick, or grandmother? Oh! mother, I can not bear to see you thus."

She clasped him to her heart; and kissed him many times.

"My child," she abruptly asked, "would you like to be rich? to be able to obtain all you want?"

"Oh yes, mother, above all things! I would then buy you a big house, like Mr. Vinton's, and every thing else you wanted; but I would not do as Jem Vinton does, by the poor little boys that go to our school, laughing at their mean clothes and worn-out books; I would give them better, with my money."

"Would you work, to assist your mother, Walter? It is easy to give away money that is not labored for; but would you work for me, my son?"

"Indeed yes, mother; it is what I often wish I could do, ever since the day I heard Dr. Santon tell you that you are killing yourself by your industry. But what can my little hands do now, mother? When I am older, I will dig in the earth, work at a trade, do any thing that you like. But suppose, and I often cry by myself when I think of it, suppose you should kill yourself before I am old enough to help you, what would become of me then?"

"God would protect you, my darling," said Mrs. Murray, with emotion.

"I wish God would be kind enough to give you all you want, mother, and I would try to take care of myself."

A faint smile crossed the features of Mrs. Murray as she looked on the earnest face of the child, and listened to his strange remark. It however expressed his unselfish affection for her, and her heart was moved with deeper tenderness toward him, than she had ever felt before.

For his sake, she must endeavor to overcome her repugnance to a second marriage. It would be selfish, unkind to hesitate, but still she vacillated; and many bitter tears were shed over her painful indecision. Many letters were written and destroyed. Thus two weeks passed, and no answer had been sent to either her brother, or lover.

At length a traveling carriage entered the village late one evening, and two gentlemen alighted from it, at the door of Mrs. Murray's cottage. One was known to be her brother, as he had visited her before; but the tall and handsome man who accompanied him was an

utter stranger to the place. They remained in the village that night, and left early on the following morning. On that day a new parcel of work was sent to Mrs. Murray, which was returned, with a message to the effect that her health was too much impaired to confine herself any longer to so sedentary an employment.

One morning about three weeks afterward, the carriage returned, with the same gentlemen in it, accompanied by a third, whose black robe announced him as a clergyman. They stopped, as before, at Mrs. Murray's door, and remained about an hour. Mrs. Murray came forth with them, and it was the first time she had been seen in the place without her weeds. She was dressed entirely in white; and those who saw her, did not fail to remark that her cheek was as colorless as her dress. She was handed into the carriage by the tall man, and the clergyman and little Walter followed, and presently the whole party were driven off.

The servant who had lived with Mrs. Murray, told that she had married a man whose riches were inexhaustible; and as a proof of the liberality and prosperous circumstances of her late mistress, she exhibited a deed of gift, entitling her to all the furniture in the cottage.

## CHAPTER IX.

We must now return to the unfortunate child, whose inheritance had thus fraudulently passed into the hands of strangers. Hard, indeed, is the lot of childhood passed without the ties of kindred love, enabling those in authority to look over petty faults, and encourage the seeds of good implanted by nature in every young mind. It is the seal of the divinity stamped on the soul; and woe to that parent, or that guardian, who does not foster its development.

On the wretchedly inclement night on which the iniquitous sale of this helpless little creature took place, her purchaser, finding that her fatigue and terror had nearly paralyzed her limbs, took her in his arms and proceeded with rapid strides toward his usual haunt. This

was a tavern of wretched appearance, situated in the suburbs of the town. He entered a room in which sat a woman and three men, drinking at a table drawn near the fire. A single wretched candle cast its feeble rays around them, and the new comer stood many moments in the obscurity of the entrance contemplating the scene. The woman looked as if bloated from the effects of intemperance, and was dressed with a tawdry attempt at fashionable attire. The men were slight, active-looking figures, well adapted to their profession; but their countenances bore on them legible marks of a dissipated and reckless mode of life.

On a miserable pallet, in one corner of the apartment, two small children were huddled together, as if endeavoring to communicate warmth to each other; for the pallet was of straw, and the covering too thin to keep out the piercing cold. A decayed fire smouldered on the hearth, and the men had drawn around them the heavy overcoats which, in the commencement of the carouse, had lain over the backs of their chairs. The woman had also wrapped over her shoulders a bright-colored shawl. She presently spoke—

"This 'll be fine, boys, when Peter Wickem comes home; no meat, no fire, no nothing. Oh, but you 'll catch it."

"Let Pete make a fire for hisself," growled one of them; "I aint his nigger. It's hard enough to have to dance on them infernal ropes for him, and get paid almost nothing, without stooping to be his waiting-man. I, for one, shan't do it."

"Well, well, you 're very independent now; but see who 'll make the fire when he comes; that's all. Who 'll roast the meat? who 'll bring the rum? I sha n't, you know; 'cause I only stays to take care of them innocent lambs a-sleeping there in that comfortable bed; and sure I is a mother to 'em, the blessed creturs."

A faint murmur came from the pallet, as if from suppressed pain.

"What's the matter, there, you owda-cious troublesome brats? What's the matter, I say, that I can't have a minute's rest, without being interrupted with your mewling? You, Anner Jane, I know it's you, you ungratefulest child that ever I seed."

"Please, ma'am," said a weak voice,

"my arm hurts me so bad, and I'm so cold here."

"Cold! pooh child, that's an impossibility, for I put you there, and you know that I am as tender to you as your own maternal parent could be, any how. Your arm is doing very well, it is only bruised a little by your fall."

The child groaned, and Wickem no longer able to contain his wrath, spoke in a voice hoarse with passion—

"So, this is the way you attend to my young ones, madam, and that is the reason they are always dying off as they do. Just as I get a child to know her business pretty well, she sinks off into the grave! Where is the covering that should be on this bed? There is not enough to keep a dog warm."

Wickem had snatched off the coverlet, and stood holding it in one hand, and the poor frightened little wanderer by the other. The men roused up; the one who would not be his servant hurried off for wood; another for food, and the third for his drinks; while the woman determined to put a bold face on the matter. She arose from her seat, faced her enraged employer, and said, in a tone of defiance—

"Well, if you must know, I sold 'em. What then, Pete Wickem?"

"Sold them! for what? Do I not give you enough to eat, and a drink, (too much of the latter,) and clothes to wear, merely for taking care of these children? Have a care Moll, or I'll give you such a beating as you shall remember the longest day you live."

"That for your beating," said the woman, snapping her fingers. "You need n't think that I am afraid of you, or any other man. You can't do without me, and you know you can't. You flout me about the children, but who beats 'em until they are black and blue, to make 'em trust theirselves on the rope? No, it's not my treatment that kills the precious darlents, and you know it well enough; and there is another come to fill the place of the one that died this morning, but what of, pray? Was it from cold taken through my carelessness, or—"

"Take care," cried the man menacingly; "enough is enough; I've warned you! see that this does not occur again, or you 'll have cause to remember my

words. Take this child to the fire; she is half frozen, and quite starved."

While this dialogue was proceeding, the three men had brought in the various articles for which they were sent, and in a few moments, a cheerful fire began to blaze on the hearth. The table was drawn forward, and after the child had been well warmed, the woman, with some show of kindness, began to give her her supper. She watched with surprise the famished eagerness with which the food was devoured, and said to Wickem—

"Where did you pick up this young un? She has not been much used to eatin', in my opinion."

"I bought her in the street, from a drunken ruffian, whose wife looked more like the ghost of famine than any thing else."

"Was it their own child?"

"I guess not. If she had been, the mother would have begged sooner than see her suffer from want, as this child has suffered."

"What is your name, my dear?" inquired the woman.

"Emma, ma'am."

"And who gave you that name, my little lady?"

"I have had it a long time. A white beautiful lady used to call me Emma, but she was taken away, and Mama Garwood come and said that she was my mother; and she took me from the house where the white lady used to live; but I had not seen her for a long time before Mama Garwood came."

"You recollect names very well for a little lady like you."

The child looked up as if she did not understand, and the woman turned to Wickem and asked—

"Suppose she belongs to some body who would pay to get her back?"

"Suppose a fiddlestick! That's always the way with women; you'd make this girl out now a grand lady, I suppose. It's none of my business who she is. I want a child in my troop, and I've got one that is too pretty to be given up; so you 'll just hush with your nonsense. She 'll soon forget all she now knows, when we've given her another name, and taken her about a little."

"What name shall we give her?" said

Moll, musingly. "Gerildean is a sweet name, and Sofire, and Angeliker——"

"Foolery; too long! No, she shall have none of your new-fangled novel names. The shorter the name the better. I shall call her Kate, and she shall pass for my own child. Kate Wickem will not sound so bad."

The woman objected, but Wickem was peremptory; and while the discussion was going forward, Emma fell into a deep sleep on Moll's lap. An additional quantity of bed-clothing was obtained from the landlady, and the children, with their new companion, rendered more comfortable.

## CHAPTER X.

THE next morning, when Emma awoke from her sound slumbers, she found two pale, delicate-looking children, between eight and ten years of age, examining her features with great curiosity and interest. The younger one had one of her arms in a sling, and on her cheek was a dark bruise; the expression of her face was inexpressibly sad and subdued. The other girl was also pale and thin, but appeared in better health and spirits than her companion.

"Ain't she pretty, Anna Jane?" asked the elder.

"Yes, very pretty. But Seraphine, where do think she came from? I heard the Boss telling mother Moll about her, last night; and, in place of getting her out of the poor-house, as bound girls, as he did us, he bought her in the street, and"—she sank her voice to a whisper—"though her right name is Emma Garwood, we are to call her Kate, and she is to be Pete's child."

"Oh! she'll be adopted, you know. I hope he'll be better to the poor little thing than he is to us. May be he won't beat her as he did poor Louise, and as you sometimes get it. How is your arm, to-day?"

"It still hurts me, but I don't care for that, now we have this little girl to be kind to, and play with. Even when the Boss beats us, we can make her love us, and that'll be something."

"Yes," said Seraphine, "that will be nice. She is so pretty, that Pete will hardly find it in his heart to use that horrid rattan on her delicate white skin; and you know if he is kind to her, we will get her to ask him not to be so hard on us as he sometimes is."

Anna Jane sighed, and observing that the new comer was awake, requested her to rise, that Seraphine might assist her in putting on a new suit of clothing, which had been already provided for her. At first, Emma was bewildered at the strange room and new faces before her, but gradually the remembrance of the transactions of the preceding evening came to her mind and she wept bitterly. The sight of food, for which she was nearly famished, stifled her tears, and she presently smiled on her new playmates and joined in their conversation.

By sunrise the whole troop was in readiness to make a fitting, and a covered wagon, drawn by four horses, was driven to the door. Into it the movables of Pete were stowed, and the party set out on one of their itinerant rambles through the country. They proceeded leisurely along, stopping at every village in their route to exhibit their skill in legerdemain and rope-dancing.

The child soon became reconciled to the change in her circumstances. Wickem wisely thought that it would be best, until she became attached to her new protectors, not to suffer her to witness the discipline to which her young companions were subjected, and Mrs. Moll Rabbles, at his request, was unusually indulgent toward her. He took care to provide comfortable clothing, and a few toys to amuse her during their tedious mode of traveling. Her season of indulgence lasted longer than usual, because her health was so feeble, and her person so emaciated by previous privations, that it was absolutely necessary to recruit, before she could be subjected to the severe discipline of her intended profession.

Seraphine and Anna Jane were strictly prohibited from telling her of the hardships they encountered; but they were always allowed to exhibit themselves to her, for a few moments, in the gay tinsel dresses, and rouged cheeks, in which they appeared before an audience; and Emma

wished for the time to arrive, when she too could glitter so finely.

Poor child! At last the time did come, when the rounded cheek again wore the hue of health; when the sweet eyes sparkled with animation, and the elastic step bounded over their comfortless abode. Then she soon found that she was to earn her own bread, at the expense of toil and weariness of which her young spirit had never dreamed. Her initiation into the mysteries of her profession was gradual; but bitter were her sufferings, and many were the blows given in anger, when the physical powers sunk beneath the burden laid on them.

Many a time had this poor child sunk on the cold hard floor in utter exhaustion, and the keen lash of her master would drive her forth from the momentary rest, with blows which left a purple mark, wherever they fell. Her condition was, in a short time, no better than that of her companions, and no allowance was made for her tender years. She learned her lesson beneath the whip of her taskmaster, and when the first difficulties were over, she began to hope that she might succeed to his satisfaction, without being the victim of such cruelty; but alas! his disposition was cruel, and he wreaked it on the helpless children thrown utterly in his power.

At length, Emma appeared in public, and was hailed as a prodigy. All who saw her were struck with the rare beauty of the rope-dancer's daughter, and many pitied her; but no one had the right to interfere. She was the man's child; at least, he said so, and no one could assume the right to dictate to him concerning his disposition of his own daughter. Emma never appeared, that her winning beauty and exquisitely graceful movements did not attract the admiring plaudits of the audience, and a shower of silver and flowers, usually greeted her. Yet, when this fairy-like child was going mechanically through her part, could the most boisterous of her admirers, have looked into her little heart, he would have rather wept over the deep and quiet sorrow cradled there.

She intuitively remembered, that she had, in early infancy, been fondly cared

for, and the image of the fair face, that once bent over her, clung with tenacity to her mind. How she came to be the child of Mrs. Garwood, and not of her first mother, puzzled her young mind; but, even when sharing the bitter poverty of her second protectress, she was far happier than now; for she had not experienced unkindness from her.

A victim to the heartless cupidity of her present owner, her tears mocked, her flesh lacerated, every indignity endured which could add to the woes of her helpless and homeless childhood—she bore in her heart a burden of sorrow, sufficient to crush one of mature years. Ah! was it not a spectacle to make angels weep! yet man, fallen and degraded man, was the agent of its infliction.

What retribution that shall sufficiently punish him, for his unrighteous conduct, can fall upon him who defrauded her of her birthright, and condemned her to such wretchedness? "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, than to hurt one of these little ones!" and the hour of punishment will surely come to the proud oppressor of helpless innocence.

Before being allowed to appear in public, Emma had been carefully drilled to the part she was to perform as the supposed child of her master; and she feared him too much, to betray the truth when questioned by strangers. Her shy manner and hesitating words were attributed to stupidity, and even those most interested by the ingenious expression of a countenance of almost angelic beauty, thought her a mere automaton that mechanically performed the part painfully drilled into her.

The two young girls who were her companions, soon learned to be jealous of the greater popularity gained by the child; and far from endeavoring to ameliorate their mutual sufferings by kindness toward each other, envy and jealousy, unsparingly expressed, still further embittered her lot.

"Alas! no one loves me," was the frequent thought of the little heart whose affections were ready to spring forth at the slightest show of kindness.

## CHAPTER XI.

The troupe had been, for several days, performing in a small town in the western part of New York, when one of the men belonging to it, one morning brought in a newspaper, which he handed to Wickem, pointing, at the same time, very significantly, to an advertisement it contained. Wickem changed color as he glanced at it, and said hastily—

"Where did you get this, Jem?"

"I went into the post-office, and heard them reading it out; and some of 'em said they would n't wonder if Kate's the child, what's wanting; for they thought all along that she did n't look like she belonged to you."

"They did, did they?" said Pete fiercely. "They shall see if she's not mine, that's all! Let 'em prove it, if they can; for my part, I defy 'em. Leave the room, you little minxes," turning to the children, who had been practicing before him.

They huddled together, and were hurrying out, when Wickem recalled Emma.

"Look you, young one! I am likely to get into trouble about you; and if any questions are asked, and you hesitate to say that I am your father, that you remember no other parent, I will take your life! yes, I'll whip you to death with my rattle! You have felt it before now, when you were obstinate and lazy, and know what it is. Even if these people should take you from me, I would find means to reach you; I would seek the world over for you, and steal you back again; and then, think what a fine time you would have with me. Do you understand, stupid?"

"Yes, sir," stammered the terrified little creature; "I know that I am your child; that is, you say so, sir."

"And what I say shall be the law to you, you brat. So now go along, and mind your answers when the people I expect, come in."

"Yes, sir;" and the child hastily disappeared.

"This advertisement then *does* relate to her?" inquired Jem.

"I expect it does; as such a coincidence could scarcely occur, as for two

rope-dancers to buy a child on the same evening, in the same city."

"You are the best judge, Pete, but would n't it be more profitable to you to secure the reward, and let the girl go? She'll mope herself to death, before very long, and then you'll lose every thing."

"The reward is not high enough; only a pitiful two hundred dollars; I have made more than twice that sum by her dancing, since she first came out. She is the most profitable child I have ever had, and minds every word I say to her. No, I would n't lose her for her weight in silver. Besides, as long as I have her in my power, I can make my own terms, any day, with her friend. I shall keep this advertisement, and some day perhaps the Rev. William Wilson may hear from me, on the subject."

"In the mean time, how'll you quiet the suspicions of these people?"

"By falling into a great passion, and talking a deal of stuff about parental affection. I will upbraid them with their attempt to rupture the ties of nature. You'll see that I'll clasp this little one to my heart, and shed the most natural tears over her; and if she do n't respond to my caresses tenderly enough, I'll give her a sly pinch, to put her on her good behavior. Then she'll cry, on this new principle of hydraulics, I know, and these good people will wipe their own eyes at the affecting scene. A father and child weeping in each other's arms, from the fear of being separated, will be a most tender sight; and they'll walk off, thinking how cruelly their suspicions wronged me."

"Prepare to act, then, for here comes a party of fussy-looking men, with the post-master at their head."

"Hurry, Jem, and bring in Kate; and tell her if she does not run into my arms the moment she enters the room, I will pay her for it so soon as these people go away."

Jem vanished, and Wickem opened the door to his guests.

"Your servant, gentlemen. Really I feel overwhelmed with this high honor: the magnates of your place, the selectmen of your very lovely and agreeable village, calling on a poor devil like me. To what cause am I to attribute my happiness?"

"To a cause which may not eventually prove very agreeable to you, Mr.—"

"Wickem," interposed Pete, blandly.

"Mr. Wickem," said the post-master, who happened also to be a magistrate, "the laws of our country are intended to protect all persons, from infancy to manhood; and it is the duty of every good citizen, to see them executed."

Pete bowed assentingly—

"To those laws I look for my own protection, sir, and therefore I agree entirely."

"Ahem! well, well sir, I am pleased to hear it, as the unpleasant duty we came to perform, will not then be resisted."

"Duty, gentlemen! unpleasant! I do not understand. In what respect have I made myself amenable to the law?" asked Wickem, in well-feigned surprise.

"Read this advertisement, sir, and then answer."

Without any change of countenance, he coolly did as desired.

"How does this concern *me*, gents? I have two girls regularly bound as apprentices to me, by the overseers of the poor in the city of New York; I can show you their indentures, if you desire it. The overseers, it is true, did not know my profession, or they might have refused the application; but since they are bound, you can have nothing to say on the subject to me."

"There is a third child, the little girl you call yours."

"Kate! good heavens! do you fancy that my beautiful pet, my darling, is not really my child?"

"Our suspicions point in that direction," replied one of the inquisitors, very drily. "The child must be examined herself, before we can rest satisfied that no imposition is practiced."

"Very well, here she comes; you may interrogate her as you like. Come hither, my precious," he continued, as the door partially unclosed, and the pale face of Emma appeared at the opening; "come to the arms of the father from whom these cruel men would tear you."

Obedient to the instructions received from Jem, the child advanced and threw herself into the arms so hypocritically opened to receive her.

"Now, gentlemen, you see for yourselves, how she loves me," said Wickem

triumphantly. "See, my words about a separation have made her as pale as death, and tears are in her charming little eyes. My darling Kate, speak to these gentlemen; tell them how dearly you love your own father; how terrible a separation from him would be to you."

An admonitory pinch warned the poor child of the consequences of failure in the part she was to play; and, with a face deluged in tears, she murmured some inaudible words, which passed, with the visitors, as expressions of affection for her supposed father.

"Now, gents," said Wickem, "you have seen a most touching proof of filial and parental affection. This child is the very pulse of my heart, as the Jews so poetically say. It would destroy my happiness to part from her; and she would pine away and die of sorrow herself, if taken from me. She is all I have to console me for the loss of her poor mother;" and he hypocritically wiped away an imaginary tear.

"Ah, sirs! if you could only feel the fluttering of her little heart, from the fear that she may be torn from me, you would feel grieved that you had caused it."

So well did Wickem act his part, that, convinced of his innocence, the deputation finally retired, with the resolution to be on the alert, on the arrival of every itinerant juggler, for the next six months. They were no sooner beyond hearing, than Wickem roughly placed the child on the floor, and, with an oath, said—

"There, you little imp, see what trouble you are to me! Besides teaching you to get a living in a highly respectable manner, you keep me eternally in hot water, what with one thing and another."

"Please, sir, it's not my fault," said the little creature, in a tone of indescribable sadness; her broken spirit appeared to modulate each inflection of her childish voice. "If I am so troublesome, let me go. I can be a servant to some of these people, and perhaps they would be good to me."

Wickem regarded her with an expression of ferocity—

"How dare you speak to me in that way? I tell you again, you are mine, body and soul, and you *never* shall escape from me; *never*! Do you hear? I will

rear you as a public dancer. You shall know nothing better in this world; and your training shall be such as to insure me your company in the next. There! that for your impudence;" he struck her a violent blow, which prostrated her on the floor.

"Pick yourself up, and go about your business; next time you'll know better than to answer me when I speak."

She arose at his bidding, and endeavored to walk, but her ankle bent beneath her weight, and, with a faint moan of pain, she sank down again. Alarmed at her excessive paleness, the brutal cause of her suffering advanced toward her, and found, on examining her ankle, that it was badly sprained. With a volley of imprecations at his ill luck in disabling the most profitable child in his troupe, he took her in his arms, and carried her to Mother Moll.

When not intoxicated, this woman was not cruel, and she applied the usual remedies resorted to in such cases. The ankle, however, was very badly sprained; and many weeks elapsed before the child could bear her light weight on it. In the mean time, they had left the place in which the accident occurred, far behind. Without stopping at any of the intermediate towns, Wickem pursued his way to the Ohio river, and embarked for the city of Louisville. So far west, he thought he would be less likely to meet with molestation on the score of the child; and by the time he had erected his tent, and commenced his performances, he considered Emma sufficiently recovered to bear her part in the representations.

She acquiesced, of course; for she had no choice; failed, and endured the punishment consequent on it. Wrought up to desperation, at length, by the unremitting cruelty of her persecutor, she resolved to make an attempt to escape, even if death should be the consequence.

She had now been more than a year with Wickem; a period of suffering which, if minutely described, would arouse the sympathies of the most callous, had been endured by this delicately organized and sensitive creature. The mind had prematurely developed under its influence; and she watched her opportunity; her childish plans were matured, and while

the rest of her companions were buried in sleep, she quietly opened the door of the room, and walked out beneath the starry heavens, on a clear, cool night in the latter part of September. The stillness of the streets at first frightened her, but she soon became accustomed to, and pleased with this calmness. She had arranged in her own mind, the appeal she would make to the first person she met; and, in her simplicity, she thought no one could be so cruel as to refuse the prayer of a broken-hearted child, to be rescued from the abject misery of her present condition.

She had not proceeded far on her lonely pilgrimage, when the sound of approaching footsteps caused her little heart to beat violently, and she stopped until two persons came up. They were two common-looking men, who appeared struck with surprise, at seeing a child alone in the streets at such an hour of the night.

"Ha! young one," said one of them, roughly seizing her by the shoulder, "what are you doing here, this time o' night?"

"Does your mother know you're out?" sang the other man in her ear.

"Oh gentlemen!" said the little girl, falling on her knees before them, "I am a poor, misused child; take me with you; put me in the poor-house, where Seraphine says she came from; make me your servant, if you choose, and I will be good. I have run away from a bad man, who beats me terribly."

Her pale face was raised toward them, and as the bright moonlight fell on it, one of them exclaimed—

"Well, if this isn't a go! This is the awkward little wretch that fell down this evening, when trying to dance on the rope. Don't you see it's the same, Ned?"

"Yes, in fact. Her master whipped her, I suppose, as she richly merited, for her awkwardness; and she has run off. Come, my little lady, it's well we caught you so soon; we have n't far to go to give you back to your father. Tramp, up with you; be quick."

"He is not my father, indeed he is not," said she, despairingly.

"Pooh! come along, I tell you. It's

none of my business if he ain't your father; he takes care of you, and that's enough to 'stablish his claim to you."

Her feeble resistance was soon overcome, and in a few moments she stood again in the same room, from which she had so heroically escaped; and her captors repeated their encounter with her, to the enraged Wickem. She fell on her pallet, half dead with fear and disappointment, and nearly insensible to the threats with which her master overwhelmed her.

At length all was again quiet. The door was securely locked, and the key placed beneath Wickem's pillow. The inmates of the apartment again slumbered soundly; but the poor child slept not. It seemed as if the evil of her fate closed around her, and left no avenue of escape from the horrible thralldom in which she was held.

She was too young to despair; after many hours of thought, the perturbation of her mind ceased—a sudden calm seemed to penetrate her soul. She had decided on her course, and child as she was, she would act up to this decision, and free herself from the degrading punishment, before which her spirit had so long quailed. Toward morning, she slumbered calmly.

Emma was aroused by the sound of Wickem's heavy tread, and unclosing her eyes, she saw him standing over her, with his rattan in his hand, and a dark scowl on his brow. With this instrument of torture, he was in the habit of adroitly striking her across the back, in such a manner, as not to leave any marks on that portion of the neck or arms which were left bare by the dress she wore in public. Many livid spots were on her tender flesh, left there by the correction of the previous day. As he raised the rattan over her, she looked calmly at him, and surprised that her usual deadening terror of correction did not show itself, he said with a malicious grin—

"My affectionate and very dear daughter, do you know what this means?"

"Yes, sir, I do; but if you strike me with it again, you will be very sorry for it."

"What is to make me sorry, little runaway?"

"Because, if you do, I'll tell everybody that you're not my father, even if

you kill me for it; that you bought me from a bad man; and if you touch me with that stick again, I will never dance another step for you."

"Really, this is fine, very fine, only it won't do with me, my pert miss. Nobody'll believe you, when you say you're not my child, and to the dancing, we will see who has the most resolution, you or me."

A shower of blows followed his words, and the poor sufferer was left insensible.

## CHAPTER XII.

ABOUT six weeks after the events detailed in the preceding chapter, an immense concourse of people had assembled on one of the principal streets of Louisville, to witness a feat, which was advertised to be performed by a child of seven years of age. Two of the tallest houses fronting each other, had been selected, and a stout rope passed across the street, from one to the other, and fastened to the chimneys. This line, which at a great height, looked from below like a mere thread, was to form a bridge, over which the child was to pass from one house to the other.

We need scarcely say that the performer was poor Emma. She had remained firm to her threat, no punishment could force her to dance again. Exasperated to a terrible pitch of fury, Wickem racked his mind for some punishment which would be adequate to her fault, and this device had been fixed on, as a means of overcoming her obstinacy, and at the same time of making money.

She was exercised in crossing a long room, on a rope raised high above the floor; and she submitted, in the hope, that on the day the frightful experiment was to be made, she would have an opportunity of appealing to the crowd, to rescue her from her inhuman master. This hope was frustrated, for she was conveyed to the door of the house in a carriage closely shut up, and carried, in the arms of Wickem, to the roof of the building. It was not occupied, and Pete had hired it for a few hours, for his exhibition. The family

living in the opposite house, were thoughtless people, who wished to see the feat performed, and thought of course the rope-dancer would not endanger the life of his own daughter, by suffering her to attempt such an undertaking, without being perfectly practiced in it.

Wickem, dressed in a gorgeous flame-colored suit of clothes, with a harlequin cap on his head, led out the intended performer on the broad parapet surrounding the roof; and a deafening shout rent the air, as the crowd caught sight of the small glittering figure he held by the hand. Dressed in a full suit of knit silk, the color of her flesh, with a spangled drapery of light material floating around her tiny figure, a crown of tinsel, and slippers of silver kid, and a pair of small, shining wings fastened to her shoulders, the child looked indeed like a fairy queen; but her cheek was pallid as death, and her whole form appeared collapsed with terror.

"I will obey you, indeed I will," she ejaculated, "if you will only save me from this. I shall fall—I know I shall, and be dashed into pieces."

"No you will not, you did the same thing in safety in your practicing-room. You *must* go, for if those people down there are disappointed now, the consequences to both of us might be very bad. Hear them, how impatient they are at the delay. Drink this, it will give you courage."

He almost poured down her throat, the contents of a small vial which he took from his pocket. This a little revived the nearly fainting child, and turning to him, she said, almost with dignity, and with touching pathos—

"I will go, sir; but I feel that I shall not reach yonder house in safety. I had better die thus, than dash myself from this roof, which I have thought of since I stood here; for if I am killed in obeying you, God will have pity on a poor child like me."

"Perverse little fool! think you will fail, and you will do so. If you choose, you can walk this distance, just as safely as you did the rope across your practicing-room. There, no more words, we have had too many already."

Shouts, wild cries, and hisses, came from the unsteady mass below. The

child stood on the edge of the parapet, and looked for an instant on the wavering and dense crowd of human heads, thrown back, and staring with all their might at her perilous elevation. Every window on the street was filled with people.

Endeavoring to steady herself by means of a small gilded wand she carried in her hand, Emma stepped on the rope, and moved forward. A sudden silence,—motionless, almost breathless, fell on the immense throng, as they followed with straining eyes, and beating hearts, the perilous track of the fairy-like being above them. She gained the center, faltered in her course, and a groan burst from them simultaneously. She recovered and moved on; a few more steps and she would be safe. A sudden shout, which made the welkin ring, a waving of handkerchiefs from the windows, came one second too soon. The noise, the concussion of the atmosphere, and the fluttering of objects below her, bewildered and frightened her. Her head grew dizzy, her sight left her, and she lost her footing on the frail support. Down—down the fearful height the little form plunged! Shrieks and cries were heard; women fainted, and men cursed him who had risked the life of his child, in so fearful a manner.

An awning before the door of a store, immediately below the spot from which Emma fell, had been fortunately left standing, and she was caught on that. Many eager hands hastened to release her insensible form from its painful position, and she was borne into a neighboring house. A physician was hastily summoned, who found that one arm was broken, her skull slightly fractured, and her whole body terribly bruised. The examination of her injuries, exhibited the cruelty with which she had been treated by her pretended parent; and a rumor to that effect, having spread among the crowd without, who anxiously awaited the physician's report, cries and yells were heard among them. They burst into the house, in which cowered her miserable tormentor, so securely fastened in that no means of egress offered itself except the front entrance, of which he was afraid to avail himself, in the presence of the excited mob. They spread themselves over the whole premises; to cut off every avenue of retreat, and with

cries of delight at last dragged him from one of the fire-places, in which he had been half suffocated in endeavoring to secrete himself in the chimney. Covered with soot, paralyzed with terror, the miserable man was hurled from the door into the thickest of the mob, who received him with kicks, cuffs, and revilings. After maltreating him until he was nearly insensible, one portion of them took charge of him, and formed a procession to the river, for the purpose of ducking him, and the remainder hastened to his tent, which was torn down, and every thing belonging to the whole troop, destroyed. Thus having taken summary vengeance, the people dispersed and went quietly to their homes.

Wickem managed to get Mother Moll, and the two girls together, and leaving the rest, embarked a few days afterward, on a flat-boat bound down the Mississippi, though many weeks elapsed before he was in a condition to move about. The combined effects of the whipping and ducking, had left him a cripple for life. When he thought of the innocent cause of his sufferings, he ground his teeth with rage, and vowed to compass his revenge. He would find that child again, even girt with all the affections of life, he would find her, and tear her from her happiness; she should again feel herself in his power—again cower before his glance.

### CHAPTER XIII.

The house into which Emma had been conveyed, was a boarding-house, kept by a widow lady of high respectability. Her circumstances were narrow, but her heart was large, and it was never closed to the voice of compassion. Every care was lavished on the poor child, and while she lay on her sick bed, many plans were formed for her future provision and welfare.

After many days of insensibility to all that passed around her, Emma once more became conscious, and her little heart swelled with gratitude toward those who had rescued her from the tyranny of her late master. Her eyes wandered around the comfortable apartment, so different

from any thing she had lately known, and finally rested on the figure of a lady in deep mourning; she was past the prime of life, but the sweet expression of the countenance compensated for the loss of the beauty she had once possessed. She was knitting very busily, and the monotonous clicking of the needles against each other, was the only sound audible in the room.

Emma endeavored to raise herself in the bed, and found that one of her arms was bandaged. She tried to remember what had happened, but an indistinct recollection of the horrible sensation of falling through a great space, was all she could recall, and shuddering, she again closed her eyes. Hearing the slight movement she had made, Mrs. Brandon arose and softly approached the bed. The child looked up at her, and said in a faint voice—

"Will not that dreadful man come here, ma'am? Please kill me, sooner than let him have me back again."

"What man, my dear?" inquired the lady kindly.

"The one that made me walk that rope, up—up; oh, so high! I remember all about it now. Oh! he is a fearful man!"

"Poor child! your brain must still wander, or you would not speak thus of your father."

"He is not my father, ma'am, indeed he is not. He calls me Kate Wickem, and my right name is Emma—Emma Garwood. That is, Mrs. Garwood said she was my mother, though I used to call a beautiful lady mother, before she came for me; but I was too small to know her name; so mine must be Garwood."

"Do not talk too much now, Emma, it will hurt you, and the doctor will be displeased, if you do not attend to his directions."

"If you will call me Emma, I will do every thing you bid me; for all who have loved me, and been kind to me, have called me Emma," said the child with a sweet smile, and in a few moments she sank again into a deep slumber.

Mrs. Brandon stood beside the bed, and putting aside the long fair curls from the brow of the sleeper, gazed on its polished beauty; on the soft and tranquil loveliness

of the face, until her heart warmed toward the helpless child. The expression was so heavenly, so touched with the divinity of the soul within, on which sin had left no stain, though sorrow had deeply tried it, that it was impossible to look upon her unmoved.

From that day Emma rapidly recovered, and with delight her protectress saw her cheek assume the roundness and rosy hue of health. Each day appeared to add some new charm to her protege, who, when no longer in fear of her inhuman persecutor, exhibited a vivacity of temperament a capacity for enjoyment, that few would have suspected to exist in the pale automaton who had so recently obeyed the behests of the rope-dancer as a task which must be performed. The little heart poured forth its affections with prodigality on her beloved protectress, and the kind physician, who had attended her during her long illness, also came in for a large share of her exuberant gratitude.

The story she had first told, she strictly adhered to; she was questioned repeatedly, and, as she never varied from her first statement, she was at last believed. Mrs. Brandon was at a loss to know what course to pursue in relation to her; that she had friends, who might wish to reclaim her, she did not doubt; but in the year which had passed away since she fell in the power of Wickem, if they had used every exertion to recover her, they might surely have succeeded before that time. Mrs. Brandon listened to the promptings of her own heart, and resolved to retain the charming child in her own family. Her only daughter had been married several years, and Emma would be a companion for her loneliness. She, however, wrote to a brother who resided in New York, and requested him to make some endeavors to discover the family of her protege. The terms of her letter impressed her brother with the belief that she was not very anxious to give up her young charge, and he scarcely troubled himself about the matter.

Thus years rolled away, and Emma grew in beauty, and rapidly improved in manners and education. Until her residence beneath the roof of the widow, she had not been taught any thing; but her

natural quickness soon enabled her to overcome the first difficulties in her path, and thenceforth her progress was rapid. There was one accomplishment which Mrs. Brandon at first thought of withholding, as unsuited to her own resources, and the station Emma would probably be called to fill. This was music; but her talent for it was so remarkable, her voice of such rare promise, that her objections were overcome. Besides, at some future day, her proficiency in the art, might be the means of securing independence to the orphan girl.

Emma's devotion to her musical studies was untiring. Like the Persian nightingales, which are said to pour forth their life in the gushing melody of song, this poor child seemed willing to sacrifice hers in the pursuit of her divine art. Hour after hour she practiced, until music became to her the language of her impassioned soul; her wild dreams, her vague reveries, found an expression, an echo in the enchanting melodies to which she gave utterance; now soft and tender as the sigh of adoring love, and again wild and triumphant, according to the mood of her changeful mind.

Eight happy years flew by, under the roof of her protectress, and no sorrow had clouded the brow of the young orphan, that her love for that excellent woman had not power to chase away. The jealousy of Mrs. Brandon's grandchildren, who lived in the same place, sometimes clouded the contentment of her lot; but such interruptions to the happiness she enjoyed were transient, and little cared for.

Mrs. Mardon herself was always civil to her mother's protege, and cared little about her, but her husband saw with ill-concealed disgust, the affection and money that were lavished on the rope-dancer's daughter, for as such he persisted in considering her, to the great vexation of his worthy mother-in-law.

Mr. Mardon was a proud and selfish man, and his parental partiality induced him to believe his own children unequalled; his vanity was wounded when their grandmother took to her affections an obscure stranger, and bestowed on her, the kindness which he regarded as their exclusive right. Beyond the most freezing coldness toward the offender, he deigned

not to betray his disapprobation; her beauty of person, her graceful manners, and fine mental gifts, only embittered his dislike toward the innocent girl, who little dreamed that this dislike was, at no distant day, to have an important influence on her future prospects.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

NINE years had elapsed since Mr. Ferris bore his bride to his own abode. The fashionable world was at first astonished at the history of his marriage; the romance of his passion scarcely excused him, for slighting the charms of the *elite* of their own set for an obscure and unknown person; but when Mrs. Ferris appeared in society, these cavilers were silenced. The beauty of her person, the dignity of her manners, and the cultivation of her mind, all reflected honor on the man who had possessed sufficient discernment to appreciate them.

For one season she shone in the gayest circles with apparent enjoyment, but at the commencement of summer, instead of going with the crowd to a fashionable watering-place, Mrs. Ferris prevailed on her husband, to whom her simplest wish was a law, to retire to a secluded and picturesque village on the Hudson. Within a few miles of this place, a splendid residence was offered for sale; and though the tastes of Mr. Ferris led him to a gayer and more bustling life than the country could afford, he saw with what delight his wife rode over the grounds, and pointed out the various points of view; he heard the earnest sympathy she expressed for those who were forced by misfortune to part with so noble a residence, and his mind was at once made up to offer her a surprise, which he felt would be so delightful.

In secret the purchase was made; the furniture was sold with the house; and one evening Mr. Ferris, as usual, turned his horse's head toward the road which led to Montalto.

"Ah! you are going to that beautiful place. I am afraid I shall become covetous; for every time I stand beneath the

old trees, I wish all they shelter could be mine. Life spent on such a spot would be so serene—so delightful."

Mr. Ferris smiled, and said—  
"Would you indeed be quite happy in its possession, Caroline?"

"I think I should be; that is for a certain time, at least. No one can speak confidently of the future; but if cares and sorrow came, they could be better borne in this beautiful solitude, than in the bustle of the crowded and heartless city."

"Well, here we are," gayly replied Ferris, as they reined up their horses in front of the stately portico, "and here come your mother and Walter to welcome you to your future home."

The boy indeed bounded down the steps, and Mrs. Hunter appeared at the open door. Mrs. Ferris in bewildered delight turned to her husband—

"Am I dreaming, or is it indeed true, that you have so kindly, so delicately, gratified the wish I dared not express?"

"Yet I divined it, dearest," said Ferris raising the hand of his wife to his lips. "To contribute to your happiness is my highest ambition—my sweetest employment."

"And I can never be sufficiently grateful, George, for all your considerate kindness."

A shadow passed over his brow, and the bitter thought arose, that she ever spoke of gratitude, never of love. As Hunter had foretold, it was his punishment to adore his wife, and to meet in return, a measured tenderness, a dutiful obedience that was as a poisoned arrow to his soul. He too well remembered the ardent and impulsive soul of the girl, with whom he had been reared, not to feel, that under the influence of such a passion as he felt, her early temperament would again develop itself. But, no; affectionate, kind she ever was, but nothing more; and the very placidity of her tenderness was a perpetual irritation to him; yet his affection waned not. The refinement of her mind, its uncommon cultivation, delighted his fastidious taste; her gentle temper soothed, and her elegance captivated him. The struggles of his mind he never betrayed, for he felt conscious that she gave all she had to bestow, and he feared to lose the esteem he

so highly prized, by a display of his unreasonable hopes. Besides, he knew that by doing so, he should cast a shadow over the happiness she appeared to enjoy.

A few days beheld them completely domesticated in their new abode; it was near enough to New York, to reach that place in a few hours, on one of the daily packets, and when the "dark hour" was on Mr. Ferris, he was in the habit of resorting to the distractions of the city for some days, until the restless fever of his spirit had subsided into its usual calm.

Years of tranquil contentment rolled away in this delicious retreat, and it seemed as if fate had forgotten to avenge on him the evil he had inflicted upon the young orphan. Mrs. Ferris became the mother of three children; a daughter and two sons. They were beautiful, and the father's very existence seemed wrapped up in them; yet, even in the affection of the mother for her children, he fancied he could discern a slight shade of difference. Walter, her love-child—her first-born—seemed ever to claim a tenderer place in her heart than the others. Caroline, George, and Wilfred were all fondly cared for, but there was a softness in the mother's tone, a more loving glance in her eye, as it rested on the open brow of her handsome elder son; it might be that she felt it due to him, for she was his only parent; but Ferris tormented himself with the idea that Walter was thus tenderly beloved, because she beheld in him the living image of the husband she had adored. He did not love the boy himself, but he redeemed the promise he had made to his mother previous to their union: he was a kind and considerate step-father, and Walter enjoyed all the advantages for which his mother had accepted her present husband.

When Ferris became a father himself, did not a natural pang of remorse touch his heart, as he bent over his own helpless children, and remembered the fate to which he had consigned the rightful possessor of all the splendor that surrounded him? On his brow remorse had stamped no line; in his heart no sorrow for the past: selfishness had hardened his nature, and the very birth of heirs to his wealth, caused him to rejoice in the means he had used to secure it.

Even if the orphan were in poverty, she had known nothing better from early infancy; she had become inured to hardships long since, and could endure them as well as thousands who were born to them, and knew nothing better throughout existence. A nervous dread of her reappearance haunted him for a long time, but the years which had elapsed since she had last been heard of, finally gave him security.

The strange conduct of his brother-in-law annoyed him much during the first months of his marriage. Gilbert Hunter appeared resolved to find the child, and made every effort to do so, in conjunction with Mr. Wilson. Advertisements were inserted in all the papers in the principal towns throughout the United States, but without success.

A clue seemed at last gained. A gentleman, from a small town in the western part of the state of New York, came to the city to purchase his yearly supply of goods. He brought with him one of the papers containing the advertisement before referred to; and called on Mr. Wilson, for the purpose of recounting to him the scene we have before described. Mr. Smith was one of the deputation which had waited on Wickem; and, on reflection, was scarcely satisfied that the child was really his. Unfortunately, before his doubts had taken a tangible shape, Wickem removed from the village, with such secrecy and celerity that no trace was left of him; and the care with which pursuit was eluded, convinced Mr. Smith that his doubts were well founded.

When these circumstances became known to Hunter, he resolved to undertake to recover her himself. He departed without the knowledge of Ferris, or even of his mother, and his conduct passed as one of his unaccountable whims. His own agency in disinheriting the daughter of a man he had truly loved, and the difficulty of rescuing her from her degrading and painful servitude, had deeply affected the brain of this eccentric man. His mind was never well balanced, and when he started on his enterprise, he was scarcely in a state to conduct it to a successful termination. He kept up a regular correspondence with Mr. Wilson; and that gentleman soon found, from the tone

of his letters, that the repeated disappointments he encountered had irritated his incipient malady, until he could no longer doubt that Hunter was laboring under mental derangement.

A trusty person was sent in pursuit of him, who, in a few weeks, returned with a raving madman under his care. He was placed in a private asylum for persons thus afflicted, and every care taken of him. His physicians hoped to restore him in time; but Ferris could not be expected to wish him to recover.

His secret he believed safe. Garwood had gone to sea, and the vessel in which he sailed had not since been heard from; Hunter, to whose whimsical character no one could safely trust, in a mad-house, and his private papers in his own possession. From what source could his villany become known? He hugged to his soul the conviction that he was safe, and apparently offered the sincerest sympathy to the afflicted mother and sister.

## CHAPTER XV.

It was a bright, beautiful morning in early summer. Light wreaths of mist were slowly rising from the river, and the brilliant sunshine poured its beams over the lawn which stretched from the portico to the edge of the bank overhanging the water below.

Montalto was built on a high bluff, elevated more than a hundred feet above the level of the river, and heavy masses of rock lay scattered upon the shore beneath. A winding walk, cut in the face of the cliff, led, by an easy descent, to a small cove, over which a house was built, that sheltered the gayly decorated barge in which the family were in the habit of sailing on the river, on nearly every pleasant evening in summer. These aquatic excursions were peculiarly delightful to the children; and Walter, who had grown into a handsome youth of seventeen, prided himself on the skill with which he could manage the graceful craft.

Mrs. Ferris was on the portico, surrounded by her children, and a beautiful group they formed. She was yet a very

lovely woman; time had stolen none of the softness of her beauty, though a shade of deeper thought rested on her brow than in days of yore. She was dressed in a white morning wrapper and a becoming little cap; and as Walter wound one of her long curls around his finger, he looked at her with such an expression of affectionate admiration, that one could see he thought her the most charming person in the world. Caroline, who had just completed her eighth year, was a fair child, with delicate features and curling hair. George, a year younger, was a fine, bluff-looking little fellow, who thought himself quite competent to console and protect his sister in all her difficulties. The youngest was a beautiful, curly-pated boy of four, who clung to his mother's dress, and earnestly petitioned for some favor, which she appeared unwilling to grant.

Innocent group of youth and beauty, must ye indeed be the means of retribution to your selfish and hardened father? Must ye suffer and perish, that he may feel? Alas! alas! better, far, that ye had never been born! then the mother, whose treasures ye are, would not raise her anguished brow to heaven, weeping, like Rachel, over the children that are no longer hers.

Mr. Ferris crossed the yard, and joined them; he raised the girl in his arms, and fondly kissed her. Little Wilfred left his mother, and running toward him, asked,

"Father, may I go with old David, to the other side of the river, to see him fish? Mother says I must n't, but I want to go so much."

"Mother knows best, then, perverse boy. But why not let him go, my dear?" he continued, turning toward his wife; "old David loves him like his own, and will take excellent care of him; the boy would enjoy the sport."

Mrs. Ferris smiled.

"I knew he would not appeal to you in vain. I believe you think it a portion of your duty as a parent, not to deny any request these little ones make of you. I am foolishly nervous this morning; and, although Wilfred has been with David so often, and returned in safety, I fancied that some accident might happen."

"Pooh! what accident *can* happen, my love? If that is all, let Wilfred go; I will answer for his safety."

Mrs. Ferris said no more, though she could not conquer a vague fear which rested as a cloud upon her mind. David was summoned, and many charges given him to watch over the safety of the boy; which rather surprised him, as the child was often in the habit of going on similar excursions, and no fear had ever before been expressed by his mother.

David was an elderly man they had found on the place when it was purchased, and he had been retained as boat-house keeper and fisherman. He was much attached to all the children, but especially to little Wilfred; and he was never better contented, than when out in his boat, quietly fishing, with Wilfred seated on a cushion in the stern, sheltered from the sun by an awning rigged up by David himself.

"Come along, dear Wil," said he, "I will see that you come back safe to your lady mother."

He took the chubby hand eagerly extended toward him, and went toward the steps leading to the boat-house. On the top step stood George, with a striped silk handkerchief fastened to a stick, which he was waving over his head, while he imitated the beating of a drum, with his voice.

"Here Wil," said he, as his brother appeared, "take my flag with you, to play with. You wanted it yesterday; and my mamma says I may ride my pony this morning, and the flag would frighten him, you may take it with you. When you get half-way across the river, wave it to us, and I will stand on the lawn and huzza."

Wilfred was delighted with the idea; and firmly grasping the stick, he marched down the steps in what he considered quite military style. David was more particular than usual, in arranging for the child's comfort, and, after some delay, succeeded in getting afloat.

Just as he started, a fine steamer came dashing up the river, leaving a long line of billows in her wake. David saw that he could not cross before she would be upon him, and he lay upon his oars until she had passed; he then rowed his boat

into the vexed waters she had left behind, thinking all the time what a pleasant motion it was, to dance from wave to wave, in his tiny bark.

He was, for one instant, oblivious of his young charge. The boy was usually so quiet, that he dreamed not of danger to him. The family group he had left a few moments before, had walked down to the edge of the bluff, that they might watch the progress of the boat. Mrs. Ferris could not prevent her heart from throbbing painfully, as she saw the craft dancing like a cork, upon the agitated waters. George, without being observed, had mounted on the top of the wall, and was eagerly watching for the expected salute, ready to shout out in his loudest tones. Wilfred saw him; he arose just as the boat mounted the crest of a wave; the flag fluttered an instant in his hand; and, unable to keep his footing as the side careened over, he was precipitated into the water. Wild with affright, David endeavored to grasp his clothes, and, in the attempt, lost his oars. The current swept the child down the stream, and when he arose, the old man, who was crippled from rheumatism, and could not swim, could only stand in his boat, wringing his hands, and calling on heaven for assistance.

The boy was drowned. But that was not the saddest calamity of the day: George, who was placed on a very perilous eminence, was so frightened at the plunge of his brother into the river, that he lost his hold on the wall, fell over the bluff, and was taken up lifeless.

Mrs. Ferris witnessed the double disaster, and sank upon the earth insensible. One fainting fit following another, finally terminated in delirium; and when the physicians, who had been hastily summoned, arrived, the mother was in nearly as dangerous a state as her unfortunate son. And what were the feelings of the father, who saw his promising children thus perish in his sight, without the power to aid them? For one moment, a voice, that arose from the past, seemed to knell into his ears—

"Remember the helpless one you cast upon the tender mercies of the world! Behold the curse of blighted infancy coming upon your own household!"

And when he stood beside the couch on which reposed the mangled form of his pride and hope, he breathed the first prayer that, for many years, had passed his lips—

"Restore him to me, God of mercy! and I will endeavor to atone for the past. I will seek the wanderer, and take her to my heart. Oh, give life back to my boy! life! life! Let him but live, and I will adore thee in thy great mercy."

His wild prayer was granted; but heaven, in its wrath, poured upon him an additional curse in its fulfillment. Life was spared; the existence which, in his deep agony, he had asked as the greatest boon, was given; but alas! the life of life, the light that illumines the form in which it is enshrined, was darkened forever. His brain had been so seriously injured in the fall, that the most skillful physicians pronounced his case incurable. The once noble boy arose from his bed of suffering, a wretched cripple, and, what was far worse, a helpless idiot.

Then, in the agony of his unrepenting heart, the father cursed the hand which had been so heavily laid on him, and retracted, with gloomy bitterness, the vow he had made over his senseless son. No; let the disinherited one feel the bitterness of poverty and toil grinding into her soul; let it bow her young head to the very mire and dust of the earth; cast her lot among its most debased creatures, and even then she could not be placed on a level with his gibbering, idiotic boy. She could still go forth in Heaven's sunshine, with elastic limbs and an unclouded mind. She, though poor and dependent, would not be an object of contemptuous pity to the scorner and the hard of heart; and he wept, this man of iron wept, but without softness; his very tears, wrung from him by anguish, and humiliation of soul, seemed to indurate the heart from which they sprang.

Mrs. Ferris recovered, and was, to all outward seeming, the same person, except that many lines of gray mingled with the hair that rested on her brow, and the pensive character of her countenance had now assumed an expression of touching mournfulness. She seldom appeared in public, and received few persons at Montalto. She devoted the greater

portion of her time to her unfortunate child. George seemed conscious that she was one he had once loved; for he never repulsed her caresses, and for hours would lie on his couch, and listen to the sweet tones of his mother's voice, as she read aloud, or warbled some nursery strain which had once lulled him to sleep. Ah! how anxiously did she gaze upon his vacant countenance at such moments, hoping that some gleam of intelligence would show that his mind had only wandered, that it had not utterly departed; and inexpressible was the sadness which followed the conviction of his utter imbecility.

The body of Wilfred had been recovered, and interred in a cemetery attached to the place; beside his little grave the bereaved mother often knelt in prayer; and she felt that it was sinful to grieve over his fate, when it was so far preferable to the one allotted to his stricken brother. It was the will of Him who is mighty to save, as well as destroy, and, in humbleness of heart, she bowed to his decree.

Mr. Ferris had feared that his wife's health would sink beneath so severe a shock, and he regarded her high-souled fortitude with wonder bordering upon awe. He witnessed the struggle in her soul; he saw the clinging fondness with which she cherished the memory of what her darling ones had once been to her; the unutterable anguish which had nearly destroyed her; and when her brow grew clear, her step more free, and her usual placid serenity diffused itself over the household, he was at a loss to understand the source of her resignation. He was still in the gall of bitterness; and yet he knew, that so far from being a woman of little sensibility, his wife possessed the most tender and affectionate of hearts. Whence, then, proceeded this calm? From a deep and true sense of a religion, which had sustained her under a trial of even greater bitterness than the loss of her children; for, to all that loved him, George was as truly lost, as if the grave had already closed over him.

Mrs. Ferris used every endeavor to lead her husband to the same source of consolation; but he turned away with ill-concealed scorn, and, in his heart of

hearts, called her faith fanaticism. He garnered his hopes in his last remaining treasure. The young Caroline became the very light of his existence; she was his constant companion; and his gloom, his fits of abstraction exerted an evil influence over the child. From being a lively, giddy little creature, she became reserved and quiet; moving through the still house as lightly as if she feared the echo of a tread would arouse the spirits of the brothers, whose childish voices had once filled those walls with mirth and gladness. A premature thoughtfulness settled upon her; she had much of her mother's gentleness of temper; and the sadness that touched her young creature, seemed to the superstitious domestic, to augur for her as mournful a fate as that of her brothers.

In her deep sorrow, Walter had been a great consolation to his mother. He was the most thoughtful, the most amiable of sons; and even the poor idiot would smile and turn his head, when he heard the echo of his well-known footstep; for it was Walter who drew him in his light wagon, beneath the shade of the overhanging trees; who manufactured for him such toys as boys delight to fashion; and it was this beloved brother who tenderly raised his crippled form, and placed it on the bed smoothed by his mother's hand.

Arrangements had been made by Mr. Ferris, for the admittance of Walter as a student at West Point, and the time at length came for him to leave his beloved home. His mother consoled herself for his departure, with the thought that he would still be near her, that she should often see him: but still, when Walter left her, there was a painful void which could not be filled. He was equally the idol of his grandmother; and the two consoled themselves for his absence, by looking forward to the bright future both anticipated for him.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Emma had nearly completed her fourteenth year, when a calamity fell on her beloved protectress, which was acutely

felt. This was the death of Mrs. Mardon, her daughter, who expired after a few hours illness. She left a young and helpless family of children, and the bereaved father naturally looked to their grandmother, as the most proper person to take charge of their helpless infancy.

He proposed to Mrs. Brandon to break up housekeeping, and reside with him altogether. He was in independent circumstances, he said, and the cares of her present establishment must be too heavy for a person declining in the vale of years. All he desired of her, was the affectionate supervision of a parent over his motherless children.

Mrs. Brandon consented the more readily to this proposal, on reflecting that by the acceptance of a home under his roof, she did not resign her independence. By dint of economy and careful management, she had saved a sum, the interest of which, was sufficient to place herself and her protegee above want.

She did not once dream that Mr. Mardon would offer any objection to her adopted child becoming an inmate of his family, and he was careful to hint nothing of the kind, until after Mrs. Brandon had sold her own house and furniture, and was quietly settled in her new home. A month was suffered to pass, and though pained by his freezing coldness toward Emma, she did not suspect that the presence of the obtrusive girl was really unwelcome.

One evening he found himself alone with his mother-in-law, and after a brief silence inquired in an indifferent tone—

“What do you intend to do with this girl you have with you, madam? She seems very useless. Is it not time to put her to a trade, that she may learn to get her own living?”

Mrs. Brandon listened in wounded surprise.

“Do with her, James? I thought you perfectly understood that she is to continue with me, until she marries, or I die.”

Mr. Mardon had perfectly understood it, but he nevertheless replied—

“I am sorry we did not understand each other better. As to her marriage, I do n't think any one will be very anxious to take the rope-dancer's daughter off your hands. In my opinion, you have pursued a wrong course in respect to the girl. You

have given her ideas above her station; and when she is grown, her own equals she will scorn, while those she would accept, would equally shrink from uniting themselves with one sprung from so low a caste. I have always disapproved your course.”

“It is the first time you have expressed your disapprobation;” said the old lady pointedly.

Mr. Mardon shrugged his shoulders.

“So long as you lived under your own roof, it was no concern of mine; you were at liberty to take into your family whoever you took a fancy to, but now, I, of course, exercise my right to object to the presence of a girl whom I consider as an unfit associate for my children.”

“Why was not this said before?” inquired Mrs. Brandon, in an offended tone. “When I consented, at your earnest request, to take charge of your children, I could not suppose that this helpless orphan was to be sacrificed. I must say, Mr. Mardon, that you have not treated me kindly.”

“My dear madam, you know I do not desire to be unkind. I never for an instant supposed, that you would put the welfare of your only daughter's children in competition with that of this obscure child.”

“Will you be so kind as to state your objections to Emma? I am desirous to know in what respect, a creature so gentle and inoffensive, can have displeased you.”

“I am not displeased with her, but her presence fosters a dangerous passion in the breasts of my children. They see how much you prefer her, and they are bitterly jealous. Every day, some complaint is made to me on that score.”

“If that is all, I will be more circumspect. I will not receive her caresses before the children. I am not conscious of loving Emma better than poor Mary's children, but she is so much attached to me, that—”

“Yes, therein lies her art,” interrupted Mr. Mardon.

“Art!” repeated Mrs. Brandon indignantly; “there never was a creature more free from it. Believe me, James, that Emma, so far from being a disadvantage to your children, would be to them as a thoughtful and affectionate elder sister.”

“I am obliged to your forethought, madam, in providing them with such a relative,” was the haughty reply; “but I must be allowed to say, that her original station was not such as to qualify her to stand in that relation to my children.”

“And do you really persist in believing her to be the daughter of that horrid man, who placed her in a situation of such imminent danger?”

“Many men have sufficient hardness of feeling to act as he did. That of itself, is not sufficient to disprove the relationship. She tells an improbable story of her infantile memories; but that only proves to my satisfaction, what I have long thought; that she is an artful little baggage.”

Mrs. Brandon arose with dignity.

“Since such is your opinion, she shall no longer remain here. I had hoped, that for my sake, she would be welcome; but I find I am mistaken. Child as she is, Emma would never remain, to be the cause of dissension in this house: I will immediately find another asylum for her.”

“Do not be so much hurt with me, Mrs. Brandon,” said he, in a softer tone. “I believe that I have simply done my duty, and I do not wish to be hard upon the girl. I have already spoken to Mrs. White, the milliner on — street, and she has agreed to take her for five years. The trade is the best a woman can follow, for it is the only one at which they can make much more than their bread. This will be better, in my opinion, than thrumming the piano and guitar forever.”

“I am obliged to you,” said the lady dryly; “but I can not avail myself of Mrs. White's offer. I have a high respect for any honest means of obtaining a living, but the milliner's apprentice would be too confining for my adopted child. She is not robust, and a sedentary employment, pursued in a confined apartment, would soon destroy her health. I feel myself responsible for the fate of a child so providentially thrown upon my protection, and shall find a home better suited to her. She shall leave this house this evening.”

Mrs. Brandon retired to her own room, and Mr. Mardon felt some compunction when he reflected upon their conversation. He knew that he had been unkind; but he consoled himself by thinking that he

had at all events freed his family of an unwelcome inmate. Absence and time, would weaken the affection of Mrs. Brandon for the orphan, and in her increasing love for his children, she would cease to care for the fate of Emma.

While Mrs. Brandon sat at her window, absorbed in a painful reverie, Emma came into the room. She appeared disturbed, and seated herself in silence. Her eye presently fell on the face of her protectress, and remarking the sad expression, she softly approached, and twining her arms around her neck, softly asked—

"Why are you so sorrowful, dear mother?"

A tear stole over the cheek of Mrs. Brandon, as she clasped her to her heart; and after a pause of painful emotion, she said—

"Tell me, Emma; speak the truth openly, my darling—are you happy here?"

"Am I not with you?" asked Emma. "Who have I on earth to love, but you? and what other person cares for me besides you?"

"But there are many hours when we are necessarily separated, Emma; are you quite happy then?"

"Do not ask me," said the girl, sorrowfully. "It would only pain you, to learn that all are not as kind to me as you are."

"I should have known this," said Mrs. Brandon, as if speaking to herself. "The children are jealous of my affection for you, my dear Emma, and they imbitter your life; is it not so?"

"Ah! who told you this, dear mother? I never intended that you should be wounded by this knowledge."

"Something has happened just now, my love, to cast you down. What is it? I wish to know."

"Ah! you will be angry with them."  
"No; I shall be able to forgive them. Speak, my child."

Thus commanded, Emma, with downcast eyes and crimsoned cheeks, proceeded to relate, that she was never alone with the young Mardons, without being treated with every species of indignity they could devise. They called her the little rope-dancer; dragged her about the nursery in the endeavor to make her dance for their amusement; they reminded her

of her dependent station, and taunted her with living in their father's house, and eating his bread. Poor Emma was both proud and sensitive, and these taunts stung her to the very soul.

Mrs. Brandon sighed over such evidences that the want of benevolence in the father was hereditary with the children. After a pause, Emma said, in a more assured tone—

"I am but a little child yet, ma'am, but I have thought a great deal lately about my situation. I know that I have no natural claims on you, and since I have been in this house, I have felt that my presence is not welcome. Mr. Mardon never speaks to me, except to tell me to give him his newspaper, or to ring the bell. The children do not love me, though I have tried to make them do so. If you please, mother, though it breaks my heart to part from you, will you let me go? I could get my own living now, I think."

"You child! how?" asked Mrs. Brandon, smiling through her tears.

"Do you remember that Mrs. Latimer, who used to board with you, wrote to you last month from Tennessee, lamenting the want of a teacher for her little girl. Permit me to go to her."

"But you are too young, my dear; you are but a child yourself."

"That is true; but Mrs. Latimer once said, that she would give any thing if Georgiana could continue to live in the house with me, that she might have the advantage of my musical talents. I can instruct her in music: my teacher says that I know quite as much as he does. I can also impart to this very little girl, all I have learned myself at school. You have praised my progress, mother."

"Alas! my child, you dream. Mrs. Latimer would laugh at the idea of a governess for her daughter, who needs one for herself. Besides, it is too far from me, for you to go; and Mrs. Latimer is not exactly the kind of person I should choose to place you with."

"It is far, but I would write to you every week. Perhaps Mrs. Latimer would take me as a companion for Georgiana. I can think of no one else, to whom I could make any return for being burdened with a helpless creature like myself."

There was so much pathos in the tone with which this was uttered, that Mrs. Brandon was deeply touched. For the present, she concluded to place Emma as a boarder in the school in which she had for several years past been a scholar; and her removal once effected, her name was no more mentioned beneath Mr. Mardon's roof, though her protectress daily visited her.

About a month after this occurrence, a servant-girl belonging to Mrs. Brandon, who was much attached to Emma, called in some perturbation, on her mistress. Phoebe communicated a conversation she had accidentally overheard, which alarmed her for the safety of the orphan. The girl, since the removal of her mistress, had been hired to the keeper of a tavern near the river. She stated that on the preceding evening, she was in a bed-room, which communicated with another, by a door, which was imperfectly closed; while there, two men entered the next room, and one said to the other—

"So you've found out at last, where the old lady put our young one, Jem?"

"Yes; after a search that might have tried the patience of Job, I traced her to the academy on — street."

"The devil! How are we to get her from there? she will never be left alone."

"Leave that to me, Pete, I will nab her as sure as white is white. Wasn't it strange, though, that just as we had all our arrangements made to net the little bird, she was taken from the house of that Mardon? I wonder if she dreamed that we were near. You know 't is said that the dove flutters and exhibits fear, before the hawk appears which is ready to pounce upon her."

"Well may she tremble, as I approach," replied a voice hoarse with passion. "I tell you Jem, when I get that little wretch in my power again, I will pay her for all she has been the means of making me endure. I will make every blow, every indignity, I suffered here, a pretext for such punishment as hate like mine could alone invent."

"Don't be so violent, Pete; some one may overhear you," said his companion, and the tone of their voices was lowered, that Phoebe could no longer understand what was said. She seized the first leisure

moment, and hastened to inform her mistress of the danger which menaced Emma.

Mrs. Brandon was much alarmed, and immediately wrote a note to the principal of the academy, desiring him to keep an especial watch over the safety of her adopted daughter, without alarming her, by betraying to Emma her wishes. As Mr. Dillon knew the circumstances which threw the child under her protection, she did not hesitate to inform him, that she had reason to believe Emma's former persecutor to be near her, and on the alert to entrap her into his power again.

Her mind was a little reassured by a visit from Mr. Dillon, who informed her that he had already prohibited his scholars from going beyond their play-ground, without express permission. Emma he would not suffer to leave his premises, unaccompanied by himself.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER the lapse of several weeks without any further alarm, these precautions were insensibly relaxed. Emma was unhappily kept in ignorance of her danger. On one fine evening, one of her young companions, requested her to accompany her, on a shopping excursion in the town. She silenced Emma's objections, by saying that she had already obtained from Mrs. Dillon, permission to take with her one of her young companions.

Well pleased with the prospect of a walk of several squares, on so pleasant an evening, Emma threw on her bonnet, and skipped gayly down stairs after her friend. They had gone too far to be recalled, before Mrs. Dillon remembered that Emma should not have been permitted to go out thus; her husband was not at home, and in great uneasiness of mind, she awaited the return of the two girls.

In the meantime they tripped quickly along, amusing themselves with the motions of an odd-looking man, who walked before them in a most grotesque manner. Occasionally he threw his head over his shoulder and glanced backward, as if desirous of ascertaining whether they kept

the same street. After loitering for a few seconds before the window of a print-shop, they went straight forward to the place of their destination. The ribbon was purchased, and, after looking at several other things, the shopman seemed anxious to display, the two girls again stepped into the street. Their grotesque companion had disappeared.

"It is such a beautiful evening, Emma," said her companion, looking toward the declining sun, "and we have not been out for so long, I think it would be a pity to return home just yet. Let us walk on a few squares more, and as we come back, we can stop at the confectioners."

"It is indeed a beautiful evening," replied Emma, "and I do not think Mr. Dillon will be displeased, provided we return before it is quite dark."

They strolled along, never once looking back, and the strange-looking person, who had been concealed behind a large box while this colloquy was going on, arose and dived into a cellar beneath one of the stores. A man whose bloated person and red face at once proclaimed his vice, was sitting beside a small table on which was placed a bottle of spirits, and several cigars.

"I told you I'd nab her at last," said the newcomer.

"And have you?" exclaimed the other, starting up.

"Not quite yet; but it's as good as done. I was n't to be thrown off the scent; and you see what I've got by it. The girl is innocently walking down the street, with another young one as green as herself. It's now nearly night, and before she can get back to the school-house, it will be dark enough for our purpose. You know the street they live in is a quiet one. Now clear your muddled intellects, Pete, and comprehend my directions. You must have a carriage at the corner, waiting for them. I will stand near the sidewalk, sheltered behind the box which protects the trunk of the large tree, a few feet from that spot. As they come along, suspecting nothing, I will throw a shawl over her head and stifle her cries; the other will be too much frightened for a few moments even to chirp, and before she can collect herself sufficiently to give the alarm, my prize

will be safe from pursuit. Come, bestir yourself old fellow, quick is the word, you have no time to lose."

The two confederates soon prepared themselves for their nefarious enterprise. A hackney-coachman had been bribed to hold himself in readiness for this emergency, for several weeks. Wickem had excited the sympathies of this man, by telling him that his only child had been stolen from him by her mother, from whom he was divorced, and he was reduced to practice violence to get her out of his former wife's hands.

The poor girl, unconscious of the terrible capture awaiting her, had not felt her spirits so much exhilarated for weeks. The exercise in the open air, had imparted a brilliancy to her complexion, a joyous gladness to her air, which caused more than one person they met, to turn, in order to obtain another glimpse of so lovely a face.

Twilight was darkening around them, as they approached the end of their walk: just as they turned the last corner, a carriage was driven slowly past them, and stopped. A man with his hat slouched over his face, got down from beside the driver, and proceeded to open the door, Emma lingered a moment behind her companion, to see who would alight from the vehicle; the latter heard a slight scuffling noise, and turned, just in time to see a man, with Emma in his arms, jump into the carriage, which was immediately driven rapidly away. Her shrieks, as she ran up the street, alarmed the inmates of the house, to whom Mrs. Dillon's uneasiness had communicated itself, and they were all on the watch for the return of the two girls. There were no houses on that side of the square, except the academy, as its extensive grounds occupied its whole length, and thus the captors had been able to effect their purposes, before assistance could possibly reach their helpless victim.

Information was immediately sent to Mrs. Brandon, and every exertion made to recover the lost girl; but without success. No clue could be obtained to the whereabouts of the persons who had carried her off; and at the end of two months, the search was abandoned as hopeless.

Mrs. Brandon grieved bitterly over the loss of her beloved protege, but Mr. Marston rejoiced at the termination of all intercourse between them. He had no doubt, he said, that the parent, who had the best right to her, had at last taken Emma under his own care; and so hardened can the heart become by selfishness, that he rejoiced in the conviction that this lovely and refined girl had been snatched from the protecting love of Mrs. Brandon, by such a miscreant as he must have felt Wickem to be.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN the carriage which contained Emma, had driven some distance from the scene of their exploit, her captor became alarmed by her perfect stillness. He loosened the folds of the shawl from about her head, and found that she was insensible. He made no endeavor to recover her, beyond raising her head and holding it near the open window; for if she speedily revived, he feared that her cries might alarm persons in the streets, and bring them to her assistance.

They, however, soon cleared the city; and when consciousness returned, Emma saw with despair, that they were rolling rapidly through the thick forest. She instantly recognized in her companions, her former master, and an old member of the troop known as Jeff Brady; and she felt that supplication or remonstrance would be alike unavailing. She sank back, faint with the terrible fears that filled her soul.

After driving an hour at a furious pace, the carriage was suddenly halted before the door of a double log-house, with an open space between the two cabins. The place had an indescribably desolate appearance: the fence was down in many places, the out-houses were in ruins, and the chimneys of the dwelling itself had partly fallen; smoke, however, curled from one of them, and the sound of a woman's voice, singing a popular air, came from the open door. As they stopped, with a sudden motion of his hand, Brady threw the shawl over her head, and raising her in his arms, carried her

into the room opposite to that occupied by the singer.

"Now my lass, we've got you again, and I would advise you to mind your affectionate father better than you did long ago, or it will be the worse for you. But mind you, there shall be no more beating; you're too big for that, and a sight too pretty."

As he thus spoke, he released her entirely from the folds of the shawl, and placed her on her feet. Emma then threw herself on a rude seat, and wept bitterly. The ruffian looked at her an instant, and shrugging his shoulders, left the room.

Presently a heavy tread echoed over the floor, and a coldness almost like that of death, crept over the poor girl. She dared not look up, for she intuitively knew that he who was gazing down on her, was the being whose presence had always inspired her with unconquerable horror. A hoarse laugh broke from him, as he roughly pulled her clasped hands from before her eyes, and said—

"Well, here's an affectionate daughter, truly! why she won't even look at her poor father, who has grieved his old heart because he could not claim her before. Oh, the ingratitude of this world! Come to your parent's heart, my precious darling—"

And knowing that nothing on earth could be more repugnant to the shrinking girl, than such an embrace, he drew her forcibly to his breast, and held her there a moment, in so rough a clasp, that when he released her she was nearly suffocated.

"Ah! you don't love me now, my bonny bird; but you'll soon learn to feign love, if you do not feel it. I'm as merry as a sparrow in the spring-time of the year—tol-a-rol"—and he capered about the floor, with uncouth gestures.

"See how delighted I am to see you, my dear. Why do n't you speak to me? Tell me that I am your beloved father, for whose return you have pined; that would be the truth, would n't it, sweet?"

He brought his repulsive face within so short a distance of hers, that they almost came in contact. Emma shrank back with undisguised aversion, and closed her eyes. Wickem, who had, as usual, been drinking deep, could no longer control his rage.

He stamped upon the floor, shook his clenched hands at her, and spoke in tones harsh with passion—

"Accursed, detested! look at me! behold my limbs cramped with rheumatism; my right hand deprived of its cunning; and all through you. The very means of existence taken from me, by the vile beating and ducking, you were the means of procuring for me. I have sworn to be avenged on you, and will I not? Will I not gloat over your sufferings, and accept every groan that rises from your breaking heart, as sweet incense? Listen to me; I have purposely suffered you to abide with those of better station, until habits have been formed, a bent given to the mind, which will render it misery to dwell with such as me and mine. Yet you may as soon hope to evade the ultimate doom of death, as escape from my power. You are now old enough to be revolted by the coarseness of your present associates; to feel the utmost bitterness of your deep degradation. I once called you my child, and as such would have reared you; but now, I claim you as my slave! yes, you were purchased with my money, and you shall feel the shackles of your servitude eating into your very soul. You shall not be exempted from the most menial toil; yet your dainty hands look little like laboring."

He glanced sneeringly at the hand and arm that hung listlessly beside her, from which the loose sleeve had slipped up, revealing their snowy and perfect proportions.

"Labor those slender fingers shall, until the weariness of the body shall even exceed what you knew in your dancing-days."

"Oh, heavens! this is too dreadful!" exclaimed Emma, clasping her hands and extending them imploringly toward him. "Kill me at once! I can but die, and it is better to have your dagger in my heart, than perish by such protracted torment."

A sardonic laugh burst from the fiend in human shape.

"You feel it already, do you? Oh, but this is rare—rare! She wants to be killed, the poor little frightened dove; and she thinks I will accommodate the rather uncommon wish. I can't indulge you in that respect, my precious; because you

see, blood's an ugly thing to have on a man's hands. The gallows you know, sometimes makes a man dance without even a rope to stand on. You will die, yes, I know you will die; because you are not made of the stuff to stand much: a whiff of wind could blow you away, you little slight creature; but it will not be by a sudden rush of blood, following the dagger's point. Oh! no; that would end you too quick; my vengeance would not be half sated. Your fate will be, to weary your soul with vain hope; to feel your heart withering in your youth; your very spirit sickening beneath the debasement I will press on it; and when you are only worthy to be ranked among the outcasts of the earth, you will die, believing that if a spirit of good exists he would not suffer you to be thus oppressed and destroyed. Thus you will be lost, body and soul, and I—I will be the minister of your destruction."

Emma looked up, and there was something heavenly in the expression of her countenance, as she said with sudden calmness—

"That there is a spirit of Good, we have every assurance. In the darkness of my soul, I had forgotten Him, until you so blasphemously named Him. I have the conviction in my heart, that I shall not be abandoned, even in this extremity. I feel that the God I have been taught to reverence, will not close his ear to the cry of a helpless child like me."

"Put your trust heaven as much as you please, little one; for, in my opinion, you'll not have much help sent you from there. Pete Wickem's plans are too well laid, to be circumvented by the prayers of a silly girl."

He seated himself and remained silent some moments. He then spoke in a more natural tone—

"You are a strange girl, I think, not to have any affectionate recollection of that excellent woman, who once stood in the relation of a mother to you, and those two fine girls, who were as your sisters for so long a time."

"Is mother Moll here, with Anna Jane, and Seraphine?" she asked, with a slight expression of interest, for their presence seemed some protection against the rages of Wickem.

"Moll and Seraphine are here, you sweet, affectionate girl," said he, mockingly; "but it will break your warm heart to know that your beloved Anna Jane died in New Orleans last summer, with the yellow fever. Won't you cry? That's perverse—very; I thought you were always ready to shed tears, until one would swear your eyes were perfect fountains."

Emma sat in sad silence, so white and motionless, that the ruffian began to think he had tormented her sufficiently for that time. He therefore left the room, and immediately after his departure, a mass of flesh, which at first sight seemed too enormous to exercise the power of volition, slowly waddled through the entrance. The features of this woman were almost buried in the rotundity of her cheeks, and it was with some difficulty that Emma recognized in her the mother Moll she had known in childhood. She drew near Emma, and said—

"Ah! my darling little duck, I am so glad to clasp you in my arms once more." The clasping, however, was a mere figure of speech, for the unwieldy Mrs. Moll, could as soon have made her short fat arms a girdle for the world, as have made them meet around even the slender form of Emma. The poor girl shrank with nervous horror from her caress, for her early memories were not such as to render a meeting with the old woman particularly gratifying. Her appearance was inexpressibly vulgar; her dress soiled and disordered, and her breath redolent of the strong waters she was constantly in the habit of imbibing.

"Ah! you do n't seem glad to see me, my darling; me, that loved you so carousingly, and had deranged so nicely for your comfort; but you vanquished without giving me even a farewell salute—"

She whimpered, and finally her grief at Emma's coldness, took a more boisterous shape; she rocked herself to and fro, and groaned and cried aloud. Wickem with a grin, looked in at the door—

"So the little lady has lost her fondness for you, Moll? I thought as much. Cry as hard as you please; it's pleasant music for her, poor little dear."

Some one spoke to him without, and he left the door free for the ingress of Sera-

phine. It will be remembered that this girl, when first seen by Emma, was ten years of age—she was now nineteen; the brightest and loveliest age of woman in this climate. But alas! her cheek was prematurely faded—the softness of her sex forever gone; and in its place a bold expression, and callous manner, which in the pure eyes of Emma, rendered her as displeasing, as the mass of flesh which had preceded her.

Seraphine greeted the captive as an old friend, and after some preliminary remarks, informed her that for the last three years, she had been the wife of Jem Brady, whom Emma might remember as the handsomest man in their old troop. She then congratulated her companion on her return to their present mode of life; assuring her that nothing could be more delightfully free from restraint. They did not now confine themselves to dancing and feats of legerdemain. Since Pete had been disabled by rheumatism from practicing his former calling, they had turned strolling players. Wickem acted the old man to admiration; she was considered great in comedy; and Brady made a good-looking hero. There were several others belonging to the troop, but they were below, in a town on the river, awaiting their arrival.

"And what am I to do?" faintly inquired Emma.

"Pete says, that after you are thoroughly subdued, and understand your position, he means to bring you out on the stage as a tragedy heroine. You might soon rise to be a star; and only think what a fortune you might make some day.

Now Kate, dear, let me counsel you not to disobey the wishes of Pete. Pretend that you are reconciled to remain among us, and he will not be so savage; it's only because he thinks you hold yourself above him, that makes him talk to you so dreadfully as he does; besides, Wickem has a son, who was left at the north at school, when we were children with him; but he has lately joined us, and he is one of the handsomest young men you ever looked at: who knows but he might take a fancy to you; and any woman might be glad to get a husband who is so good-looking as always to be sure of a hero's part in the cast."

"Heaven forbid that he should fancy me!" said Emma, who had listened, heart-sick to all these revelations. So sudden—so stunning had been her misfortune, that she had no power to reflect on the means of escape. To say that her soul revolted against the associations by which she was surrounded, would give but a feeble idea of the loathing, the sickening horror which filled it: but her terror of Wickem enabled her to conceal much that passed in her mind.

He kept his word in regard to her menial services. The morning after her abduction, they left the log-house, and journeyed by circuitous and unfrequented roads to —, on the Ohio, and during the whole of the journey, he would accept his food from no other hand, and no other person was allowed to prepare it. Aware of the shrinking terror she felt for him, he compelled her to spend hours every day in combing and arranging his hair.

#### CHAPTER XIX.

THEY at last reached a small town near the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, where several of the troop, who were strangers to Emma, were awaiting their arrival. The son of Wickem had however left them, and was then in Memphis. The company remained there so long as they could obtain an audience, and then embarked on a flat-boat, for the purpose of descending the Mississippi.

During all that time, Emma had been kept a close prisoner, in a room of which Wickem himself carried the key. This confinement, combined with the state of her mind, at length threw her into a violent fever. She hoped a physician might be called in, and a chance of effecting her release be thus given; but her jailer told her with brutal coldness, that if no other hope remained for her, she must make up her mind to die; as he would not permit a stranger to see her on any account. He, however, possessed some trifling knowledge of medicine himself, and after several weeks of intense suffering, she once more arose from her sick bed.

The disease left her in a state of great

weakness and emaciation; and when they arrived at Memphis, she was still too feeble to take any part in their performances; even if Wickem would have risked her making her appearance, before her spirit was completely broken, and despair had resigned her to her evil lot. Since her illness, he had been less brutal than before, and sometimes for days allowed Mrs. Brady to minister to her wants, without approaching her himself. One evening, Seraphine entered her dismal apartment in full costume for the character of Clemanthe, in the tragedy of Ion. Emma looked at her highly-rouged cheeks and bedizened figure with the thought—

"Can it be possible that any degree of persecution can ever bring me to such a level as this?" Clemanthe in place of the classic costume of ancient Greece, wore a white muslin dress with enormous sleeves, and a very short, full skirt; sandals were laced on her feet, and in her hair a perfect forest of faded flowers were woven. A band of wide white ribbon was then wound around her forehead, and fastened in a knot beneath the hair of the back of her head, whence the ends floated in two long streamers nearly to the floor.

"How do I look?" she asked.

Though not much skilled in ancient costume, Emma scarcely knew what reply to make. Her innate sense of beauty told her that Mrs. Brady's dress was at least unbecoming. She at length, said—

"It will pass, I suppose; but this band, worn so low on the brow, looks as if you had the headache, and had bound something to your forehead as a remedy."

"So I said; but Pete was obstinate, and would have us all wear it, as he says it used to be the Grecian style of head-dress. It must be very stupid here, dear Kate; so if you will promise me on your word, not to speak, or attempt to escape, I will bring you where you can see the performance. Bill Wickem has joined us, and I wish you to see him as Ion; he plays the character superbly."

Desirous of any change in the monotony of her existence, Emma readily gave the required promise, and after throwing a shawl over her head, Mrs. Brady conducted her to the temporary dressing-room, which had been allotted to herself. It was a small pasteboard pavilion, which

remained in the back-ground of every scene, whether it was intended to represent a garden, a parlor, or a street. Truth to tell, the company possessed but one set of scenery, and the imagination of the audience must perforce supply all deficiencies. There was a small window looking toward the stage, with a muslin curtain drawn before it; beside this aperture, Mrs. Brady stationed her companion, in a chair which was sufficiently elevated to look over the top of the curtain upon the house beyond; cautioning her to keep perfectly still, the heroine of the piece then disappeared.

As the town could boast of no theater, a large unfinished room, had been temporarily converted into one. A dividing line marked by the footlights, only separated the actors from the spectators, and as the curtain had risen just as Emma took her station, she had an opportunity of seeing that there was quite a full house, with a few respectable-looking ladies occupying the front rows. Her attention, however, was speedily attracted to the stage, and what was passing thereon. The opening dialogue was spoken by two rough-looking men, who wore their long necks bare, and fastened over their shoulders was something which looked marvelously like sheets, that fell in drapery to the floor. The same disfiguring ribbon, which she had remarked on Mrs. Brady's forehead, served to render their coarse red features even more disagreeable than they naturally were.

With the passion for rant, so characteristic of inferior actors, they literally murdered the musical flow of words for which Ion is so remarkable. They strutted from side to side while speaking, and the air catching in their drapery, sent it streaming out in the most ludicrous manner imaginable. The audience apparently enjoyed it with great zest, and even poor Emma could have laughed, had not her heart been so very heavy. Presently Ion appeared, and Emma acknowledged that his appearance was imposing. William Wickem was certainly a handsome though coarse-looking young man; but he no sooner spoke, than his voice and pronunciation convinced all who heard him, that nature had never designed him for an actor. His voice was peculiarly harsh

and grating, and his carriage slovenly and awkward.

The performance proceeded amid the most absurd blunders, and awkward attempts to cover them, until the interview between King Adrastus and his son took place. Wickem, who sustained the character of the King, had fortified his strength for the part, by taking such strong doses of his favorite beverage, that in the dying scene, the strong waters combining with the pathos necessary to the development there made, completely overcame him. To prevent him from falling on his face on the floor, his son was forced to hold him on the temporary sofa, which had been made of boards, and covered with a faded red curtain; the architect had not been very particular in its construction, and, sad to relate, the violent contortions of the King in his death-agony, were too much for the frail support; a crash was heard, and King Adrastus and his son rolled together on the floor, amid the inextinguishable laughter of the house.

Silence was with difficulty restored, and the play went on. It finally ended, amid a renewed chorus of laughter, and all acknowledged that no comedy is so complete, as a sentimental tragedy turned into burlesque by wretched acting.

Mrs. Brady came to Emma at its conclusion, and after expressing her vexation at Wickem's obstinacy, in attempting tragedy with their force, she took her back to her room and locked her in. A small house near their place of performance was her abode; it was tenanted only by an old woman, so deaf that it was almost impossible to make her comprehend any thing; and under her surveillance, Emma was placed. After the return of William Wickem to the troop, he was permitted by his father to walk out with the young girl every evening; but he never took her through the town. The surrounding country offered many walks in which there was little danger of meeting any one likely to listen to Emma's complaint, should she make one. The rest of the day she was kept locked in her apartment.

A very short time had elapsed, when this young man began to speak to her of his admiration—his love for herself. She was surprised that her extreme youth did not prevent him from using such language

to her; she forgot that she had nearly attained her full height, and was beautiful enough to attract a much more fastidious judge than he was likely to prove. At length she resented his pertinacity, and plainly told him that she would never consent to become his wife.

"Very well, miss; just as you please," was his cool reply. "If you will marry me, I can release you at once from the tyranny of my father; if you refuse, you will endure persecution enough I can tell you; and at last, end in begging the protection you now so proudly spurn."

"When that hour comes, I will throw myself on the mercy of God, sooner than trust to yours. I sometimes think, that some situations can almost give pardon to human wretchedness for braving the unknown future."

"My father says you shall be my wife, Miss Kate, and he never speaks in vain; so you had better think well, before you determine against me. As to making your escape by death, I shall take care that you no longer have the means. I shall order the woman of the hut to keep a strict watch over you in future."

They returned in silence, and after giving the order to the wrinkled old hag, who filled the place of jailer to the unfortunate girl, he again closed the door on her, and left her to her own desolate thoughts.

On the following morning, to the great alarm of Emma, she was removed from the hut to a lonely cabin in the country, where she and the old woman remained two days unmolested by visits from any of the troop. She vainly endeavored to interest her companion in her favor, but she was too deaf to comprehend her, and was so fully persuaded that her prisoner was the daughter of Wickem, and had been so disobedient as to bring such severe punishment on herself, that it was useless to attempt to undeceive her.

## CHAPTER XX.

WICKEM, his son, and Mrs. Brady, sat in the hut, which had been vacated by the old woman, engaged in earnest consultation.

"Perhaps you can manage her, Seraphine," said the young man. "I should prefer using no force in making her my wife. If you can bring her to consent quietly, I will give you a handsome present, besides what Brady got for his assistance in nabbing her."

"I am sure I have no objection to help you in any way," replied Mrs. Brady. "I knew that you would be taken with her pretty face, as soon as you saw her; and I spoke up to her in your favor then. But I can tell you one thing, Bill; she thinks herself entirely too good for the likes of you, with all your good looks."

"That's what pleases me best of all," said Wickem, with a malicious grin. "I owe the little devil a grudge, and it makes my heart merry to know that she has to bow her pride before my will."

"Well old Wick, if you'll answer me one question I've wanted to ask a long time, I'll do what I can to help Bill in the present difficulty."

"Speak on, Seraph; what is it, girl?" It might have excited the risibility of a looker-on, to hear the faded tawdry-looking Mrs. Brady, addressed as a seraph; but the trio were used to it, and without a smile she went on—

"Why just this. The first night she ever came among us, you spoke to Mother Moll concerning her, and something was said about her belonging to people who would pay well to get her back again. If that is the fact, why don't you find out all about her family, and for a good round sum, prove that she is the right child?"

"That's easier said than done. The man I bought her from has not been heard of since he beat his wife to death. I tried to find out whether the advertisement, which caused me some trouble when I first got her, would lead to any thing more than the pitiful reward which was offered. A friend of mine that I could trust, came the sentimental over the old Rev. in New York, and he let out that he did n't know her connections, and the only man that could clear up the affair, was mad, and not likely to recover. All hope was at an end in that quarter, you see."

"Then the poor thing may as well marry Bill at once, for I can see no better prospect for her. After all, it will not be so bad, to be always sure of a heroine's

part. Ah! she will succeed finely on the stage."

"Go along, then, and if she proves obstinate, tell her that I shall come there with my son, and a black coat, at three o'clock this afternoon, and whether she says no or yes, she shall be made Mrs. William Wickem all the same. Next week she is already advertised to appear in the character of Julia in the Hunchback, and it will then be vain for her to appeal to the public for protection; the law will give Bill a husband's right over her."

"Very well; I understand;" and putting on a fine bonnet, and showy scarf, Mrs. Brady sallied forth on her errand. After a pause, Wickem said—

"I don't think this will be so bad a thing for you, Bill. Kate is a pretty girl, and after she becomes reconciled to our way of life, she will always attract an audience, as long as her beauty lasts. She has the stuff in her, too, to make a fine actress, if we can only manage her. You have fixed things so, that the woman at the North who claims you, will not know where to follow you; and so for the present our game is safe. You can keep the purse and be master of all her earnings, and whenever you choose, you can just tell her to tramp, that she is no lawful wife of yours. On the other hand, if it turns out that she has money, why you can silence your other spouse with a good slice of the fortune, walk in, and take possession."

"But who am I to get to act the parson? None of our fellows would dare to do it, because she would soon detect the imposition."

"Pooh! that's easily settled. Go under the bluff; there are plenty of flat-boats there, and you can bribe some fellow to put on a long face, and look sanctified enough to impose on a frightened child."

"I had not thought of that. Let us set about it directly, for we have no time to lose."

The worthy father and son proceeded on their errand, and in the meantime, Mrs. Brady had reached the prison of Emma. When the door of the wretched apartment was opened, she felt a twinge of remorse as she looked on the scene it presented, and recalled to mind the purpose that

brought her there. The room was very small, and the uncarpeted floor was of rough boards, loosely laid on large logs, which rested on the ground. A small grated aperture gave a feeble light to the place, and beneath it was placed a mean-looking bed, the coarse covering of which was, however, scrupulously clean. Emma was reclining on this humble couch in a troubled slumber, and her features wore an expression of care and suffering, even in sleep.

It was a part of Mrs. Brady's duty this morning, to despatch the old woman on some errand, which would detain her beyond the hour of the intended visit; and having performed this portion of her mission to her satisfaction, she returned to the sleeping girl. As she bent over her, Emma started up with a look of affright; she trembled so violently, that it was several moments before she could compose herself.

"I did not mean to alarm you, Kate," said Mrs. Brady kindly; "you looked so pale, I felt grieved."

"Dear Seraphine," said Emma, earnestly, "if you do indeed feel sympathy for me, aid me in escaping from this dreadful confinement. I am not rich, but there is one who loves me dearly, and she will give you a reward befitting the service you can render me. Oh, Seraphine, remember your childhood!—then you were not hard of heart—and help me in my greatest need."

Mrs. Brady wiped a tear from her eyes, and taking the clasped hands that were imploringly held toward her, in both her own, said almost sorrowfully—

"It would be as much as my life is worth, poor child. I am sold body and soul to these men; Brady is my husband, and he would as soon take my life as look at me, if he suspected me of playing him false in this matter. He took you from your home, and should I be the means of aiding you to return to it again, he would—Oh, my God, Kate! you don't know what might be the penalty. You, in your innocence, could never dream of the crimes such men as my destiny has bound me to, might be guilty of."

"Poor Seraphine, is it even so?" asked Emma, mournfully regarding her—"and I—Oh Father of mercies! is there no

escape from my wretched situation? Must I too become one of these? No, no, I can never submit to such degradation."

"Kate," said Mrs. Brady, calmly—"listen to me, and be guided by me. William Wickem sent me here to plead his cause; he is generous, and has some good points about him, although he is the son of Pete. You had better say yes, at once, and gain the credit of submitting to your fate with a good grace; for Pete comes with the parson in another hour, and if you resist ever so much, it will be all the same. They won't employ a parson who will be likely to have any scruples about completing the ceremony, even if you do refuse to say yes."

"No," said Emma resolutely. "I never will be so untrue to myself, as to acquiesce in the greatest wrong one human being can endure from another. I would sooner beg my bread from door to door, than link my fate with that of such wretches as you have just described; my nature debasing itself to their level, by a gradual assimilation to their habits! I have known a better, a higher state; and I will not voluntarily cast myself down into what must be to me, the lowest depths of wretchedness."

"As you please," said Mrs. Brady, in her turn offended at the strong contempt and aversion Emma expressed for her wandering life; "but I can tell you that you'll gain nothing by your obstinacy; Pete's more than a match for you at that game, any day you'll choose to try it."

Emma said no more. She tried to drive from her mind the dreadful apprehensions that filled it, and to feel that the fervent prayers for protection and deliverance which she had addressed to heaven, would yet be answered. Her agitation deprived her of all desire for food, and her companion devoured her dinner in sullen silence.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Mrs. BRADY stood at the door watching the approach of four persons. As they drew near, she saw that Wickem and his son were accompanied by her own husband and another man in black, whose

sedate air might have induced a more experienced judge than Emma, to believe that he was what he announced himself—a Methodist clergyman. In a few moments they reached the entrance, and Wickem inquired how Emma was then affected toward the marriage.

"She's just wild to get away from us," she replied. "I shall take myself off, for nothing but force will hold her upon the floor long enough to say the words. I think she is a little fool, but then I don't like to see the poor thing made so miserable."

"Go, if you choose; I've no objection. William is like a rock; I am iron; you know long ago what Brady is; and this fellow in the parson's gear, is not soft-hearted either; so we can manage the little lady well enough: see that the old woman do n't interrupt us, and all will be right."

Mrs. Brady immediately left, and William Wickem unclosed the door leading into Emma's apartment. She was lying on the bed, with her face buried in the pillow. He advanced and spoke to her; but no answer was given; he raised up the pallid face, and thought for an instant that death had indeed released her. His exclamations brought in the others, and Wickem said—

"This is the very thing; bring her out William; hold her in your arms while our parson runs over the form of marriage. Then it will be time enough to bring her to."

Half stupefied, his son obeyed him. He stood in the center of the outer room with the pale face of the insensible girl on his breast; a few words were hurried over by the pretended priest, and slapping the groom on the back, he said—

"There now, my jolly dog, you are as firmly spliced to this young woman as you care to be, I guess. Thunder! I should think her pretty enough to be made a sure-enough wife," he continued, as he put aside the long curls from her brow, and gazed on its pallid beauty.

Water was thrown over her, and frightened at the death-like immobility of her appearance, she was borne to the open air. It was a bright beautiful day in early autumn, and the declining sun shone on the group as they collected around the

still lifeless girl. The cabin was situated in the skirt of a woodland bordering on the town, and though not in sight of Memphis, was so near a bend in the road, that a person passing on horseback had a perfect view of the front of the house, and could hear words spoken from that spot in an ordinary tone of voice.

Two horsemen were slowly riding along this road; one was a man past middle-age, whose large features, shaggy brows, and piercing eyes, would not at first sight have prepossessed one greatly in his favor; but a physiognomist would, at a second glance, have seen that there was a kindly sparkle in his eye at times, and that his mouth expressed humor mingled with benevolence of feeling. He wore a suit of jeans manufactured in the country, and a closely-fitting riding-cap. A valise, cloak, and umbrella strapped to his saddle, showed that he was setting out on a journey.

His companion was many years his junior, and was similarly equipped, with the addition of a pair of pistols ready for use, and so placed as to be grasped at a moment's warning. He was a fair, good-humored looking person, but his countenance now wore an unusual expression of seriousness. After several attempts from the elder one to draw him into conversation, he said—

"I beg pardon, uncle; but I can not withdraw my thoughts from a strange circumstance, of which the letter I received from home just as we were starting, gives me an account."

The old gentleman looked interested.

"Do you remember the widow lady with whom my family boarded in Louisville?"

"Mrs. Brandon? certainly. I saw her once, when business took me there."

"Well, the child she adopted under such strange circumstances, has again been stolen, by the wretch who called himself her father."

"Bless my soul! you don't say so! I remember what a lovely creature the little girl was, and how fondly she was attached to her protectress. I confess, that I have almost envied her the love of so charming a being, and half regretted being a bachelor. Can they gain no clue to her place of detention?"

"It seems not. Mrs. Brandon has herself written to my wife, and related to her a wish Emma had expressed to live with us as a companion and teacher for our little Georgiana. She now bitterly regrets that she had not yielded to her wish, as in such an out-of-the-way place as our residence, her persecutor could not easily have traced her. I should have been glad to receive her, for her musical knowledge is wonderful, considering her years, and she would have been of great use to Georgiana."

"Poor thing! poor thing!" ejaculated the uncle. "But what are those people doing, in front of the log-house yonder?"

As the conversation proceeded, they had slowly drawn nearer to the house, until they were in the curve of the road which looked directly toward it; and no one of the group appeared to have observed the approach of strangers. Curiosity induced them to go forward at a slow pace. The soft turf returned no echo to the tread of their horses, and they had already caught a glimpse of the insensible girl, when Brady said—

"By Jupiter! I believe she's done for. We've frightened the life out of her this time, that's certain. Old Wick, you'll have to answer for this, some day."

Wickem turned on him, and was about to make a bitter retort, when he caught sight of the strangers, now close on them. His face grew of a livid hue, and he clutched at the form of Emma, as if he would not make an effort to escape without securing her. Mr. Latimer had already seen the pale face of the poor girl, and knew her at once. He drew his pistol, and shouted—

"Fly, villains! I will shoot the first man that offers to touch that child!"

Unarmed, and conscious of guilt, a second command was not necessary; the whole party fled with rapid steps. Before following the example of the rest, William Wickem carefully laid Emma on the grass, and Mr. Latimer dismounted, and seriously applied himself to the task of recovering her from her death-like swoon. His uncle carried a flask of spirits in his pocket, and after pouring a small quantity down her throat, and bathing her hands and brow with water, she once more unclosed her eyes, and a faint

shade of color began to spread over her cheeks.

"Emma, dear Emma, you are with friends who will protect you. Look up, my dear girl."

Emma evidently knew him, she clasped his hand, and said faintly—

"Take me from this place, or I shall lose my reason. Let us go; I am strong enough to endure fatigue. I can not remain in this horrible place; they will come back."

"Be not afraid, my child; we will take you with us, and protect you from these unprincipled ruffians."

Emma murmured her thanks, and presently she was able to sit up and relate to her rescuers the story of her captivity.

The necessity of an immediate departure was evident, as the men might return with an additional force, and again seize on her. Mr. Latimer looked through the house for something which might serve as a pillion, and after placing in a conspicuous spot an amount of money sufficient to pay doubly for it, he took a yarn coverlet from the old woman's bed, and converting it to that use, he placed Emma behind himself. They proceeded, at a quick pace, toward the residence of a friend, several miles from the village, where they were expected to pass the night. To the kindness of the lady of the house, they knew they could recommend the unfortunate orphan; nor were they deceived. During the two days they remained, to allow Emma to recover sufficiently to proceed, every attention was shown to her.

The old gentleman, Mr. Ruggles, after hearing the artless narrative of Emma, returned to Memphis, for the purpose of having Wickem and his confederates arrested. But they had been too wise to await his motions; under shelter of night, the whole troop had taken their departure, no one knew whither.

Mr. Latimer offered Emma a home beneath his roof, which she gratefully accepted; and he made arrangements to return with her to his own abode, in the stage-coach which twice a week passed the door of his friend.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE coach rolled through a beautiful, but wild country, with small, flourishing towns scattered at intervals over it, and large plantations, newly settled, few and far between. On these places, the girdled trees were still standing in all their unsightly nakedness—a mournful sight to the lover of the picturesque; and the Spanish moss, which hung in long wreaths, from many of the leafless branches, imparted a yet more gloomy appearance to the vast fields of whitening stems, rising like pale giants, as far as the eye could reach. After such a scene, the luxuriant forest, for miles, would stretch away in unbroken beauty, until the labor of man again showed its effects.

Emma was enchanted, and each day recovered a portion of her natural vivacity. Toward the evening of the second day they reached a small village, near which the residence of Mr. Latimer was situated. The trio went from there on horseback; and as the setting sun cast its last parting beams on the lofty forest trees, they came in sight of Myrtle cottage, still nearly a mile distant from them.

Mr. Latimer's residence was in that portion of Tennessee vacated a few years since by the Choctaw Indians, and the country was yet free from the usual undergrowth of the forest; a carriage could have been driven through any portion of it without danger, as the ground was perfectly level, and any obstructions in his path could be seen by the driver in time to be avoided. The stately trees grew straight, and far apart, looking, in the gathering twilight, like tall columns of Egyptian marble, with their limbs interlacing high overhead, forming a temple more solemn, more impressive than any made by human hands.

Emma had never been in the depths of a forest before, and a solemn awe began to creep over her young spirit, when a sudden turn in their pathway brought them directly in front of the cottage, and Mr. Latimer said—

"Here is your future home, my young friend."

The setting sun yet shone, in a blaze of gold, on the windows of a cottage of

such peculiar construction that it deserves a description. Mrs. Latimer was much too ambitious to rest contented with a hewn log house, like her neighbors; and as her good-tempered husband usually allowed her to rule without a murmur, against his better judgment the cottage was constructed according to her whim. The means of Mr. Latimer being, at the time of their emigration, insufficient to compass a frame or brick dwelling, the fertile genius of his better half had hit on an expedient of quite a novel kind. Young trees, with smooth and even stems, had been sawed off, of the requisite height, and firmly imbedded in the soil, about four feet apart; these were covered on both sides with laths, over which was spread a thick coat of plaster, very neatly whitewashed. The portico in front was supported by four young poplars, whose branches were trimmed in the form of a cone, and the trunks wreathed around with jessamine, honeysuckle, and other fragrant flowers. A large yard, surrounded by a post-and-rail fence, in good order, was filled with a great variety of shrubbery, showing that the mistress of the mansion had brought with her, to her new home, the same tastes which had been cultivated under more prosperous circumstances.

A group was collected beneath the portico, anxiously looking out for the expected comers; for a letter had been dispatched by the servant who had taken the horses of the two gentlemen home, and Mrs. Latimer knew that Emma would accompany them. Mrs. Latimer was a slight, faded-looking woman, about thirty years of age. She wore a gingham wrapper, whose edgings and frillings were as unique as her dwelling. On her head was a cap, which, in days o' lang syne, was called a crazy Jane—I know not why, unless the inventor thought all persons must have lost their senses before they consented to be disfigured by such an enormity in the shape of a cap. It seemed entirely made up of streamers of ribbon and lace, and formed a most unsuitable ornament to the insignificant features it overshadowed. She had once been as pretty as the bright coloring of youth and delicate features could render her; but the bloom was gone, and an expres-

sion of insipidity had usurped its place. She considered herself an original, and affected to be extremely literary.

Her family consisted of six children, five rough-looking, boisterous boys, and a girl about eight years of age.

Mr. Ruggles was a rich uncle, without family, who resided in Mississippi. He had come up the river to pay them a visit, greatly to the satisfaction of his niece, who hoped he might take a fancy to one, if not all of her children, as they were far from rich themselves. Mr. Latimer had been unfortunate in his speculations; and the farm they lived on, with a few slaves, constituted the whole of their possessions.

Emma was kindly, though very affectingly received by Mrs. Latimer, and the little girl was loud in her expressions of delight; the boys had secreted themselves on the approach of the strangers, and were deaf to the calls of their mother to return and welcome their dear father and their venerated uncle, to the hospitalities of their humble home.

Mrs. Latimer finding remonstrance unavailing with her refractory olive branches, led the way into the parlor. The decorations of this room were certainly worthy of the genius which had invented the style of architecture that distinguished her dwelling. The walls of the room were covered with paper of a pale green color, and prints of fashions, wood-cuts from newspapers, and engravings of every description, were pasted over it, without regard to arrangement; over head was a solar system, drawn by an itinerant lecturer on astronomy, who had wandered even to so new a country; and the floor was covered by a Brussels carpet, a remnant of her former luxury. Over the fire place hung a family picture, painted, a few months before, by a traveling artist, in which was represented Mr. and Mrs. Latimer with the whole of their children, on a very small scale, however, or it would have been as unsuited to the size of the house as the one in the Primrose family. The figures looked as hard and as stiff as the board they were painted on, and such a quantity of blue was used in shading the flesh, that one was forced to conclude that the sittings had taken place in freezing weather, in a room without fire.

Between the windows hung original paintings, executed in oil by Mrs. Latimer herself. One represented a lake scene; but unfortunately, the fair artist had no more knowledge of perspective than the Chinese, in whose parterre a pair of lovers are represented as in imminent danger of having the gardener's wheelbarrow rolled on their luckless heads. The other was a military gentleman, taking a rural walk, in boots and chapeau bras; and that, too, must have been a fancy piece, for surely no mortal man ever had the shoulders of a Hercules and the limbs of a dwarf. There were two other pictures worked in silk, and they too were specimens of Mrs. Latimer's taste in the fine arts. One represented the tomb of Washington, with a stiff-looking willow over it, and the Goddess of Liberty weeping over her favorite son. The other was Sterne's Maria, with a little dog beside her, whose unnatural elongation of countenance induced one to believe that he had the keenest perception of the sorrow of his mistress.

The furniture of the room was substantial and neat, having been purchased by Mr. Latimer himself, and forwarded to their new home, so soon as the house was in readiness for its reception. A nice, wide sofa, covered with hair cloth, and two large rocking-chairs stood on one side; while the other was occupied by a fine-toned piano, and a workstand. A guitar-case stood in one corner, on which the passion of its mistress for pictorial embellishment was also displayed.

Mr. Ruggles gazed around him with some surprise, and, turning to his niece, said—

"You appear to be quite comfortably fixed, Kitty, and I am very glad to see it. I was afraid that Latimer's misfortunes had dipped him deeper than he appears to have been."

A quiet smile played on the lips of Mr. Latimer, while his wife replied—

"Yes, for the wild woods we do pretty well, uncle; but you must not forget to give me credit for the embellishments which render our place so much superior to those around us."

"Humph!" said the uncle, glancing half contemptuously at the ornamental portions of the apartment; "that must be

judged according to the taste of your visitors. Mine does not lean toward such fal-lal nonsense."

The lady looked half offended, but remembering the downright character of her relative, and the means of serving them he possessed, she wisely concealed her chagrin by rising from her seat and inviting Emma to follow her in to another room.

When there, she asked innumerable questions relative to her former associates in L—, and made the poor girl go over and over the history of her own adventures, until she was heart-sick. Child as she was, Emma began already to understand Mrs. Brandon's unwillingness to place her under the protection of her present patroness. A narrow mind and cold heart could not long remain concealed, by the flimsy veil of affected feeling with which she sought to cover them.

"Well, my dear," she at length said, "on the whole, I am glad you are here, for it is a great bore to teach Georgiana myself; though you are too young to be of much more use than merely to hear her recite her lessons, while I sit by. Georgiana has not undertaken any thing but music yet; poor child! she has not got beyond the first lesson in the instruction book; though she has been a year at it. 'Slow and sure' is my motto; but now you are here, you can sit beside her when she practices, and that will be a great advantage. I shall limit her to four hours a day, and after the musical instruction is over, you can vary the occupation by teaching her how to read. The larger boys go to a gentleman in the neighborhood; but my youngest hope, my sweetest little darling, is at home; and you can instruct him with Georgiana. Kind in me, isn't it, to provide an occupation for you, which the poet declares so charming?"

'Delightful task to rear the tender thought—'

Don't you agree with me, my dear?"

Emma bowed assent, but she felt indescribably desolate, as her future destiny was thus disclosed to her. Her affectionate heart was chilled by the business-like manner of these details. A few days might surely have been allowed to pass, until she became accustomed to her new

home, before the tasks which were to win her bread were pointed out to her. She struggled against the feeling; she tried to reanimate the glowing gratitude with which she had approached the house she looked on as a refuge from her late oppressors. In vain: the first impression beneath the roof was taken in ice, and all her efforts could not restore her feelings to their former state.

Mr. Ruggles saw, from the depression of her countenance, and the subdued quietness of her manner, that something had distressed her, and he kindly seated himself near her, and endeavored to restore her cheerfulness. This warm-hearted old man, had sympathy for every genuine sorrow, and the brow of childhood he could not bear to see overcast.

Night fell, lights were brought in, and to Mrs. Latimer's vexation, her truant sons had not yet returned home. She was still further exasperated, by seeing the evident pleasure with which her uncle at last brought smiles to the lips of Emma, and she thought within herself—

"There is no knowing what whim an eccentric old blockhead like him may take into his head. It is unlucky that Latimer happened to encounter this girl just now, for she has a way with her, that wins on every one who is not on their guard against her artfulness. I shall know how to make her useful to me, and would be glad to have her at another time."

She drew near Mr. Ruggles as these thoughts passed through her mind, and addressed him in her most insinuating tones—

"I think you will be pleased with my sons, uncle. They are noble-looking boys; they are a little boisterous to be sure, but they are the treasures of my heart—my pearls of great price, as the Jewish matron said to Solomon, when she brought her sons before him, to listen to the wisdom that flowed from his lips. A beautiful story that."

"I do not remember to have seen that version of it," said Mr. Ruggles, dryly. "These are my jewels," said the Roman mother; but my course of reading is probably not as extensive as yours, and Solomon's visitor has escaped me."

"True; it is not every one who has the same passion for reading, that animates

my heart. I am really devoted to the beauties of divine poesy."

At this moment a sudden irruption was made by the "pearls of great price," recently alluded to, in the shape of four burly noisy boys, from nine to fourteen years of age. They had forgotten for the moment, the arrival of their dreaded uncle, in whose presence they had been assiduously tutored by their mama to be as near angels as possible; they came rushing in, whooping and stamping so loudly, that they failed to hear the admonitory voice of Georgiana, warning them that company was in the parlor. In they all bolted, nearly at the same moment, and had they invaded the precincts of the enchanted cave, they could not more suddenly have been metamorphosed into dumb and motionless statues."

"Come, boys," said their father, "shake hands with me, and speak to your uncle, and Miss Emma."

With one accord they rushed to their father, and grasped his outstretched hands; they then turned their sheepish faces toward their strange uncle, but without any further demonstrations toward an acquaintance.

"You will excuse their charming bashfulness, uncle, in youth it is so graceful," said the mother, apologetically. "Come hither, my loves, and be introduced to your excellent relative." She forcibly drew forward the eldest, and roughest of the group, and continued—

"This, uncle, is my eldest hope, and his name I trust will inspire him to emulate the great men whose appellations he bears—Jefferson Cicero. It was a happy thought of my own, to unite the ancient and modern names in beautiful sympathy. This,"—pointing to the next in age, who stood with his mouth wide open, as if in unutterable amazement, "this is Franklin Germanicus; the next, Washington Titus; and the fourth, Wirt Caesar. My youngest son, as you already know, bears your own name."

"And what have you tacked to my homely name of Timothy, Kitty?" asked Mr. Ruggles with a sly smile. "I expect you have refined it into Timoleon by this time."

Mr. Latimer laughed, and his wife blushed; for, as it happened, this was the exact truth. To her refined ear, Timothy

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Ruggles sounded too plebeian, and nothing would ever have induced her to bestow either of the uncouth names on her youngest darling, but the hope of future benefit to him from the wealth of his kinsman.

"Ah, ha! I see how it is, niece; but I'd have you to know, that Timothy Ruggles, hard and plebeian as it sounds, is a better name among responsible men, than his is ever likely to be."

"La! uncle, you are so queer," said the lady, with a simper.

"Queer am I? well, I have a right to be queer; for I have fought my own way to independence, without asking favors of any one. Well, what is the lad's name? I am curious to know what comes after Timoleon Ruggles."

"Fitz Clarence," said Mrs. Latimer in a faint voice, while her husband could not do otherwise than pity her confusion.

"Fitz Clarence," repeated the old gentleman, in a mincing tone. "Timothy Ruggles Fitz Clarence—Fitz-fool you had better have had it, and 't would have been nearer the mark. Ah, Kitty! Kitty! you always were too romantic. By and by, I suppose we shall have the boy writing his name T. R. Fitz Clarence Latimer. That will be excellent! ha, ha, ha!"

He threw his burly frame back to indulge in his mirth: the rocking-chair in which he was seated, lost its balance, and he was precipitated against the frail wall of the delicately-built house; lo! the treacherous laths and plaster yielded before the unwonted pressure, and Uncle Timothy landed on the gallery floor amid the ruin he had wrought. With curses, "not loud but deep," he arose from the wreck, with bits of plaster and fragments of pictures garnishing his clothes and hair. Stifling the explosion of his wrath with a tremendous effort, he listened in silence to the consolations of Mr. Latimer, and the assurances of his wife, that the mischief could be easily repaired, as her husband was quite a mechanical genius, and she had a sufficient quantity of paper and pictures by her, to remedy the internal injury. Muttering something about fal-lals and foolery, the rich uncle retired to his apartment, to disencumber his person of the traces of the disaster.

SEVERAL weeks passed by, and the broken wall shone in renovated splendor. Mr. Ruggles soon recovered his usual good humor; and Mrs. Latimer, after a few days, began to understand his character a little better.

He was a man who may be considered as a type of our institutions. Boasting of respectable parentage, and no more, he had risen solely by his own exertions from poverty to wealth; and Mr. Ruggles prided himself on the energy and industry, which had made him the architect of his own fortunes. Fine airs, and affectation he perfectly abhorred; though true elegance and refinement were as highly appreciated by him, as though his days had been spent within the precincts of a court, and not in the drudgery of accumulating money.

During these weeks, he had silently observed Emma, and had marked and understood the conduct of his niece toward her. The day after their arrival, the musical instruction commenced, and a weary drudgery he saw it was likely to prove to the youthful teacher. Georgiana, unfortunately, had no musical capacity, and it was a species of torture to the exquisitely tuned ear of Emma, to hear her inharmonious thrumming. When all the daily lessons were over, and his kindly heart hoped to see the teacher and pupil take a hearty romp together, Emma was instantly employed in sewing.

Mr. Ruggles pondered deeply on all this. He remembered his own overwrought childhood, and sympathized deeply with the orphan. He saw that Emma would joyfully have performed her duties, if she had felt that she was really cared for by those she served; but the show of interest was too hollow to deceive an affectionate heart, which had once known what true affection is. Day by day, a deeper consciousness of her true position in the family, fell coldly on her heart: she was useful, and therefore her presence was tolerated; how depressing such a conviction is, none but those who have felt it, can know.

Mr. Latimer, since he had placed her under the care of his wife, became indifferent, and inattentive to what was passing

around him. He was a quiet and rather indolent man, who devoted the most of his leisure within doors to books, and suffered his wife to control her family in her own way. It is true, he sometimes observed the sadness that shaded the brow of Emma, and wondered why a creature so young should not be happy; but, insensibly the attractive beauty of the face, rendered him forgetful of what had first struck him, and he would gaze on it with the same critical admiration with which one might regard a beautiful statue or painting.

When strongly pre-occupied, he took no note of what was passing around him, and the temper of his wife was not improved by the air of abstraction with which he often gazed on her young protegee. There are minds of so petty a cast, as to trample on those whose helplessness and dependence should be their best protection; Emma was thrown on the kindness of the possessor of such a spirit, and, secure of impunity, Mrs. Latimer abused the power thus placed in her hands. Emma had but one friend, she argued, and that one was far away; she would be too grateful for shelter and protection from those who had recently persecuted her, to make any complaint; she would submit to be made a drudge for her and her children, without greater remuneration than her own narrow spirit would prompt her to bestow. Though pleased at the chance which had brought her beneath their roof, Mrs. Latimer acted toward her as if it was a great favor, and quite an inconvenience, to tolerate her presence there.

The children were much spoiled, and the only daughter was, of course, more indulged than the rest: she was an intractable pupil to poor Emma, and the young Fitz Clarence was not much better. The elder boys were practical jokers, and with their natural roughness, it may be supposed that their jests were not of the most agreeable kind. Finding themselves unrebuked by their mother, they played off their pranks on Emma, until she instinctively learned to seek protection near the rich uncle, as their voices were heard on their return from school.

Mr. Ruggles was an observant man, and he quietly marked all these proceedings. His knowledge of character

enabled him to read the heart of his niece, and understand her maneuvers with regard to himself. He knew that if he had come to her house poor and in want, the assistance she might have extended to him would have been embittered by the grudging manner with which it would have been offered; but for the uncle whose wealth might at some future day benefit her family, there was no sacrifice too great to be made. He felt that so rough an old fellow as himself could never make so strong an appeal to the feelings, as a beautiful and unfortunate girl like Emma; and his conclusion was, that to him who did not need it kindness was offered, when it was withheld from a young creature it would have rendered happy. Misfortunes are held lightly, when the strong arm of affection is raised to shield us from their worst effects.

"I am rich," thought the eccentric old bachelor; "why can I not rescue this poor child from her present thralldom."

He reflected long and deeply on the subject, and after arranging his plans in his own mind, he sought Mrs. Latimer. That lady was seated in a large rocking-chair, overlooking the progress of Emma in darning stockings. An enormous basket, filled with these necessary articles of apparel, in every stage of dilapidation, stood on the floor beside her; and with a countenance of hopeless weariness she stooped over her work, while her taskmistress descanted on the delights of mending stockings, and the advantages to be derived from the employment, to those who indulged in it.

"Ah, uncle, is it you?" she languidly inquired, as Mr. Ruggles entered. "I am just teaching Emma how to use her needle. It is wonderful how little that is really useful she knows; in her situation it is a matter of the greatest necessity to become acquainted with the most minute branches of domestic economy; don't you think so?"

"I do not know that it is economy to spend time, which might be better employed in manufacturing new stockings, in patching up such a set of incurables as those seem to be. However, you are the best judge of that. I have a favor to request of you, Kitty. I have something to say to you, which is of much

interest to me, and you will oblige me by letting Emma have the rest of the evening as a holiday."

"O, she can go into my chamber, and sew there, uncle; and we shall then have this room to ourselves."

"No, niece, I wish Emma to take a walk. She is moped up too much in the house; I think her too young to be made a woman of yet, Kitty. Let her have a chance to romp with the rest of the children."

"Very well," said Mrs. Latimer in a constrained voice. "You can go, child; you and Georgiana may walk over to Mrs. Watson's, and ask her for the sage she promised to let me have."

A second permission was not needed, and in a few moments Emma was bounding over the yard in search of Georgiana. Mr. Ruggles watched her lithe figure from the window, as long as it was visible; while Mrs. Latimer reflected on his words, and indulged the pleasant hope, that her uncle was about to inform her that he intended immediately to divide his estate, and give half to her husband, with the remainder secured to her children at his death. She was startled from her charming reverie, by hearing him exclaim—

"I never in my life saw any creature half so graceful!"

"As Georgiana?" inquired the fond mother. "There you are right, uncle; she is graceful as—as one of the Graces herself."

"I have read, somewhere, that among the ancients the Graces were also called the Charities. I am afraid that your daughter will never come under that category."

"Why not, uncle?" asked Mrs. Latimer, coloring with displeasure. "Georgiana, I am sure, possesses the elements to make a great and good woman. A Grace, or a Charity either, she might become; and I, her mother, intend to train her mind to every virtue."

Mr. Ruggles regarded her with an air of comic incredulity. After a pause, he abruptly inquired—

"Can you tell me any thing of Mrs. Elmore and her daughter?"

A faint shriek issued from Mrs. Latimer's lips, and she raised her hands and

eyes to heaven. Her uncle waited, with exemplary patience, until this burst of emotion had subsided, and again repeated his question, in what the lady considered a very hard-hearted manner. She replied, in a faint, whimpering tone—

"Just to think, that you, my respected, I may say, my venerated uncle, should profane the sanctity of my roof, by uttering beneath it a name that has been a prohibited sound in it for six years. Oh dear! oh dear, how shall I sustain this shock!"

"Do n't faint, I beg," said Mr. Ruggles, with what, under the circumstances, seemed the most inhuman sarcasm; "because, if you do, I shall certainly throw this pitcher of water over you, and, as the heat is not oppressive, it would n't, perhaps, be the pleasantest remedy that could be thought of."

Mrs. Latimer ceased the rocking to and fro she had vehemently kept up for some moments, and withdrew her handkerchief from her face, which had lost its usual pale hue.

"Ah, I see you are coming round, Kitty. Now tell me where Mary Elmore is, for I wish to write to her immediately, and offer her some assistance."

At this announcement, Mrs. Latimer showed strong symptoms of fainting in good earnest; but the vision of Mr. Ruggles standing over her, with the pitcher of water poised threateningly in his hand, restored her self-possession in marvelously quick time. With a faint moan, she said—

"And is it you, *you* who can thrust this arrow in my heart! You, for whose sake I quarreled with my brother's wife. Oh dear! oh dear!"

"Poh! do n't talk of arrows, and such nonsense, Kitty; but come down at once to the level of plain, common sense, and tell me what I wish to know. You're my niece, and I have paid you a visit, to see, with my own eyes, how you were situated. Very well, why should n't I extend a helping hand to my nephew's widow and her daughter, especially as I know they are not rich, and I may be of great assistance to them?"

This was the "unkindest cut of all," for no offer of assistance had been made to her husband, simply because Mr.

Ruggles saw that he did not need it, and that Mr. Latimer himself did not desire it. With the air of an injured person, she said,

"Mrs. Elmore is living in a small town in Alabama, where her daughter is a teacher in an academy."

"Have they no other means of support?"

"None that I am aware of; but I know very little about them. I learned, by accident, that they were in ———, and what they were doing. When I heard that you had abjured all intercourse with them, on account of a piece of base ingratitude on their part, I gave them up at once. An injury to you was as one to myself; and now, to think this is the return I get for making your quarrels my own."

"Kitty Latimer," said the old gentleman, sternly, "it would be as well, perhaps, for you to refrain from quarreling with those against whom you have no personal cause of offence. It was neither the widow, nor her daughter, who offended me, but your brother; and may heaven forgive me for never inquiring into the fate of those he left behind him, until now; out of my abundance, I could have made the widow's and orphan's heart leap for joy. But it is not yet too late to repair my unkindness."

"My children are as near to you, uncle, as Nat Elmore's daughter is," said she reproachfully.

"Yours! true enough; but they have a father to take care of them, and a comfortable home, while Clarice Elmore has neither."

"In case—in case of any accident to their dear father, life is uncertain, you— you'll not forget, uncle, that my treasures are not provided for. Remember that I have made your quarrels my own, even with my own brother's wife, solely through my strong affection for you."

Mr. Ruggles stared at her some moments, and then said—

"If you will agree to a proposal I am going to make, I will promise not to forget, when I make my will, that you're an uncommonly affectionate and thoughtful niece, and that your sons are my grand-nephews."

"Undoubtedly, uncle; any wish of yours would be a law to me," she eagerly replied.

"I am glad to hear it; for I was afraid, in the present instance, I should have some difficulty in gaining your consent. I wish you to surrender Emma to my protection. I intend to invite Mrs. Elmore and her daughter to take up their residence with me, and settle a handsome allowance on them. I am glad to learn that Clarice is an accomplished teacher, as she can complete the education of my adopted daughter, in a proper manner."

"Adopted daughter!" repeated Mrs. Latimer, in a gasping tone. "Emma Garwood, the child of a wretched rope-dancer, your adopted daughter! Oh! uncle, are you in your right mind?"

"I rather think I am, madam; I believe myself to be perfectly sane. You know, very well, that Emma is not the child of that man; and when she is under my protection, I will spare neither trouble nor expense to discover the truth."

"And if she turns out to be his child, you will give her up to him again?"

"No, certainly not; the interest she has inspired me with can not be destroyed. I have marked her angelic patience, since we have been together beneath this roof, and my heart is irresistibly drawn toward her."

"To her! and Georgiana with her too! This is too much! I shall faint."

"Georgiana is a very quiet little girl, and, with good management, will make a clever woman," continued her uncle, calmly; "and, as a mark of my kindly feeling toward the little maiden, I will give her a handsome education, if you will send her to the north, to one of our best institutions for young ladies."

A little mollified by this promise, it occurred to Mrs. Latimer, that nothing could be gained by betraying her chagrin and disappointment, and, with an effort, she recovered her composure sufficiently to say—

"It shall be as you desire, uncle. Emma is a fortunate child, to enlist the sympathy of all who become acquainted with her. I would willingly have given her a home in my happy and contented family, and have performed my duty religiously by her. I hope you will justly appreciate the sacrifice I make, in relinquishing her to you."

"It is settled, then, niece?"

"Yes, I will speak to Mr. Latimer about it, immediately."

"Very well. You may communicate my desire to Emma, too, if you please."

"With the greatest pleasure, uncle. Since she is to go, let mine be the lips to communicate to her the news of her good fortune, in gaining the kind affection of such a genial nature as yours; though she will naturally be grieved at parting with a family which received her into its bosom with parental kindness."

With a shrug of his shoulders, and an expressive hump! Mr. Ruggles left the room; and his niece proceeded at once to seek her husband, to communicate the mortifying news she had to tell. She was still further aggravated, when she witnessed the calmness with which Mr. Latimer listened to her, and heard him say, in an earnest manner—

"I am heartily glad of it. The life, Emma leads here, does not appear to suit her, she does not get her color back; and her manner is too subdued for one of her years. What you tell me, concerning Mrs. Elmore and her daughter, charms me. I have often regretted that my own misfortunes deprived me of the means of assisting poor Nat's widow myself. She is an amiable, clever woman, and Clarice is highly accomplished. Your uncle is acting wisely, in drawing around him such spirits to cheer the decline of his life. It will be a delightful thought to him, that he is the means of bestowing independence and happiness on such persons as he is about to install beneath his roof."

He was interrupted by his wife, suddenly jerking her arm from his shoulder, on which, in the height of her confidence, she had laid it, and turning abruptly away. He saw that she was deeply offended, and said in a deprecating tone—"After all, she is your only brother's widow, my dear."

"Don't my dear me, sir. I beg you won't, when you can talk to me, your wife, of that woman, who has always been my aversion, and call her clever. Clever!—And then to talk of assisting her, if in your power! If you were worth a million, sir, with my consent you should never give her a penny. Let them work—they are used to it, and they are none to good for it, I know."

She flung in the house, and Mr. Latimer quietly took a pruning knife from a bench near him, and went on with the occupation his wife's appearance had interrupted; thinking in his heart all the time, what a terrible thing is envy of the superior endowments of another; for he knew it was that feeling, which imbittered his wife against her unoffending sister-in-law.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

We will not attempt to describe the joy of Emma, as she heard of the change in her future prospects. When she took the hand of her benefactor and pressed it to her lips, he felt that he had won the warm affection of a grateful heart. The day after their arrival at Myrtle cottage, Emma had written to Mrs. Brandon, and Mr. Ruggles considerably determined to delay his departure for his own residence, until the expected answer arrived. In the interval he wrote to Mrs. Elmore, and the true delicacy of his nature was shown in the words he addressed to a refined woman, suffering from a severe reverse of fortune. He at once assumed the right, as an affectionate and childless relative, to offer to her daughter a portion of the wealth providence had permitted him to acquire, on the condition that Clarice and her mother should both take up their residence at once beneath his roof. The orphan girl he had adopted, was spoken of, and Mrs. Elmore informed, that she could still feel herself independent, by completing the education of Emma, in return for the liberal allowance made to her by her uncle.

The answer was all that he could have desired. The offer was gratefully accepted by his niece; and in compliance with a wish to that effect, expressed in his letter, Mrs. Elmore informed him that it would be quite convenient to them to leave—immediately; and by the time he reached Ragleston with his young charge, herself and her daughter would be established there.

Emma was naturally desirous to learn something of those, with whom she was in future to be associated. Mr. Ruggles knew

so little of them, that he could tell her nothing.

Mrs. Latimer represented the elder lady as a "stiff, hypocritical Methodist;" and the younger as a "piece of affected sanctity," who at thirteen years of age, when she had last seen her, was as prim as if she had numbered fifty. But Mr. Latimer gave her a better idea of Mrs. Elmore and her daughter. According to him, the mother was a woman of fine education, and unobtrusive piety; her daughter, a quiet, graceful girl, with a slight touch of gravity beyond her years, easily accounted for by the fact that sorrows and reverses of no ordinary magnitude had fallen on her family, when she was old enough to understand, and be deeply influenced by them. Emma felt that she should love her young preceptor, even before they met; and in the mother of her future friend she would endeavor to awaken the affection of a parent for herself.

Since it had been understood in the family at Myrtle cottage, that Emma was in all probability the future heiress of much of Uncle Timothy's wealth, she had been treated with a little more consideration by the junior members of the household; but since they were to derive no benefit from the immunity Mr. Ruggles had hitherto enjoyed in being exempted from their tricks, the boys no longer practiced their usual forbearance toward him. Every day developed some practical joke at his expense, until his patience was fairly exhausted. If he caught the perpetrator he was sure to suffer for it, but the punishment inflicted only brought on the old gentleman a summary revenge in return. He at length vowed he would stay no longer. Mrs. Brandon's reply to Emma must be forwarded to the village nearest to his plantation, and every preparation was made for an early departure.

The supper table was in readiness, and Mrs. Latimer was sentimentalizing on the fact, that it was the last supper of which her beloved uncle and her sweet young friend would partake under her roof. Mr. Ruggles left the room a few moments, and a tremendous noise of scolding, thumping, and laughter, mingled with sharp explosions, was heard. Mrs. Latimer was afraid to inquire into the cause of this uproar, for she intuitively knew that it was some

piece of mischief, practiced by her young scapegraces, which had bitterly enraged her relative.

The old gentleman came in after the lapse of a short time, looking flushed and angry, but said nothing; and Mrs. Latimer secretly hoped, that he would suffer the indignity he had sustained, to pass over in silence. Mr. Latimer was in the yard, and at the sound of the supper-bell, made his appearance. The recent fracas was unknown to him, and looking around he missed the boys, and inquired with a pleasant smile—

"Where are the cherubs, my dear?" giving them a name he often bestowed in his simplicity, never seeing how ludicrously inappropriate was the misnomer.

"In *one* respect they are like the cherubim," growled Mr. Ruggles; "for they continually do cry, or rather roar; for such a noise as they keep up beneath my chamber window, when they are about the place, is enough to arouse the dead."

"Children will be children," simpered the mother.

"Yes, Mrs. Latimer; but children should be taught some respect for their elders. Just now, I went to get a warmer coat on, and as I thrust my arms in the sleeves, pop! pop! went the crackers these imps of yours had filled them with. Last night my bed was filled with a parcel of the same infernal preparations; and this morning, when I stepped into the yard, a deluge of water poured over me, and forced me to return to my room for a change of garments. The massacre of the innocents, a wicked deed forsooth! Herod should be canonized by all enduring uncles at least."

"I am sorry," began Mr. Latimer, but his wife interrupted him without ceremony.

"I am at a loss to know what we are to do with our dear boys. Our circumstances are too narrow to enable Mr. Latimer to employ a private teacher, and I know that at the public school they now attend, they learned all this vice and viciousness."

"Do with them!" testily repeated Mr. Ruggles—"Shall I tell you what to do with them, Kitty?"

"Do, dear uncle; nothing would afford me more pleasure," said the lady sweetly, hoping in her heart that he would offer to assist in educating them. "I wish to

have your excellent advice, and I am sure Latimer and myself, will be delighted to do with them exactly as you wish."

"I am glad to hear it, niece—very glad," said the old gentleman, pettishly; "I'll tell you the only way you'll ever do any thing with them to please me: put them into a bag, tie the neck tight, and throw them in the nearest river. There, that's my advice."

Mrs. Latimer sank back in her chair, and dropped the tea-pot on the waiter, overturning a portion of the tea equipage, in her horror and consternation at such a proposal. Her husband jumped up, and endeavored to remedy the evil, wondering why she could have committed so awkward an action; he was in profound ignorance of the cause of her emotion, for he had not been listening to a word of the foregoing conversation.

After some effort, the tranquillity of Mrs. Latimer was again restored, and the tea-pot replenished. Supper was despatched in complete silence; the mother was too much offended at the insult offered to her darlings, to conceal her feelings, and the father maintaining as strict a silence as if he had been a member of the order of La. Trappe.

#### CHAPTER XXV.

On the evening of a beautiful day toward the close of spring, the carriage containing Mr. Ruggles and his young companion, approached Ruggleston.—The road wound through an avenue of magnificent forest-trees; and with a true perception of the beautiful, the invasions of art had not been permitted to disfigure the wild loveliness of nature. The copse-wood had been partially cleared away, leaving here and there a clump, matted together with wild vines, in which birds built their nests and reared their young in safety. The dwelling-house was a long low building, encircled by wide galleries supported by massive pillars: the ground was slightly undulating, and sloped gradually toward a hedge of evergreens, which formed the boundary of the lawn. Many beautiful flowers were scattered carelessly about, as if the hand of chance had ar-

ranged them, yet this want of formal order gave an additional charm to their presence.

Several magnolia trees stood near the house, whose glossy green leaves contrasted beautifully with their wealth of snowy blossoms.

"Look, Emma," said Mr. Ruggles, pointing proudly toward the walls of his mansion. "There is the home won by my own industry. I laid the first stone with my own hands, and for five years, I have lived there in contented peace. Ruggleston is a rough name, and he who gave the name to it, bears as rough an exterior, but Nature has not forgotten to give him a kind heart. May you find happiness, my dear child, beneath my roof."

"I shall; I know I shall, dear sir. I should know the benevolence of your heart I am sure, for in the depths of mine I feel it," said Emma, pressing his hand affectionately. "Your kindness to a poor child like me, can never—never be forgotten. I will ever yield to you the love and true obedience of a daughter."

"A daughter! yes, my child, let it be so; call me father; I will endeavor to supply the place of one to you, indeed."

"Father!" repeated Emma in a sweetly thrilling tone—"I have never known the love of a father, and of my mother my recollections are so dim, that I scarcely dare trust to their accuracy; but, since I have found so kind a friend to stand in that relation to me, I will cease to regret that I have been deprived of the affection of those who were really my parents."

Mr. Ruggles pressed her to his bosom, and imprinted a kiss on her forehead—

"That seals the compact," said he. "I am henceforth to you as a parent. But here we are. Welcome to your future home, my dear."

The carriage drew up at the steps, and as Mr. Ruggles assisted Emma to alight, a tall, middle-aged woman, advanced from the house, and greeted them. A glance assured the old gentleman, that his nephew's widow was before him; and with cordial earnestness, he took her hand, and expressed his gratification at finding her beneath his roof.

Mrs. Elmore was perhaps a few years beyond forty; her person was tall and

thin, but still graceful, and her manner dignified. She was dressed in the deepest mourning, and the bands of raven hair which rested on her pale brow were worn beneath a close cap of black crape. Her features were regular, and so fair and colorless, that they looked more like sculptured marble than living flesh: even her finely-curved lips were almost hueless. Gazing on the profile of this remarkable face, a stranger would have been struck with the perfectly faultless outline; but when the full blaze of the large black eyes was turned on him he would have been startled at the fiery soul which beamed from their depths; so marked in contrast was this expression with the statue-like placidity of the rest of the features. She took the hand of Emma in both her own, when she was presented to her, and with great gentleness drew her toward herself.

"This is a fair brow," she remarked with a faint smile, as she put back the curls which had fallen in some disorder over it, and the soft melody of her voice seemed to vibrate to the innermost soul of the sensitive girl. "There is frankness and truth impressed on its open surface. Your adopted daughter, sir, is all that I can desire, and I pique myself on my power to read character in the physiognomy."

"I am glad that you approve of her, madam. She is a good, affectionate girl, who will not be a troublesome charge to you, I am sure. But where is Clarice?"

"She walked toward the wood just now, hoping she might be in time to meet the carriage, but I suppose she was not quick enough. Clarice has been exploring ever since we have been here, and never wearies of walking through the beautiful country around us."

"She was a child when I last saw her; I suppose I should scarcely know her now. Is she as pretty as she once promised to be, Mrs. Elmore?"

"You can scarcely expect me to be a judge of one I love so dearly. She is very lovely to me. Ah! there she comes up yonder walk, and you can decide for yourself."

The flutter of a white dress was seen among the shrubbery, and in a few seconds the figure of a tall and magnificently-

proportioned girl, advanced with a motion so light and airy, that her dainty feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground. Her complexion was brilliantly fair, and her black hair was braided in innumerable plaits, and wound around her exquisitely-formed head. She bore a striking resemblance to her mother: there was the same chiseled outline of features—the same wild unfathomable eyes; but in her the hue of youth and health gave a soft glow to the cheek, a transparent ruby to the beautiful lips, which imparted the most bewitching charm to a face and form of unrivaled loveliness.

The dress was plain muslin, entirely without ornament; but its very simplicity seemed to accord with the nobleness of her appearance. She advanced at once to her uncle, and kissing him on the forehead, said—

"You find us at home, dear sir, and I am inexpressibly happy to acknowledge the kindness which has afforded my mother and myself an asylum in so charming a retreat."

"You are welcome, my dear; a thousand times welcome," replied Mr. Ruggles, holding her at arm's length, and gazing, in delighted surprise, on her face. "I am only too proud to be able to afford a home to so enchanting a creature as you are. Nay, don't blush, many a younger man than I am, has whispered such flattery in those dainty little ears before today. Here is a companion for you, quite as pretty as yourself, though of a different style."

Clarice turned quickly, and with a smile so soft and winning, that Emma's heart was won at once, she took the hand her uncle placed in hers, and kissing the owner, said—

"We will be fellow-students, dear Emma—not teacher and pupil. You shall teach me how to win your love, while I impart to you such information as I possess."

"Love me, beautiful Clarice," said the young girl, carried away by her admiration; "love me, and I shall be happy."

That first evening was spent with great cheerfulness by all parties. Mr. Ruggles was delighted with his new inmates, and happy in the consciousness of having performed a benevolent action. The splendid

beauty, and winning grace of his niece, charmed him, and he was proud to be in circumstances to secure her from the pressure of poverty.

Mrs. Elmore was pleased to see the impression her daughter made, and built castles in the air, which Clarice was at some future day to inhabit. Clarice and Emma were happy in their youth, their hopefulness, and their present immunity from evil.

On account of the fatigue of the travelers, they retired early. Mrs. Elmore and her daughter were alone in their own apartment. It was a spacious room, with many windows, shaded with heavy green blinds; from several of them, these were thrown back; and the moonlit lawn and the distant forest, formed a panorama of soft and exceeding loveliness. In the far distance, the moon glittered on the white walls of a group of small cottages, forming quite a respectable village; this was the quarter where the slaves belonging to the plantation were lodged.

The room was embellished with a degree of taste, which one would scarcely have expected to find in the residence of a bachelor of so little pretensions as Mr. Ruggles. Money is the true fairy gift after all; for it can accomplish wonders in an incredible short space of time. So soon as Mr. Ruggles determined to invite his niece to reside with him, he sent an order to New Orleans for new furniture for his whole house; and on her arrival at her future home, Mrs. Elmore found every thing in the neatest order for her reception. It may be imagined that she was well pleased to find herself so pleasantly situated, with a mind once more freed from the sordid cares which for years had pressed with such bitterness upon her.

A door stood open between this room and one of smaller size, appropriated to Emma; who, fatigued with the day's journey, was already asleep. Mrs. Elmore sat beside a window, with her head leaning on her hand, absorbed in deep thought; and Clarice stood before the dressing-stand, with her long hair hanging in magnificent confusion around her person, her slender fingers busily employed in smoothing the silken bands, before putting them up for the night. The eyes of the mother at length wan-

dered toward her, and she smiled faintly as she looked on the thoughtful face of her daughter.

"Clarice," said she softly, "there is no hope left, that you will rival this child in the affections of your uncle."

"Mother!" exclaimed Clarice, raising her eyes to the pale face turned toward her, with an expression in them bordering on indignant surprise.

"Nay, my child, I spoke without thought. I forgot that the workings of my heart had not been visible to you. I had hoped—it was a natural hope, Clarice—that, when once seen, you would become the heiress of his wealth, and not a stranger."

"To that stranger we owe the offer of a home beneath his roof," said Clarice, gently. "Your affection for me, dear mother, misleads your better judgment. My uncle is rich enough to give me an independence, if he should think proper to do so, and still leave the bulk of his fortune to Emma."

"Yet my love," said Mrs. Elmore, as if thinking aloud, "if you, with your regal beauty, had the reputation of possessing wealth, you might choose among the highest."

"You forget that my choice is already made," said Clarice, in a low, faltering voice.

"True; I had forgotten. But even there, the want of fortune was the objection on the part of his father; and now I own that I should prefer your union to any other than so lukewarm a lover. Two years have passed since you were betrothed, and he seems quite as well contented as on the first day the engagement was formed. You must admit, yourself, that he has made no effort to assist himself; but has been contented to remain entirely dependent on his father, and look forward to some impossible chance for overcoming his objections."

"Oh mother!" said Clarice, passionately; "you greatly wrong him. What could he do? His father was rich, and proud; he dared not outrage that pride, by seeking a means of independence in any of the paths left open to him. He had no profession, no capital to begin with. His yearly allowance was munificent, and afforded him means to gratify his fine

literary taste. Would you have such a man give up his elegant leisure to the drudgery of business? Could I have asked so great a sacrifice of him? Would I have been justified in accepting it? Oh no, no!"

"Alas! my child, you think ever of him, and his sacrifices, and yet how cruelly he has trifled with you. Allen has shown that he prizes his 'elegant leisure' more than your happiness. It is my duty to speak frankly to you, Clarice, and, however painful to myself, I will not shrink from the task. Edward Allen will seek you again, with even warmer protestations of love than in days of yore, because you are in a more commanding position than you occupied as the poor teacher; but when he learns the truth—that the wealthy relative who gives you a home, intends to bestow his fortune on another—he will withdraw his pretensions, I very much fear, with a few fine phrases about his desolated heart and blighted hopes."

"Then," said Clarice, raising her stately form to its utmost height, and throwing back the hair from her pallid brow, "then I can learn to despise him, or sink into the grave dug by his falsehood and treachery. Oh, mother! judge him less harshly. So devotedly do I love him, that my heart is crushed beneath the suspicion of wrong from him. Did not he, the high in station, the god-like in form, the noble in intellect, seek me, win me, from amid others more fair than I? then why suppose him false to the love he has vowed a thousand times?"

Alarmed at this burst of feeling, Mrs. Elmore arose, and threw her arms around her.

"Compose yourself, my beloved child. I would not have awakened suspicion in your mind, but from the fear that when the blow falls, it will come so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that it may crush you at once. Yet, my beloved Clarice, trust on, trust on; let not my words poison the dream of happiness. I have so long indulged. I may be wrong; my affection for you may lead me to judge him too harshly."

"Ah, that is it," exclaimed Clarice, a sudden flash of light passing over her pale features; "you love me so dearly,

yourself, mother, that you never think others estimate me as highly as I deserve. Trust me, mother, Edward is true."

"I will believe it, my darling. It grows very late; let us retire. Forget my words, Clarice; I recall them; I was wrong."

And the mother gazed apprehensively on the contracted features and pale brow of her daughter. After a pause, Clarice slowly raised her head, and her mother shuddered, as she pointed to the pages of a large Bible, which lay open beneath the lamp, at the illustration representing the sudden doom which fell on Sapphira, and said—

"Methinks the knowledge of his perfidy would bring on me as unexpected a fate as was awarded to her of old. Mother, would to God your words were unsaid! I feel their poison insinuating itself into my mind. Edward may be, must be all I have thought him. But the blight of mistrust has passed over me, and I am no longer what I was to him; I have given him the right to reproach me, for harboring a doubt of his noble, his true heart."

After many efforts, Mrs. Elmore succeeded in subduing the emotion of Clarice, and they retired, but not to rest. Clarice wept silently; but, toward morning, wearied by her long vigils, she fell into a deep slumber. Her mother slept not at all; for she knew, by the convulsive breathing of her daughter, that her words had unsealed the fountain of tears; and, with an unquiet heart, she revolved the past, and looked toward the future.

Clarice awoke calm and refreshed. Hope sprang anew into her heart, as she looked forth on the bright earth and the gay sunshine. She was too young, too fair, to welcome to her bosom so dark a guest as despair; and her mother's uneasiness was allayed by a glance at her noble face, as she entered the breakfast-room with Emma. Mr. Ruggles was charmed to see that a warm friendship seemed already established between these two fair girls.

Several months passed away, and each one had quietly sank into the place in the family circle, assigned to her. Mrs. Elmore took on herself the superintendence of the household; the mornings were

devoted to literary pursuits by Clarice and her young pupil; and in the evening, they visited, or received company from the neighboring plantations.

Mr. Ruggles soon began to feel the refining effects of constant intercourse with intelligent and amiable female society; and he seemed daily to lose a portion of the roughness which had once clung to him. He soon became warmly attached to his niece, and Mrs. Elmore began to indulge the hope that her beloved Clarice might at least share the fortune of her uncle, equally with his adopted daughter.

Several letters had been received from Mrs. Brandon, addressed to both Emma and her benefactor; and Mr. Ruggles was so charmed with them, that he declared, if he was a susceptible man, he did not know what desperate resolution he might take in the matrimonial line.

Once more in a home in which her affections were called into exercise, Emma was happy. Her bright smile, her sweet voice, and charming manners, soon won the love of all around her; and Mr. Ruggles, in this young and graceful creature, adored the ideal of his youthful dreams. Emma possessed a loveliness of person, and a softness of disposition, which he had never before seen embodied in a human form. Even Mrs. Elmore, whose natural anxiety for her daughter's prosperity had caused her to feel a little cold toward the orphan girl, acknowledged that it was impossible to withstand the nameless attraction which invested her with so great a charm; and Clarice cherished for her the partial affection of an elder sister. Nightly did the guileless heart of the young girl raise a thankful prayer to Heaven, for casting her lot in so pleasant a place.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

ABOUT a mile from Ruggleston, stood a stately mansion, surrounded by lofty monarchs of the forest, whose majestic growth imparted an appearance of antiquity to a residence which was but of modern date. The dampness of the climate had also given to the massive walls of the structure an appearance of age, which was

extremely pleasing to the taste of the proprietor.

Mr. Herbert was a gentleman of English descent, and many years of his early life, had been passed in that country, for the purpose of acquiring a liberal education. His father, a wealthy merchant, who had settled in New York, wished him to pursue the profession of law; but immediately on his return to his paternal home, an uncle of Herbert died and bequeathed to him several thousand acres of land in Mississippi, and a few slaves. The young man possessed a retiring and contemplative disposition, and he at once declared his intention to settle on his inheritance, and forever forsake the profession to which he had been destined.

On the part of his family no objection was made, and after a visit to his estate, he once more set sail for England, and soon returned with a fair, but portionless bride, who had promised to await his success in life, in the seclusion of her native home. Mrs. Herbert was the daughter of a curate of small means, but she was handsome, well principled, and highly educated. Reared in seclusion, she was ambitious of no brighter lot than the one her lover returned to offer her; and in the years which had passed since she was welcomed to his abode, as the companion of his future life, no repining had ever cast its shadow over their household. In the kind mistress, the cultivated companion, the affectionate mother, Herbert blessed the providence which had bestowed on him so suitable a helpmate. They had gradually seen the country around them settled, and welcomed each addition to the neighborhood as a new friend.

Herbert had brought his wife home to the hewed loghouse, erected by his uncle, and the first bright years of their wedded happiness were spent beneath that humble and unpretending roof. When the country was cleared, and facilities for communicating with towns, were offered, Herbert planned his present aristocratic abode, and "wedded love's first home" was removed, as being an unsightly object beside the new edifice; but it was not done without tears from the wife, and we will not assert that the eye of the husband was entirely

dry, when he recalled the memories connected with the humble walls, which were rapidly disappearing. Within them he had first felt what an invaluable treasure is domestic happiness, and all the sweet charities of home: they had first echoed to childish merriment of his children; but why should such memories intrude beside the lofty walls of his new abode, built on the model of a country residence in the land of his forefathers, which it been his favorite dream to renew in the home of his adoption, and adorned with all that a luxurious civilization offers to wealth in the older countries of the earth.

The pride of the new occupant was gratified perhaps, but his heart was not touched, when he placed himself beside his marble hearth and reposed his frame on a fauteuil covered with rich velvet.

Many years had passed, however, since that day, and though not "wedded love's first home," it was still its abode, and many bright and happy associations had also clustered around those walls. Two children had been given to this estimable pair, a son, now in his twenty-fifth year, and a daughter about four years younger.

On a bright evening in early autumn, they stood beside each other on the lofty portico in front of the house. The young man was nearly six feet in height, with a well-proportioned, and strongly-built frame. His features were not regularly handsome, but they were of a commanding order, and indicated more mind than a merely handsome face usually betokens. His eyes were of a deep, clear blue, and there was a slight expression of pride in the curve of the short upper lip, which seemed to indicate a full consciousness of his superiority to the great mass of mankind; around his high bold forehead hung a profusion of dark-waving auburn hair.

The girl was remarkably pretty; she had inherited from her English mother, the transparent complexion, and golden hair of the Saxon race, united with the flexible form, and willowy grace, which is said to distinguish the daughters of her own fair land.

"Of what are you thinking, Charles?" she playfully asked. "I have spoken to you thrice, and you have not heeded me."

The young man started—

"Let us walk," said he, "and I will tell you."

She passed her arm through his, and they descended to the lawn, on which the soft glow of the preceding sun yet lingered. They had proceeded some distance in silence, when the young lady impatiently exclaimed—

"Well, brother, when will you begin? I fancied that you had a secret to impart to me."

"No, indeed," he replied with a smile; "I wished to walk, and invited you to accompany me; I own to a desire to excite your curiosity a little."

"Pooh! do not seek to deceive me, Charles; you were dreaming of Clarice Elmore. Do you remember the old beech tree by the spring, on which her name is carved in a hundred fantastic patterns? Now tell me truly, was not that the cause of your deafness to the voice of your little sister?"

"Have your own way, Miss Willful, as you always do. By heaven! what a glorious woman Miss Elmore is. She looks like a goddess; and if it were not for her enchanting sweetness of manner, I should even feel abashed in her presence at times myself."

"Have a care, brother of mine," said Mary Herbert, raising her finger warningly. "Do not too quickly surrender your affections to this stranger, or you may love in vain. I warn you, that she is not so deeply impressed with your perfections, as you seem to be with hers. She is a beautiful girl, I confess; and I think I am generous to admit it, for I own I feel like a pigmy beside her."

"Nonsense; you women are always thinking of love. Do not jump to a conclusion quite so rapidly, Mary. Her face is one to dream of, but I am not sure that it is one to take a heart by storm. I have known her now some months, yet I can not exactly understand her. She is polite, entertaining, when I visit Ruggleston; yet she seems determined to give me no encouragement to fall in love with her; and of late, a cloud of sadness seems to have settled on her brow. I am half inclined to believe that there is a previous attachment, which is not approved by the elders of the family."

"What, then, becomes of the project of

my father and Mr. Ruggles, to bring about a match between you and Clarice. Knowing that some conversation concerning such a union had taken place between our neighbor and my father, I have more attentively observed Clarice than usual, and I am inclined to agree with you. I can not help connecting the letter you have this morning received from our distant cousin, with Clarice Elmore."

"I hope not—I trust not," said Herbert with fervor. "Yet I sadly fear it may be so. The place of her former residence was near Col. Allen's, and it is not likely that so consummate a deceiver as Edward Allen, would pass by so fair a flower. I can now understand why he volunteers a visit to this retired place."

"Describe this unknown relative to me. I have much curiosity to know in what consists the attraction of so celebrated a lady-killer."

"He is faultlessly handsome; of a beauty, too, that most attracts women; for spite of his vain heart, and petty ambition, he has a face where every god doth seem to set his seal, and a form of manly elegance. He has those dark unfathomable eyes, which seem to possess some magnetic charm, and a voice of the rarest melody. You will soon see him, and judge for yourself, for I expect him to-morrow."

"So soon! well, I must prepare all my airs and graces, for if he is a professed flirt, I can conquer him fair game."

Herbert smiled, and continued more seriously—

"When I first entered college, I found Edward Allen there before me, and the distant relationship which existed between us, was soon made known to me. At first, I was as much charmed as the most unsuspecting girl could be; but gradually the inner life of the man became known to me, and I learned that the outward beauty and pleasing manner, masked a hard and cold heart. Many a fair girl in that distant town in which we pursued our studies together, remembers, and she shudders as she does so, the heartless treachery of this consummate actor. I am sorry that he comes hither, Mary."

"I confess to a womanly desire to see this *rara avis*. It will be 'diamond cut diamond' I suspect, when he and I play

off our respective attractions to each other. As a universal admirer, I presume he will certainly make love to me; and if he is a traitor to Clarice, I will unmask him to her."

"You have my full consent; but, ah! should she already love him!" and the tone of his voice betrayed the feeling toward Clarice which he had just disclaimed. Yet Charles Herbert already loved the young stranger, with a passion that he felt must influence his whole future existence; and he could not think with calmness, of a previous entanglement with his callous and vain kinsman. He left his sister at the door, and plunged into the thick woodland to muse in its sombre silence, on hopes and fears for the future, and with them all came the image of his stately love: now as his own fair and faithful bride, again as the indifferent and disdainful acquaintance. Unconsciously he spoke aloud—

"She cares not for me, now; but I will win her yet. Let her only be mine, mine, and I ask no brighter boon of fate."

"What is it, you so eagerly desire?" asked a voice close beside him; and quickly turning, he beheld his father. Mr. Herbert was a fine, ruddy-looking man, who still retained some claims to personal comeliness; his dress was fastidiously neat, and indicated considerable attention to appearances.

"What is it, I ask, my son," he again inquired. Receiving no answer, he continued: "I will lay a wager with you, that I can guess what boon you consider so valuable. A lady's heart, eh? Am I not right? Yes, your countenance tells me so. I bring you good news. I have just returned from Ruggleston, and the old gentleman consents to your proposal at once; but he wishes you to try and gain the consent of Clarice before any thing further is said on the subject. She is a strange girl, at any rate, and he does not like to urge her into compliance with his wishes. By the way, I spoke to Mrs. Elmore, and she is pleased to say, she would be much gratified to see her daughter your wife. So cheer up my lad, the day will yet be yours."

Herbert warmly thanked his father for

his kindness, and the two proceeded in earnest conversation toward the house.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

A letter from one who is dear! Ah, where is the heart so cold, that it has not overflowed with joy, as the precious missive is held in the trembling grasp; and the familiar writing, which traced its messages of affection, is recognized.

Next to beholding the absent, is the welcome page which breathes of the cherished past, and anticipates the uncertain future, tinged with the sanguine hopes which rally around their citadel and stronghold—the imagination of youth.

Hope meets us with her lambent flame as we enter on the journey of life, but alas! as the wearied step still hurries onward over the rugged way, her beams become dim and finally fade entirely away. Beautiful and true was the allegory, which, in the ancient fable, consigned the torch of hope to youth alone.

Clarice Elmore sat beside the open window of her own apartment, and again, and again read the words of her lover. Her heart throbbled, and her eye moistened, for the weight which of late had pressed on her soul, was removed. Doubt to a generous nature, and doubt of one looked up to as a superior being, and loved with the fervor of strong affection, is torture. The certainty of wrong brings with it something of contempt for him who inflicts it. Pride is aroused, to struggle against the blind infatuation which led the heart to make one of earth's creatures its idol. After-reflection, when the mind is in a state to reason on its past sufferings, completes the disenchantment; and the coldness of marble usurps the place of the wild and passionate dream, from which the awakening was so terrible.

Since their separation Allan had written to Clarice but three times, and whether it was, that suspicion was aroused by the warning of her mother, or that he had really changed, she thought she could detect a marked coldness in the tone of his first letters. Even his expres-

sions of interest in her future happiness, she fancied constricted.

Mrs. Elmore saw that a struggle was going on in her mind, and she watched the result with deep interest. To her the admiration of Herbert for her daughter had been no secret, even before his father made the proposal to unite their families. The young man was a great favorite with her, and convinced in her own mind that Allan was merely playing a part toward Clarice, she did not despair of yet claiming Herbert for her son-in-law. She had determined to speak to Clarice on the subject, when the third letter of Allan arrived, and she saw that her intention must be deferred.

Never had pen traced words better calculated to rivet anew the bonds of love around the warm heart to which they were addressed. Clarice wept, but they were not tears of sorrow; and she bitterly chided herself for harboring a moment's distrust of a nature she believed so noble. All that had hitherto appeared cold she blamed herself for misinterpreting; her own suspicions, unfounded as they were now proven to be, had alone inflicted so much suffering on her.

Allan informed her that his father still stubbornly refused his consent to their union, for he had taken the trouble to ascertain that Clarice had no reasonable hopes of succeeding to the fortune of her uncle. He deplored his obstinacy in pathetic terms, but said, they would still hope on, and during his approaching visit to his relatives, the Herbert's, they could at least meet daily, and enjoy the happiness of the present, while they looked forward to the blissful future, which a voice whispered him would yet be theirs.

Clarice believed him, and was content. She removed the traces of emotion from her features, and soon after entered the parlor, where her uncle was reading, with a step so buoyant and a brow so radiant with happiness, that he involuntarily laid down his paper and gazed on her bright face. Her mother also looked quietly up from her work, and said:

"You had a letter, my love?"

"Yes ma'am—from, —from Edward. Come, Emma dear, let us go on the gallery and play battledoor."

"Who is Edward, Mrs. Elmore?" asked the uncle, gravely.

"He is the only son of Col. Allan, and the same gentleman I once mentioned to you as an admirer of my daughter. She corresponds with him, by my permission."

"Aye, I remember; I think you said something about an attachment between him and Clarice, and want of fortune on her side being the objection with his father."

Mrs. Elmore bowed; and after meditating in silence some time, Mr. Ruggles went to his own *sanctum*, and addressed the following concise epistle to Col. Allan.

COL. ALLAN:

Dear Sir—Your son it seems, has been a lover of my niece, Clarice Elmore, for the last two years, and on your part, there are objections on account of her being portionless. I, sir, shall ever make it a rule to endeavor to render the young persons under my care, happy in their own way; and I therefore address you, to say, that if a fortune of fifty thousand dollars with my niece, removes your objections to the union between her and your son, I will pledge myself to settle that amount on Clarice, before her marriage. Hoping to have your reply, as soon as possible.

I remain, yours respectfully,

TIMOTHY RUGGLES.

COL. E. ALLAN.

This epistle was forthwith dispatched, and in two weeks the answer to it might be expected.

In the meantime, George Herbert had joined the players on the gallery; he announced to them the expected arrival of his kinsman, and the glow that deepened on the cheek of Clarice, carried coldly to his heart, the conviction that she was already aware of his intended visit, and anticipated the meeting with impatient pleasure. He became silent and reserved. Though he had never before seen Clarice in such gay spirits, all her efforts were fruitless to win him from his gloom, and he departed very early.

On the following morning Allan arrived at Mr. Herbert's, and Mary at once declared him handsome enough for a hero. His manners were so agreeable, so deferential, that in a few days he became highly popular with the elders of the family.

Mary thought her brother prejudiced; and in spite of his previous convictions and their present rivalry, Herbert almost liked him. Where Allan chose to render himself agreeable, few could resist the fascination of his address; he was vain of his power of pleasing, and valued acquaintances exactly in proportion to his own influence over them. Vanity, the most arid and selfish feeling, of the human heart, ruled every act of his life; the purest, the most devoted affection, was only regarded as incense to this insatiate passion. All the deeper and holier emotions, were to him as a sealed fountain; he had never felt them, and did not believe they really existed in the breast of another; by his own heartless and cold standard he measured the most hallowed of human sympathies, the most beautiful of human aspirations. Yet the countenance of this man was as that of a fallen angel, and his voice the very soul of melody. His was also the perfection of manly beauty; with a form of unrivaled symmetry, he moved over the earth with lordly tread, and haughty bearing. His features were beautiful as those of an ancient Greek model, and his complexion, of a clear pale bronze, harmonized with the dark brown hair, which curled around his high smooth brow. His eyes were large, dark, and at times, melancholy in their expression; and this he knew, was his greatest charm, with the young and romantic.

While Clarice was inexpressibly happy in the expectation of a speedy reunion with her lover, could she have glanced into the soul of this proud and worldly man, she would have recoiled, heart-struck and revolted, by what was passing there, in regard to herself. The history of their engagement was, with him, a common affair. She was too beautiful to pass unnoticed, by a professed admirer of female loveliness; but the admiration of others, first rendered the conquest of her heart necessary to his vanity. Clarice was a stranger in —, and no warning voice was raised to guard her against the insidious advances of so consummate a flirt. Too inexperienced to detect the counterfeit, she was completely enthralled by his seeming nobleness, his high endowments of mind, and his rare beauty of person.

Two years rolled away, and the charm of her devotion, and perhaps the fact that she was undoubtedly the most beautiful girl in the place of his abode, kept him true to his vows. Clarice had rarely seen his father, and was easily induced to believe that he refused to sanction the union of his son, with a portionless bride.

Mrs. Elmore was not so easily satisfied. She had at first, been pleased with the advances of Allan, but when she discovered that the youth of her daughter was to be spent in unpleasing toil, to gain a support, while years might intervene before the marriage could take place, she regretted the encouragement she had at first given to their attachment. With Clarice it was then too late to remonstrate; her whole being seemed absorbed by her lover. Mrs. Elmore looked on, and sighed, as she remembered the events of her own youth, and felt that her beloved child must pass through the fiery ordeal of disappointment and despair. When too late, her penetration enabled her to understand the true character of Allan, and to read the motives of his heartless conduct toward her daughter; yet she dared not speak of her suspicions to Clarice; she feared to deal so fearful a blow, until certain of the perfidy of his intentions.

They were thus situated, when the offer of a home beneath the roof of Mr. Ruggles, reached them. It was thankfully accepted by Mrs. Elmore, and hailed as the means of removing her daughter from the sphere of Allan's influence; and she trusted to time and absence, to soften the blow which she knew would be inflicted by his desertion. She had never ventured to hint the truth to Clarice, until on the night of her uncle's arrival at Ruggles-ton, and the wild emotion she then displayed, frightened her from her purpose.

Allan was not blind to what was passing in the mind of Mrs. Elmore, and he rejoiced no less than herself when the separation took place. His vanity had gained its end. He was congratulated on his success in winning the affections of the fairest of the fair, as Clarice was styled, at a dinner party given by himself the day after her departure; and her health, proposed by the host, was drank standing, at least by those who were capable of performing that feat; those who

were not, made a show of holding themselves up by the table.

Had Clarice known this, disdain would have conquered her love. Nothing is so contemptible to a proud and generous woman, as a boast such as he had dared to make. The scales would have fallen from her eyes at once, and this god of her imagination have sunk to his true level. Allan had coldly determined to break his engagement with her, and he considered it best gradually to discontinue their correspondence; and the two letters that came with such long intervals between them, were well calculated to foreshadow what was to follow. Clarice was not mistaken, when she considered them cold; they were written with studied care by Allan, that she might gradually learn to view with calmness, the great sorrow which approached her. He knew that her faith, her trust in him were strong as life itself, and he feared the too sudden destruction of all her previous ideas of his character. His third communication he had determined should end their correspondence; when a young man, from the neighborhood of Ruggles-ton, arrived in —, and was introduced to Allan. He naturally inquired after the widow and her daughter; and, from the lips of a warm admirer of the latter, heard the account of the admiration which followed her appearance in society. This pleased, but did not excite Allan, until Mr. Wallis casually mentioned, that Charles Herbert, the son of a wealthy planter whose lands joined those of her uncle, was a suitor for the hand of Clarice, and was likely to succeed in his wooing. Allan mentally rejoiced, that the influence he possessed had not yet passed away. To this very Charles Herbert, he owed a debt, which he would now pay back with interest. Toward him, who had proved himself his superior in many a hard-fought contest, he cherished a deep-rooted dislike. He knew him to possess great sensibility, deep feeling, and strong enthusiasm of temperament; and a blow on the affections of such a man, would, he knew, reach the very core of his heart. He instantly determined to visit the Herberts: the pretext of distant relationship, and a college acquaintance with the heir of the family,

was sufficient excuse for volunteering a visit to them. Besides, there was a sister, who was said to be pretty, and he might deal two blows at the same time to the man he so affectionately addressed as "dear Charles," by showing the unbounded influence he possessed over the woman he loved, and winning the heart of his only and fondly-loved sister. Under the influence of all these feelings, he wrote to Clarice, announcing his intended visit; and his words were well calculated to reassure her doubts, if such she cherished.

The letter was followed by his speedy arrival; and the *empressment* of his manner, at their first meeting, rendered even Mrs. Elmore forgetful of her doubts of his sincerity, while Clarice chided herself for having suffered a suspicion of his truth to darken her trust in him.

During this visit, he spoke of his relations at Oakland, for he came alone. George Herbert had declined accompanying him beyond the gate, under the plea of business with a neighboring gentleman. Allan described them as kind, amiable persons; the son as rather intellectual, but of a very obstinate and irascible temper; and the daughter as a pretty, but exceedingly affected girl, who seemed to be a great flirt. In spite of her better nature, Clarice was pleased; for she had been speculating, almost unconsciously, on the charms of her young neighbor, and did what a woman in love is very apt to do in regard to another who may become her rival—fancied Mary Herbert much more attractive than herself.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE evening was mild and lovely; the sun cast its glowing reflection over the verdant carpet which still covered the earth; and the leaves of the forest, in that soft atmosphere, had not yet begun to forsake their airy homes, for the lowly earth, to be trodden under foot by the careless wanderer. Sudden is your abasement, oh, bright and quivering things, to which the earth is indebted for its highest beauty; and reckless are they who

have found shelter beneath your umbrage, of the indignities they heap upon ye. Leaves of the forest, your name is legion, and your beauty is poetry! The flowers of the earth are highly prized, but to ye they owe half their loveliness; for of what value is the bud without the foliage? and what heart has ever been stirred to its inmost depths, when standing in a conservatory, as it has been beneath the dim aisles of the forest, with glimpses of heaven's sunshine glancing athwart the green twilight, like the smile of hope breaking over the brow of despondency.

On a gentle elevation, just within the edge of the forest, was a clump of tall tulip trees, interlacing their bows with each other; and beneath their shelter sat two, who might have served as types of the whole human race—the deceived and the deceiver. Happiness had given new brilliancy to the beauty of Clarice, and on the brow of Allan was no shadow from the evil within. He had taken his knife from his pocket, and was carving a name on the bark of the tree beside which he sat. The golden sunshine came down with a softer glow on that spot, thought Clarice; for it had borrowed from her own heart, a reflection from its brightest dreams.

And is it an irrevocable law of our nature, that where much love is given, small shall be the return we receive? Is it the price exacted by heaven, for lavishing on a creature of clay the idolatry which should be given to holier things? Alas! the cry of the stricken heart, fills the universe, and human agony hath never yet found a response.

Allan carved the shape of a heart, and in it were enclosed his own initials, united with those of Clarice.

"See," he said, as he cut the last flourish, "we are united in heart, dearest Clarice; and I trust the time is not very far distant, when this typical union may be realized. Do you know, love, that I dread leaving you here to the assiduities of Herbert? He might win a little on your regard, and I would not have a smile of yours lavished on him. I am jealous of such a robbery."

Clarice hastened to disclaim all possibility of such an occurrence, but she was

secretly pleased that Allan loved her well enough to be jealous of her smiles.

"You do not like Charles Herbert?" she inquired, after a pause.

"No; I rebel against the kindred blood which flows in our veins. We have known each other well in days of yore, and there is that about him which repels me. According to the professors of magnetism, his atmosphere and mine are antagonistic. Water and oil could more readily condescend, than he and I agree, and yet we both love the same woman. Think, Clarice, how strong must have been the passion which brought me to his father's house, as a guest. Behold the potency of your influence; you were here, and hither I came; and with Spartan courage do I conceal my distaste to his presence. It is an effort of heroism, I assure you; for Herbert has been the cause of many bitter defeats to me; he ever took pleasure in thwarting my most innocent amusements."

"Yet he appears amiable," replied Clarice; "he is the kindest and most affectionate of sons and brothers."

"Clarice, do not madden me, with praises of this man!" said Allan, with much appearance of emotion; "from your lips I can not bear it. Let us turn to some more congenial theme. I have brought this volume of poems with me, because I knew it to be a favorite of yours; and in reading aloud to you in some romantic spot, I wished to renew the memory of the past. You remember the sheltered nook near —, shaded by an old willow, and the sparkling stream that went rippling by?"

"Ah, can I ever forget it!" murmured Clarice.

"There is still the rustic seat I erected for you, and I often seek it, with a book for my companion; but the memory of the sweet communion of mind and heart I have enjoyed on that spot, always unfit me for reading, and I sit there for hours and dream of thee. Thou art the Egeria of that haunted place."

As he spoke, he drew from his pocket a small volume, containing Mrs. Hemans' "Records of Woman;" he turned over the leaves, and selected from among them, *Propergia Rossi*, with a view of hearing the remarks the poem would be

sure to elicit from Clarice. He was not so utterly debased, as to dwell on the course he intended to pursue toward her, without some shrinking of the heart. Enthralled by her beauty, and her frank affection for himself, he sometimes thought it not impossible that he might at last marry her. Even that were better than to see her, at some future day, return the love of the detested Herbert.

The voice of Allan was sweet and full-toned, and his enunciation distinct. He read the impassioned poem he had chosen, remarkably well, and Clarice was delighted. When he had finished it, she drew the book from his hand, and looked over the portions of it which had most touched her feelings.

"It was a bitter fate," said she, sadly. "Of all the maladies that 'flesh is heir to,' to die of unrequited affection, appears to me the most mournful:

"And dream by night, and weary thought  
by day,  
Stealing the brightness of her life away.

"Ah! can you not place yourself, in imagination, beside the bed of this dying woman, and behold her struggles

Under the burden and the agony  
Of this vain tenderness,

and give to her human sorrow, a human sympathy? And how painfully such words as these thrill the feeling heart:

"Where'er I move  
The shadow of this broken-hearted love  
Is on me and around me.

And thou, oh! thou, on whom my spirit cast  
Unvalued wealth—who know'st not what was  
given.

In that devotedness, the sad, and deep  
'And unrequited—'

Her enthusiasm charmed her lover, and he would willingly have listened to her sweet voice, repeating beautiful and touching thoughts much longer, but Clarice caught his eye fixed intently on her face, and with a deep blush she laid the book on the grass.

"After all, Clarice, do you really believe that any woman ever died for love?" asked Allan half mockingly.

"Are you serious in asking such a question, Edward? There are instances of men yielding themselves up to grief over

the loss of a beloved wife or child until death was the result: why, then, shall not a delicate, and enthusiastic girl, who has seen her dream of perfection realized, in the form of him who professed to love her, sink into the friendly embrace of death, when the light which illumined her path is removed? When, as Gertrude so beautifully says to Trevelyian: "A music has ceased to breathe along the face of things."

"But if her lover had not been snatched from her by inconstancy, or death?—If they had been separated by an iron destiny?"

"If to him there clung no cause of reproach, she would live to cherish the memory of his love, as the brightest thread in life's varied woof. If he had wronged her, a soft and yielding temperament might sink under the severity of the blow; but one of stronger mental endowments, with even the same tenderness of feeling, would survive, to enjoy a more rational happiness, perhaps in a brighter future, than the faithless one could possibly have given her."

"And you Clarice—do you think you possess that stronger organization, which has power to resist such a blow?"

"Who knows, until I am tried? But if I dreaded such a fate, I would, if I dared, pray to heaven to give me death in preference. When my trust in you is destroyed, Edward, life will wear but a barren aspect to my eyes. I might live, for who can say what amount of suffering is necessary to kill; but my heart would brokenly live on."

Allan raised her hand to his lips, and bent his head over it, to conceal the blush which rose to his cheek, beneath the half-startled glance of her clear soft eyes.

"Such shall never be your lot, beloved Clarice," he murmured, "while I am so happy as to claim the first place in your regard."

He took up the book and again resumed his reading to conceal his embarrassment. Reassured by his words, Clarice leaned her head against the trunk of the tree she was seated beneath, in such a position, that her eyes could rest on his features; and she listened to that finely toned voice, with more pleasure than the most magnificent music could have bestowed, until twilight darkened around

them, and the first faint stars gleamed from the cloudless heavens above.

With her eyes fixed on his countenance she recalled the fable which represents the union of the human soul with immortal love: "Psyche was warned that separation would be the consequence, if she looked at the face of her divine lover. She gazed at him as he slept, and was left to sorrow alone." Clarice felt how impossible it must have been to refrain from looking on the features of one so deeply beloved, although the threatened penalty was so terrible.

The light no longer sufficed to read, and linking her arm in that of her lover, they slowly proceeded toward the house. Allan still continued to discourse, with a blending of feeling and poetic thought, which was extremely captivating to one of her romantic and imaginative temperament, and every step of her homeward route seemed on air.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

The next morning Mary Herbert rode over to Ruggleston on horseback, escorted by Allan, for the purpose of inviting the family to spend the evening at Oakland. She was in gay spirits, and during her brief stay, Clarice could not help thinking her lover too assiduous in his attentions, for one betrothed to another. Mary looked remarkably well, in her dark riding habit, and the coquettish little cap, which shaded her golden curls.

The invitation was accepted, and as the two cantered from the door, Clarice involuntarily looked after them—she remarked that the pace of their horses, was soon slackened, and they proceeded in a slow walk, as if the riders were deeply absorbed in conversation. The jealous pang that contracted her heart, made her blush for her own want of confidence in the object of her affections—yet she could not control it. With a vague feeling of approaching evil, for which she not could account, Clarice prepared her toilet for the occasion. With more than usual care, she attired herself, for she had an undefined impression, that her appearance on

that evening, was to undergo the ordeal of comparison, with that of Mary Herbert, in the mind of one whose lightest thought was of interest to her.

A black velvet robe, made in such a manner as to display the finely turned shoulders, and dimpled arms, well became her stately figure, net gloves fitting closely to her beautifully formed hands, and confined above the wrist with bracelets of emerald, showed their perfect symmetry. Her magnificent hair, braided with pearls, was wound around her head, and arranged in a classical knot behind, from which a few curls fell on the fair neck.

As she surveyed herself in the mirror, she could not but be conscious of her rare loveliness; but the thought brought no triumph to her: a heart-sickening presentiment of evil, threw its dark shadow over her spirit, and if she had yielded to her feelings, she would have sat down and wept.

When they arrived at Oakland, they were received by Miss Herbert, attired simply in white, with no ornament except a delicate natural flower in her hair, and Clarice glanced at her own figure, with dissatisfaction. Contrasted with the extreme simplicity of Miss Herbert's toilette, she thought herself overdressed.

A few of the neighboring families were already assembled, and cards, conversation, and music agreeably passed away the time. After supper, some of the younger portion of the company proposed dancing, and the card tables were removed from one of the parlors. Clarice volunteered to perform on the piano, and a cotillon was soon formed. After the cotillon, waltzing commenced, and glancing ever and anon at the flying figures, Miss Elmore saw that Mary Herbert had joined the waltz with Allan; the musician faltered a moment, but recovered and went on with the lively strain, which was at that instant little in unison with the feelings of her agitated soul. Round and round they went; by degrees the different couples receded, and left the floor entirely to Allan and his partner; would they never cease? thought poor Clarice. At last she stopped playing and turned. Allan, flushed with the exercise, was still supporting the slight form of Miss Herbert, as he led her toward a seat, in a recess a little removed

from the rest of the company. His profile was turned toward Clarice: the expression she saw perfectly, and the interest with which he seemed to murmur some lover-like phrase in the ear of her rival, caused a sudden and painful thrill of emotion. Her head reeled—she felt faint and ill; but the voice of Herbert, who had noted her glance, and understood what was passing in her mind, restored her to outward calmness.

"The night is mild, and lovely," said he, offering his arm. "You are overcome with the crowd, and your efforts to amuse others. Let us stand a few moments, on the gallery."

She bowed her head in assent, and he led her through the hall, without much consciousness on her part, as to whither they were going. The cool air of night blew upon her brow, but it could not remove from her heart the crushing weight which had fallen upon it. She leaned her head against one of the pillars which supported the gallery, and while she endeavored to keep up a disjointed conversation with Herbert, he saw that tears were dimming the eyes, which were too proud to suffer them to fall.

After a few moments, she requested him to bring her a glass of water; no sooner was he fairly out of sight, than she darted down the steps, made a circuit around the house, and came to a door which opened into an extensive conservatory: she hastily entered and threw her trembling frame upon a seat.

Then she endeavored to reason with herself, and prove to her soul the groundlessness of her jealousy. She called it stupid, ridiculous; but still her heart would not be satisfied. Allan was certainly bending on Miss Herbert one of those deep glances, which express more—far more, than the interest of a friend. Yet had she not every reason to know and feel herself the chosen of his heart?

She had almost reassured her own fainting soul, when the sound of approaching footsteps startled her, and she shrank into a corner to escape observation; as her singular fancy for solitude, would, if discovered, be certain to elicit a laugh at her expense. The moon was shining brightly into the open door, and Clarice peeped through the crevice where the hinges swung back,

to see who was approaching her retreat. An icy chill struck to her soul, as she beheld the two, who were occupying her thoughts, advance until within a few feet of the door, and stand still in the clear light. Her breath came slowly and painfully, and the pulses of her heart almost ceased, as she listened to the low, thrilling tones which had first touched her glad young spirit, uttering such words as lovers alone use. Mary received them with careless coquetry, affected doubts of Allan's sincerity, until he bent his knee, half playfully, and said—

"I swear by your own loveliness, you are my true liege lady! that my sincere homage belongs to no other."

"Perjured! how dare you tell me this? when I know that your troth is plighted to Clarice Elmore."

"Ah, lovely Mary, when that bond was forged, I had not seen thee! I had not felt my soul bowing in homage before thy fascinations. I love thee alone, sweet Mary: by yon fair moon I swear."

"A truce to your oaths, Mr. Allan," said Mary pettishly; "I value them not the weight of the thistle down. Clarice is my friend, and I do not choose to be her rival. Especially," she continued, in a tone of bitter sarcasm, "especially as the vows you are so condescending as to offer me, have been the property of every woman above mediocrity, either in person or in fortune, that you have ever known. Learn sir, that I, Mary Herbert, consider them ineffably beneath my acceptance."

"Miss—Miss Herbert, I do not understand you," stammered Allan, with a look of blank amazement; for the little figure before him had assumed a dignity, he had not believed it capable of expressing, and the arched lips were curved with an expression of scornful disdain that stung him to the very soul. "What does this mean?" he asked, with a voice that trembled with passion. "Have you not listened to me complacently? Have you not led me on—?"

"Yes; to unmask you, sir, to one whose pure and unsullied soul, you are incapable of understanding. Go back to your world, to your profligate and worthless companions, and tell them, that you have met one woman who foiled you at your own weapons. One, who played upon

your foibles, to show you in all your native worthlessness, to the noble and true heart, whose love you have outraged—whose claims you have denied. Miss Elmore, sir, is in that conservatory, and she must have overheard every word of our conversation. I saw her from the parlor window, when she entered it, and purposely drew you hither. I will now leave you, as I have no wish to witness your further humiliation, in the interview which must take place with her."

Confounded by her words, Allan looked after Miss Herbert in blank dismay, until an angle in the pathway, concealed her from his sight. Turning mechanically toward the conservatory, he saw that Clarice had emerged into the open moonlight and stood within a few paces of him: and her pale cheek looked rigid as that of the dead. There are moments of supreme suffering in life, in which the soul asserts its superiority over the body: this was such a one with Clarice. She felt herself at that crisis, capable of any sacrifice—any violence to her feelings, to prevent him from knowing, and seeing, how much the knowledge of his perfidy cost her.

Her large bright eyes, were raised steadily to his; those eyes, which had never before turned on him without that ineffable expression of interest which he had made such efforts to excite in her breast, now flashed forth such an expression of insulted dignity, that he shrank from their clear, yet scorching light. Outraged feeling he had expected; but the calm, the living scorn, and disdain, which pierced his inmost soul, made his own sink abashed to the earth. He felt, that the chain which had so long bound her to him was snapped, and forever: and so strange, so wayward, is the human heart, that he would have given worlds, to recall the words he had lately uttered—to blot from her memory the scene in which he had played so contemptible a part. The affection so lately almost valueless in his eyes, became suddenly the brightest jewel he had ever possessed. A silence of some moments ensued, which Clarice was the first to break.

"And this man," she said, as if unconsciously uttering her thoughts aloud—"this man I have loved."

"Oh Clarice!" exclaimed Allan, impetuously—"say not you *have* loved; recall it not as a memory of the past. Am I not the one you do love, spite of all my faults? Speak, dearest Clarice, and remove from my heart this frightful weight which has so suddenly fallen upon it. I was merely jesting." He attempted to take her hand, but she drew it proudly back, and said, with touching sadness:

"It was a sorry jest, and one that your own knowledge of human nature will tell you, no woman forgives. No, Mr. Allan; if it is any gratification to your vanity, to know that I have loved you, with a blind and foolish trust in your faith, and honor, it is yours: but I have been rudely aroused from my dream, and the weakness that led me to believe myself loved in return, is sufficiently punished by the discovery of this night. I abjure the past; its memory shall become to me as naught. In your future life, remember that a proud woman's contempt, in one moment broke the fetters years had been necessary to forge."

She turned away, but he rushed after her, and retaining her forcibly by her dress, exclaimed;

"Great heaven! Clarice, you cannot be in earnest? Recall your cruel words! I sue for forgiveness—on my knees, I ask it. I will defy my father, and marry you at once. To-morrow—next week—any day—any time; only say that you will be mine."

"Never," said Clarice proudly. "The being I loved, was gifted with every noble thought, every kindly impulse; but *you*, no—you are not that one: and I thank God, that I have discovered it before it was too late! I loved the creature of my own fantasy; and in wedding you, I should be forced, day by day, to strip my idol of some of his false pretenses, until the base and earthly nature came forth from the unreal glory my imagination had cast around him. No—no—I never will be your wife."

"Then be it so, madam," said Allan releasing her; and stepping haughtily aside, she passed rapidly into the house, without casting one glance behind. He watched her receding figure, in the hope that there

would be one look, one faint sign of relenting; but there was none, and he stamped upon the ground in impotent rage, and in his heart of hearts, cursed that meddling little jilt, Mary Herbert.

As Clarice entered, the guests were departing, and she was glad to shelter her pallid face beneath her hood, until the carriage drove to the door. Mary Herbert approached her, as she was about to descend into the yard, and pressing her hand tenderly, whispered:

"Forgive me, Clarice; it was seemingly a cruel ordeal, but it was to save you from the future."

"I do forgive, Mary," she returned in the same tone, "and the day will come, when I shall thank you; though *now*—" and the faint, tremulous whisper in which the last words were spoken, revealed the world of anguish which was convulsing the heart that had so utterly trusted its happiness in the keeping of another.

## CHAPTER XXX.

Stunned by the first violence of the blow, she had so unexpectedly received, Clarice, much as she suffered, scarcely felt the full bitterness this sudden recoil of feeling must inflict, until time for reflection had been allowed. The keen sorrow of finding one whom we have looked up to as superior, and loved as noble in mind and heart, destitute of integrity and moral worth, is anguish too deep for words. This was hers, in all its bitterness; but she struggled resolutely against it, and but for the paleness of her cheek, when she arose on the following morning, and the occasional abstraction of her manner, none but a mother's eye would have noted that a change so fraught with suffering had passed over her. Her contempt for Allan, was too profound to suffer one emotion of regret for his loss. No; she wept over her buried hopes—her bright dreams vanished in the darkness of distrust—

"T is not the lover which is lost,  
The love for which we grieve  
It is the price that they have cost,  
The memories which they leave."

The poetry of her young life, the first romance of an unhackneyed heart, were forever destroyed; but for him, the inflictor of this great wrong, there could remain no gentle thought, no tender feeling, in her outraged soul.

The next morning, while the family were still seated around the breakfast table, a letter was brought in. It was for Mr. Ruggles, and a faint flush passed over the cheek of Clarice as she glanced at the post-mark, and saw that it came from her former place of residence. Deliberately wiping his spectacles, and putting them on, Mr. Ruggles proceeded to read the contents, and a dark frown settled on his brow, as he folded it and placed it in his pocket. As his niece was rising from the table, he said:

"I wish to see you a moment alone, Clarice. This letter concerns you."

Clarice turned toward her mother. He understood the glance, and added—

"Your mother can be present at our conversation, if you wish it."

The three entered the parlor together; Clarice fearing she scarcely knew what. Her trembling heart foreboded something of Allan, and she feared her outward firmness would fail her, in the ordeal which approached. Her uncle took from his pocket the letter he had just received, and handed it to her in silence. It was from Col. Allan, in answer to the one Mr. Ruggles had addressed to him, and contained the following words:

MR. RUGGLES:

Sir—I am at a loss to understand your communication to me, as I have never withheld my consent to the union of my son with your niece. On the contrary, I should gladly welcome any amiable and accomplished woman as his wife, in the hope that her influence might achieve for him, what mine can not, by inducing him to settle down at once, into the character of a domestic man and a useful member of society.

Your niece I have seen, and I could not desire a more charming wife for Edward. There must be some misunderstanding; as I scarcely think he would misrepresent me, in an affair of this kind; and my consent, had only to be asked by him, to be granted to anything

that he thinks will contribute to his happiness.

As to the portion you choose to settle upon your niece, I leave that entirely with yourself. My son is independent, and Miss Elmore would be a sufficient prize herself, without the addition of fortune.

Respectfully

GEORGE ALLAN.

"Well niece, what do you think of that?" asked the old gentleman, looking full at Clarice, as if to read her very soul. She struggled to keep back her tears.

"I think dear uncle, that I can never be sufficiently grateful to you, for your kind endeavors to promote my happiness; although in the present instance, they have been made in vain. This letter is only an additional proof of the hollowness of the professions which have been made, with the intention to deceive me. I have already broken the engagement, which you are aware existed between Mr. Allan and myself. Let this suffice; it is painful to me to speak on this subject. Be assured, I would not now be his wife, if he sued to me with all the truth of affection of which I once believed myself the object."

A knock on the door was heard—a servant entered and said: "A letter for Miss Clarice, sir; the boy waits for an answer."

Clarice broke the seal with nervous haste, for she saw that it was from Allan, and she wished to see what he could possibly have to say, after the decisive interview of the previous night.

"Clarice" he began, "I can not leave finally, without again hazarding an appeal to the heart that was once mine. Last night, in the anger of the moment, at discovering what your high-toned sensibility led you to consider as an inconsistency to yourself, you used words which on calmer reflection you may regret. Clarice, I solemnly swear, that when I place you in comparison with Miss Herbert, I curse my stupid infatuation. I *did* make love to her, but it was merely *pour passer le tems*.—Yes, as a distraction to the vacancy of the hours, passed at a distance from you. Think, too, how habitual the language of gallantry becomes to a man,

who is so accustomed to see his attentions sought after, and highly prized. My vanity has been gratified by such things, but my heart has been touched by you—you alone. I love you truly—deeply. You will forget that little cloud. Your pride is insulted, but your heart will speak in my favor. I have been the choice of your *first* affections, and they will not appeal to you in vain. As your husband, Clarice, I will become all you have ever dreamed me. Recall me, and I leave this spot with you as my companion. If not, we meet no more.

Your devoted

EDWARD ALLAN.

Clarice read this effusion twice, with a burning cheek and indignant spirit. Even there was stamped the seal of his vanity. Amid his professions of love for herself, was expressed reliance on his own irresistible fascinations, and the impotence of her efforts to escape from them. With a full heart she sought her own apartment, and hurriedly wrote the following reply.

"That we may never meet again, I earnestly hope. Your appeal is vain—for it is addressed to a heart which has fathomed the hollowness, the falsehood of your own. The high and passing affection of such a nature as yours, can be of little worth to one of earnest and strong feelings. You rely on being the object of my first affections. I have read somewhere, and I now fully believe it, 'that the origin of half the *first loves* of young hearts, is *ignorance*, and their death blow, *experience*.' If the mere experience of life can disenchant, how much more quickly will the knowledge of perfidy on the part of the one beloved, have that effect? You have wounded me, where the feelings of my sex are most sensitive; you have endeavored to make another believe herself preferred before me, and you had not even the poor excuse of sincerity toward her, to offer for your conduct. If you had loved her, I could have believed that in myself was the want of attraction; but no—your heartless avowals of affection, were merely made to fill up the vacancy of your hours!

"The man in whose power I place my destiny for good or ill, must possess more

dignified resources, or he forfeits my respect. You allude to the power you once possessed over my affections: learn that with the conviction of your treachery, passed away that power; for I assure you it is the simple truth. It is true, you have destroyed the bright vision of human excellence, which lived, and had its being in my heart of hearts; but the last and crowning despair you have not been permitted to inflict—that of completing your deception, by linking my faith with your own.

"Oh thou, who art capable of assuming the semblance of so much that is noble and good, to accomplish thy own purposes, go forth, and seek to render thy seeming a reality; that the approbation of conscience, and the smiles of the noble among earth's creatures, may rightfully belong to thee!

"If any thing could have influenced my decision, it would have been the reception of the enclosed letter from your father. You will see from it, that I know how completely I have been your dupe. A falsehood toward a woman you professed to adore, and with such a motive! Look into the human heart, and judge how much of love can be left in mine, for him who invented it."

The letter was dispatched, and Clarice remained with a feeling of blank desolation in her heart, which she vainly struggled to overcome. She was not permitted to indulge her sorrow in solitude. Through the efforts of her relatives, the house was kept constantly filled with company, and one plan of amusement followed another so rapidly, that no time was left for thought. Clarice tried to be interested in passing events; she had courage and strength to conceal beneath a fictitious gayety, the desolation that reigned within her soul; but the voice of mirth, of flattery, even of hope, found no echo there. She was suffering from that terrible reaction of feeling, whose first surges are those of despair.

Herbert, encouraged by her mother, was ever near her, offering the most delicate and unobtrusive attentions. For many weeks he dared not allude to his hopes; but gradually he acquired confidence to speak on the subject, with the eloquence which true feeling ever imparts.

Clarice listened without interruption, and after a few vague sentences, so indistinctly uttered, that he could not understand them, she more composedly referred him to her uncle, and abruptly left him.

Herbert was too happy to mark her manner—he did know how long the engagement between herself and Allan had existed—how much of faith, strong hopes and deep love, had been shipwrecked on her side; or he would not have been so precipitate in preferring his suit. That she had broken the engagement herself he knew; and, ignorant of the causes which had influenced her, he flattered himself that she had found that her affection for Allan had not stood the test of time and absence. It is true, he had witnessed her emotion on the evening of the party at his father's; but he easily persuaded himself, that he might have misinterpreted its cause, and his sister had never betrayed to him the occurrences of that evening, in which she was implicated. Anxious for his happiness, believing that when once united to him, Clarice would do justice to his many excellent qualities, and in the end become more truly attached to him than she had ever been to Allen, Mary Herbert looked forward with unalloyed satisfaction, to the successful termination of his suit.

Allan had returned to his own home, and nothing farther was heard from him.

### CHAPTER XXX.

Mrs. Elmore and her daughter sat together at one end of the long gallery, engaged in earnest conversation; while Emma, at some distance from them, leaned with her head against the railing, her long curls sweeping over her face, as she bent over a book she appeared entirely absorbed in.

It was the first time for many weeks, that the house had been entirely free from company, and Mrs. Elmore felt her heart grow unquiet, as she looked upon the wild eyes of her daughter, so strangely contrasted by the listless apathy of manner, which expressed an utter wear-

iness of life, with all its varied cares and interests.

"Clarice," she said, "much as this engagement pleases me, your apparent want of interest in what mostly concerns yourself, chills me to the very soul."

"What more would you have, mother?" asked the young girl, with slight bitterness. "Your wishes will be gratified; I shall marry Herbert. You tell me that I shall be happy; I am content to take your experience, to rely upon your judgment; what more can I do?"

Mrs. Elmore sighed.

"My daughter, you no longer give me your confidence. Once your soul was open to me; now it is veiled. I do not understand you?"

"I would to God I could understand myself," muttered Clarice; "but all is dark, dark. My soul wrestles in an abyss of gloom. There are hours when I almost fear myself."

"My child! what do you mean?" asked her mother, in alarm, as she gazed upon her convulsed features.

Clarice leaned her head upon her shoulder, and wept bitterly.

"Dear mother, I am very, very unhappy."

"Confide in me, my beloved; it will lighten your sorrow."

"I feel that I am acting a miserable part. Herbert is noble, generous; and I am recklessly periling the happiness of such a man, by my weak selfishness. He is not one to be contented with endurance; and I—Oh why did I not know him, before this blight passed over my soul! I despise, I loathe myself."

"My dear Clarice, if this marriage really makes you unhappy, you shall be released from it. Speak; you shall decide for yourself. Forget my wishes; allow them to have no weight in influencing your final decision."

"No, no; I dare not recede. My word is plighted; Herbert seems happy in the thought that I shall be his. Besides, I will not, suffer him to triumph in the belief that he left me to pine over my crushed hopes; that thought nerves me to endurance."

She proudly arose, and dashed the traces of emotion from her features. At that moment they were startled by a

thrilling cry from Emma, who had started from her seat, and stood pale and trembling, a short distance from it.

"What is it, dear Emma?" inquired Clarice, looking eagerly around; but she saw nothing; the sound of a retreating footstep was, however, distinctly heard.

"I—I saw that dreadful Brady; he who captured me before, standing there—there, just beyond those bushes, looking at me!"

The two ladies drew near, in much perturbation.

"Are you certain, Emma?" asked Mrs. Elmore, quietly. "It may have been fancy."

"No, no; I saw him as plainly as I see you. When I screamed, he jumped over the hedge, and ran down toward the bayou below the yard."

"My uncle must be informed of this," said Clarice, gravely; "let us go to him immediately."

Mr. Ruggles appeared to be annoyed and vexed, that Emma should have been so much alarmed; but he did not appear as much surprised as they expected. He strictly forbade her to venture beyond the yard, unaccompanied by some member of the family: this precaution, he felt assured, would insure her safety. When the two girls had retired, he said to Mrs. Elmore—

"I had a letter from this wretched man, who claims her as his child, only yesterday. I can not imagine how he discovered her, in so retired a place. Here is the epistle; you can see from its tenor, that it will be no difficult matter to buy his right from him. Emma says she distinctly remembers being sold to him, by a man she called father; though she does not think he really stood in that relation to her."

Mrs. Elmore opened the soiled and crumpled paper, and read the following specimen of phonetic writing.

Sus,

without askin my leve yew talk from me a young gurl that bilongd to me, whose taluns would have bin profitable to me, not to menshun that she is lorfully marrid to my sun, who is almost brokin hartid at thers separation. I appele to your konshins, if this is rite.

Yew must ether kum down ban-somely on the nale, or I shall kick up a fus yew wont like. My clames must be pade, and my sun's hart must have a plaister of bank notes, or twont git over the grate grefe of losin his little duck.

You can see me if you cum alone to the entrans of Black Bayou, to a tree blastid by lightin—and I wont leve this naberhood till you see me: face to face we can ma be come to turms. This is sent by a safe hand who wil shew yew the way. PEZE WICKEM.

"Will you venture to go, my dear sir?" asked Mrs. Elmore.

"By all means; there can be no danger to me, and the poor child shall be rescued at once, from her fears of her tormentors; I will pay them a ransom, and send them off. If it were not for bringing Emma's name so unpleasantly before the neighborhood, I would take a few of the negroes and arrest these men. The county court would soon dispose of them, and we should be delivered from all apprehensions on their account."

Black Bayou was a noted place of resort for thieves, and runaway slaves. It was a deep ravine, washed in the earth by the heavy rains, to which the country is liable. As the soil crumbles, the weight of the trees standing near, precipitates them down the slide, and as the gap annually widens and deepens, a gulf of verdure is formed, which in summer is extremely pleasing to the eye. During a wet season, a turbid stream struggles through the drooping vines and roots of trees matted together in the deepest part of the dell, but in spring and summer the dry surface offers a secure foothold to its wretched inhabitants.

Those bayous form a singular feature in the alluvial lands lying near the mouth of the Mississippi: the soft soil offers little resistance to the action of water; and a neglected furrow, sometimes a few strokes of a spade, form the commencement of one.

A sapless, withered tree, stood at the entrance of a narrow pathway, half-concealed by blackberry bushes, and other low shrubs, which overhung it. It descended almost perpendicularly about twenty feet, and then wound gradually

toward the bottom of the ravine. Where the gorge made a sudden turn, the winter torrents had widened the space at the bottom, and left a bed of smooth, dark-looking earth, from which grass of a pale green tint, began to spring. Two mighty trees which once towered toward heaven, had fallen with the yielding soil, and after sliding about half-way down the precipitous descent, had found a resting-place for their roots against those of other monarchs of the forest, which had previously shared their fate. Unable to sustain the weight of their immense branches, they had toppled over, and rested on the opposite side of the gorge, their leafy verdure matted together with wild vines, forming a screen almost impervious to the noon-day sun.

The sides of this verdant temple were covered with grass, moss, and wild flowers, which formed a variegated tapestry, for what old Wickem called his hall of audience. Far in the deepest shadow, a figure could at intervals be seen, flitting around dull fire, over which hung a pot, containing some savory mess.

Wickem was seated on a clumsily constructed bench, beneath one of the trees, smoking. The lines about his hard and acute face, had deepened, and the sullen mouth had acquired a more decidedly repulsive expression. He now, however, appeared to be in an unusually good humor.

Jem Brady, leaned lazily against the side of the ravine, watching the motions of his wife, as she superintended the culinary preparations for dinner. Wickem at length spoke.

"You say, Jem, that old Squaretoes will certainly be here by two o'clock?"

"Yes, certainly; he refused to come at a later hour, because you see, Wick, your drawing-room here, has n't the best of reputations. Precisely at two, he will be at the blasted tree; and he agreed to come down, when I told him to ask Kate if you was n't a cripple from the rheumatism."

A fierce imprecation broke from the lips of Wickem, coupled with the name he had conferred on Emma while under his authority.

"That girl shall yet suffer pang for pang; for all I have endured on her account," he said savagely. "I'll see this old fellow, get a round sum from him,

and decamp as I promise; but it will only be as a blind. When they are in fancied security I will pounce upon them, seize their darling, and before they have recovered from their consternation, will have her beyond their reach."

Brady shook his head—

"Better give her up, Wick. She's been trouble enough to us afore this, without getting yourself into another scrape about her. The little witch finds friends to help her out of every difficulty."

"Aye, she *has* heretofore, but the next trap shall be better set. Do you think I could live and know this girl happy and prosperous? I never can look on my crippled limbs without an intense desire to drag her from her happiness."

"But it always ends in your own discomfort. Besides, when you succeed in getting her in your power again, you will not find her more tractable than heretofore. How will you compel her to act with the troupe, if she refuses?"

"I do not intend to attempt it. I have a better object in view; and to accomplish it, I do not choose her abduction to be known to the rest of the troupe. That is the reason why I have separated for the present from all of them, but you and your wife."

"What then are your plans?" asked Brady, with some appearance of curiosity.

Wickem shook his head mysteriously, and beckoning Brady close to his side, whispered a few words in his ear. He looked puzzled and doubtful, but presently said—

"It may work well, but to my mind it's a great risk. However, it is time for me to meet the old gentleman at the rendezvous. You'd better take my advice, and make a fast bargain with the old one; he will pay handsomely to get rid of you entirely."

"Pooh! you argue like an idiot. When Pete Wickem can get paid twice, did you ever know him to fight shy, even if there was danger in the wind? You attend to your part of the business, and things will go all square and straight."

"Oh I'm accommodatin, as you knew a long while ago, Pete." And he lazily threaded his way toward the top of the abrupt ascent. When he reached the level of the upper earth, he cast his eyes

over the undulating ground, until the white buildings and flourishing fields of the wealthy planter arrested his attention. After the fashion of his profession, he soliloquized aloud—

"It seems a most a pity, to take little Kate from that nice place, and the enjoyment of a nice fortin to boot; but, as the copybooks say, 'necessity has no law,' and the Bible says, 'charity begins at home,' and for that matter, *stops* there too in most cases: so poor Kate must become an interesting victim, because old Wick and I need the rhino; and charity with us must stop at home, 'cause we can't afford to let her go a visitin on no account, whatever. She's a nice inmate, and we ought n't to part with her at no price. Ah, here comes the old nob. If there was any chance for him to 'dopt me, now, would n't I turn state's evidence against old Wick, and play the d—l with his schemes? Would n't I be a dutiful and affectionate son to the old feller, spendin' his shiners right royally for him, and doin' the good son as we acts it for the 'musement of the public?'"

As he thus muttered the fancies that entered his mind, Mr. Ruggles approached at a slow pace, followed, a few paces in the rear, by a very black and athletic negro, who carried a pair of pistols in his hands, holding them however as if he was mortally afraid of injuring himself with them. The old gentleman bowed stiffly, and was about to speak, when Brady called to the negro—

"Hillo! lily-white, what use have you got for them barkers? I'll just trouble you to turn their muzzles toward the earth, as I have no desire to be shot this morning."

"Be not afraid," said Mr. Ruggles; "Pompey will hardly be guilty of so lubberly an act. I do not choose to venture into your den without some assurance of protection against treachery. My servant takes his station here, and if I do not return before the sun strikes yonder bough, he fires one of the pistols as a signal to my overseer, who holds himself in readiness to come to my assistance, and keeps the other for his own defense."

Brady stared, and said sullenly—

"We are neither robbers, nor cut-throats, mister."

"Perhaps not; but it is best always to be prepared, when one has dealings with persons of doubtful character. Lead the way, if you please, as I prefer following you."

Thus admonished, Brady descended, and Mr. Ruggles slowly toiled after him, for it was no slight undertaking for a person heavily made as he was, to follow the steep pathway. They at length reached the bottom, and, after scrambling through a narrow pass, trampled through the matted shrubs, they stood in Wickem's hall of audience, the cool shade of which was extremely welcome to the new comer. Brady, with a great show of politeness, placed a rude seat made of an old stump, and offered him a gourd of water from a limpid spring, which flowed down the side of the ravine, in a narrow thread of silver. Wickem only nodded his head at his guest, and said gruffly—

"Glad to see you, old feller. I hope you come to do the clever thing by me, since you *are* come."

Mr. Ruggles looked around him in some surprise—

"This is truly a pleasant spot. But are you not sometimes troubled with snakes, in a place so suitable for them to harbor in?"

Wickem answered with great *sang froid*—

"Oh! there's nothing like getting used to a thing. We do n't mind 'em. See! there is one hanging over your head now. How gracefully he twines himself about that bough! Do n't be afraid; they never trouble us, since we cleared the underwood away."

Mr. Ruggles arose precipitately, and said—

"I have an antipathy to the reptiles, which I can not overcome. If you please, Mr. Wicks, we will proceed at once to business."

"As you please," growled Pete; "the quicker, the better. But my name is not Wicks; it's Wickem."

"Ah, very well; excuse the mistake. I wish you to say at once, what sum will forever rid my adopted daughter of your persecutions. I wish it to be distinctly understood that this is to be your last application to me. In case of another, I shall know how to proceed."

"Laconic; well that 's to the point; and I say two thousand dollars down, and no less."

"And I say it is too much by half," said Mr. Ruggles, rising: "so I shall turn you over to the tender mercies of the law, in case I hear from you again."

Pete laughed scornfully.

"Look at me," said he fiercely: "see my form bent, but not with age; my limbs shrunk and withered, before their time; through the ducking that girl you call your daughter, obtained for me; and then refuse, from your superfluity, the means of purchasing a home in which to pass my old age. As surely as you do, I say, beware."

"Pooh! your threats frighten me not. I came hither with a desire to compromise, as I naturally wish the connection of such as you are, with the destiny of my adopted daughter, to remain unknown in the neighborhood in which she lives. Say half the amount named, for yourself, and altogether waive the iniquitous claims of your son; and I will pay that sum cheerfully. If not, our negociation is at an end. Remember, however, that your threat carries no weight with it; you dare not tear this young girl from my protection; for I would seek for you the world over, and inflict such a punishment upon you, as would make even such miscreants as yourself, tremble to think of."

"That 's as it may be," said Wickem; "but it 's no use talkin'; big words don't frighten me. But as to the money, if I can't get all, I must take half, I suppose."

"Very well; I came prepared," replied Mr. Ruggles, and he drew from his pocket-book a check, and filled it for the amount named, having brought with him a bottle of ink and a pen for the purpose. As he handed it to Wickem, he said—

"Make a good use of this, for it is the last you will ever obtain from the same source: and leave this neighborhood immediately, or it may be greatly the worse for you."

"Oh! I shall make myself scarce to-night. Give my love to little Kate, and tell her I know her affectionate heart will grieve when she hears that poor Mother Moll is dead. She took too much of the spiritual, poor creature, and fell down stairs, and broke her fat neck."

Brady conducted Mr. Ruggles to the foot of the pathway, and there left him to find his way to the level earth above. He safely reached home, with the joyful news to Emma, that her fears of her old persecutor, might henceforth be forever laid at rest.

Cheerful was the group which assembled that evening on the moonlit gallery. The conversation of the morning, unsatisfactory as it had been, seemed to have removed a portion of the weight from the spirits of Clarice. She herself, proposed to bring out her guitar, and play an accompaniment to Emma's charming voice. Herbert and his sister joined them in the course of the evening; and until a late hour they lingered, unwilling to end so pleasant a reunion.

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## EMMA WALTON

OR

## TRIALS AND TRIUMPH.

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VOL. II.

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# EMMA WALTON:

OR

## TRIALS AND TRIUMPH.

### CHAPTER I.

TURN we to the magnificent abode of Mr. Ferris. The angel of Death, was again hovering over the stately walls, in which mournful hearts had so long held their vigils, beside the couch of the suffering child; but now, he came as a deliverer—to bear away upon his bosom, the stricken one, who had so long lingered between life and death: and there was meek thankfulness, mingled with anguish, in the mother's heart, as she supported his weary head within her loving arms.

It was a summer's eve, so calm, so breathless, that not even a leaf was seen to quiver on the trees which shaded the lawn upon which the death-chamber opened. The small couch upon which his crippled form rested, was drawn near to one of the windows, through which the branches of a rose-bush in full bloom had found their way; and the bright crimson buds offered a sad contrast to the pale boy, like them in his first youth, but ah! how unlike in all that makes the life of youth, of hope, of joy.

Mr. Ferris sat at the foot of the bed, and gazed upon the features convulsed, at intervals, with acute pain, and his own heart writhed with every throe of suffering imprinted upon that young face, once so bright with intelligence and beauty. How bitterly had the forsaken child been avenged, daily, hourly for years, by the slow consuming suffering of him who had so

mercilessly wronged her. Well is it that each moment can bear only its own pang; or the proud form would have been bowed to the earth, the haughty intellect a wreck, beneath the accumulated sufferings of this man. Unmoved, stoical, as he appeared, there was a world of storming passion, of rebellious agony, within his inmost soul, of which others dreamed not. Selfish to the last degree, the few objects that were *his*, were loved with an intensity of which few are capable. Arrogant as selfish, he could not bear the thought that *his* child should be the victim of such a fate, as had been awarded him.

His wife alone, understood much of what was passing within his mind: their souls had drawn nearer to each other, during their long watches beside the couch of their child, and Caroline looked with more love upon the prematurely whitened hair, and furrowed brow of her husband, than in the early days of their marriage had been bestowed upon the handsome lover, who had wooed her from poverty and obscurity to be his bride. With earnest tenderness, she sought to soothe the irritated spirit to peace; and could she have penetrated the dark recesses so jealously sealed to her, she might have been a ministering angel indeed to him.

Ferris was sustained—was comforted, by this display of affection; and in his inmost soul, he felt how necessary it was to his very existence. That lately awakened love, was his treasure: he looked

into those clear eyes, oftener veiled by sorrow, and read there that which sent a wild thrill of happiness to his heart—for confidence, trust, sympathy, and warm love, were now in their glance. Then would come the chilling fear, should she ever discover the dark secret of his life! There was horror in the thought; and the suicide's grave arose in appalling distinctness before him as his only refuge, should some fatality ever betray to her, that which would as surely cause her pure and upright soul to recoil from him, as from some loathsome plague-stricken wretch. With such terrible alternations of feeling, it was not wonderful that silver threads gleamed thickly among his dark locks; that lines of thought were drawn upon his brow.

In the sweet face of the pale mother might be read the history of the inward struggle, which had enabled her to preserve, amid her bitter trials, that self-command which kept her faith pure, her soul from repinings which would have recoiled on all within the sphere of her influence. If there is an earthly scene on which angel's eyes dwell lovingly, it is the domestic circle, presided over by a thoughtful, tender, and refined woman; shedding the influence of a gentle and affectionate heart over all around her. The turbulent are softened; the wilful rendered manageable; the sensitive sustained by this divine influence of love, which is the true manifestation of a holy spirit. "Love one another," said the master, and she who takes that precept for the guide of her life, in its true meaning, will need no noisy disputant to espouse her rights, in this age of universal emancipation.

Mrs. Ferris watched the changing features of her child, with the consciousness that life was parting from his worn frame, and a prayer of thankfulness, that his bitter sufferings were nearly ended, arose from the believing mother's heart. Her eyes looked into his, as if to ask the parting soul if it could bid a final adieu to earth, without one glance of recognition which she might carry with her into the years which would elapse before they should again greet each other in the future land. Her yearning wish was granted; suddenly the small hand which lay

in hers, grasped it with that eager clutch so expressive of acute pain. She leaned over him, and said—

"My darling, you suffer greatly."

His dim eyes lighted up; a faint smile gleamed upon his lips, and he answered, in the soft, collected voice of other days—

"Yes, mother; but it is past now; all is well," and with a radiant expression of peace, his spirit passed from its earthly tenement. The mother held the lifeless form to her breast for many moments, with unutterable feelings of joy and thankfulness. He had evidently known her, and she could now rejoice that he was released from his sufferings. Laying his head gently upon the pillow, she raised her tearful eyes to her husband's face, and said—

"He is at last at rest. Let us kneel together beside his bed, my beloved husband, and pray earnestly to God, to prepare us to meet him in the better land."

Mr. Ferris drew back—

"My soul is dark; I can not pray to Him, who has punished the innocent and unoffending, in so terrible a manner."

"Yet our child is now with angels," she softly said—"all his sufferings forgotten—all repaid a thousand fold."

"But we—we who wander in darkness and sorrow; where shall we find consolation for the loss of our bright, our noble boys?"

"In the mercy of Him who is as mighty to save as to destroy. Oh! my dearest husband, if your soul could bow before his requirements, how much lighter would this affliction prove!"

"It may be so with you, my meek-spirited Caroline, but such turbulent, unbelieving souls as mine, can find no consolation in your faith. I would it were not so."

He turned away; the mother sighed heavily, and knelt alone beside her dead child, and prayed in agony of spirit for the benighted one, while he leaned against the wall, and looked upon the living mother, and the lifeless son, with a feeling of gloomy relief. The long agony was over, the protracted punishment to his guilt passed; henceforth he would devote his life to his remaining child; he would seek a foreign shore, and in leaving behind the sorrowful recollections of the past,

would again find happiness and joy. His long-suffering wife, would once more smile upon him, with something of her former buoyancy of heart. Ah, yes! there should yet be mirth and light-hearted enjoyment beneath his roof: his darling child should no longer have her young life clouded by gloom and suffering; already had it made her too quiet, and thoughtful for her years.

Mr. Ferris at length arose, and went into the next room. A tall, slender girl, with dark eyes and jet black hair, sat beside a window, with her head supported upon her hands. She did not heed her mother's entrance, until she stood beside her and laid her hand upon her shoulder. She started, and looked up—

"How is Georgy now, mother?" she asked.

"He is better, much better," replied the mother calmly, as she looked searchingly into the face of her child.

"I am so glad to hear it. May I go in, and see him?"

"Presently, love; he sleeps now."

The girl looked keenly into her face, and the color receded from her own, as she quickly asked—

"Is it—is it his last sleep, mother?"

"It is, my darling. I have prepared you for this; you will not feel it too keenly?"

Her frame quivered with emotion—

"Oh! I can not help it! And must he too, be put away in darkness, as my pretty Wilfred was; never, never to be seen again on earth?"

"Yes, my own love; but think how much suffering he is released from; how happy he now is, with the angels in heaven."

"That is a beautiful thought; but oh mother, the other! the cold, cold grave, with the suffocating earth piled above his breast! Oh it is terrible!"

She threw herself into her mother's arms, and wept convulsively. As the sounds of her distress reached Mr. Ferris, he entered the room, and approached her with such words of endearment as were wont to soothe her. In reply to them, the girl raised her head and cast a look full of anguish upon him. He recoiled, as if suddenly struck, from the wild expression of her eyes, and exclaimed—

"Good God! how like!"

He turned away, and hurried out upon the lawn, that he might have space to breathe, to shake off the sudden horror that had filled his soul. He rapidly paced to and fro beneath the trees, with a new and terrible cause of uneasiness in his heart. Strange that he had never before been struck with the remarkable resemblance his daughter bore to Gilbert Hunter, his mad brother-in-law. He, whose insanity he had gloated over, as his own preservation from ruin, again looked upon him from the eyes of his idolized child, his last earthly hope. Should she inherit the fatal disease! There was unutterable wretchedness in the thought; yet that look, when she raised her head from her mother's breast, wore the same expression which had glared upon him from Hunter's eyes, when he last looked upon him, chained in the madman's cell. Should the curse which clung to him and his be thus consummated? It was a terrible fear, but once admitted to his breast, it was there forever as a haunting specter, that would not be laid to rest.

## CHAPTER II.

DEEP into the woodland the unhappy father wandered, but its quiet beauty spoke no peace to his restless soul. The evening sunshine fell softly upon the green sward, the birds chattered gayly among the foliage of the trees, all nature breathed of peace and tranquillity, while he, fit type of fallen humanity, endeavored, by rapidity of motion, to allay the fever of wretchedness that irritated his whole being.

In a retired part of the park, crouched in a thicket of underwood, a squalid, ruffianly-looking man watched his approach, and his fierce eye gleamed with ferocious joy as it caught the flash of the diamond in his bosom, and the glittering of the costly guard chain which secured his watch. Want, suffering, and dissipation were legibly imprinted upon the meager features, and his eye glared with fixed determination upon the approaching figure, while his fingers nervously clutched

the handle of a knife concealed in his bosom. Cautiously changing his position, he prepared himself for a sudden spring upon his intended victim, as he passed his place of concealment; but when within a few paces of the spot, Mr. Ferris suddenly turned, as if to retrace his steps. With a muttered imprecation, the meditated assassin arose to his feet, displaying a thick-set, powerful frame, clad in the habiliments of a sailor, though much worn and soiled.

"Now or never," he muttered, as he followed in the footsteps of his intended victim. "I see the house rising among the trees, not a quarter of a mile off. At the rate he goes, he will soon be near enough to cry out and be heard. Shall I kill, or only rob? Why kill—kill—kill to be sure; war to the knife, with the cursed aristocrats, these collectors of property to the injury of the poor man they mockingly call their brother. He has grown gray in prosperity, and that is happiness enough for one man, while I have worked, robbed, stabbed, and am still a miserable outcast, without a roof to cover me, or a morsel to eat, until I relieve this dainty man of his superfluities. Death makes all equal, 'tis said, and I will soon make you lordly owner of the soil, my inferior. Bah! I will spurn with my foot the human mass which, in life, would think my touch desecration."

As these half-muttered thoughts passed through his mind, he cautiously followed the rapid steps of Mr. Ferris, until an abrupt turn in the pathway concealed him from view. He calculated the distance, drew forth his knife, and sprang forward, determined at one bound to sheathe it in his heart. As he reached the angle in the pathway, with his knife raised aloft, his face bearing upon it all the revolting passions of debased mankind; his body came with stunning force against that of the man he was pursuing with such deadly intent. Both recoiled, and with great difficulty maintained their equilibrium after so violent and unexpected a shock. A servant approaching in the distance, had caused Mr. Ferris to turn suddenly; that he might avoid him, as the face of man in his present mood was odious to him; and thus had he escaped the assassin's blow. The two who

had thus met, stood gazing upon each other with an expression of evident recognition, though productive in each of very different emotions. Mr. Ferris grew pallid as death, and his frame seemed to become rigid as stone, beneath the blood-shot eyes which measured him with an expression of insolent familiarity.

"Well met by ——," said the ruffian. "For in another moment, I should have sent my best friend to Davy Jones' locker, as we sailors say."

"Wretch! how dare you address me thus?" gasped the agitated listener. "Who are you? Whence do you come, and why were you dogging my footsteps, for the purpose of taking my life?"

"Well, that's cool any how! I would not a-took your life for a cool thousand; and that is saying much, for you may see for yourself that I ain't so well off as the President of these United States, nor for that matter as Queen Vict'ry, nor the Emp'rour o' Russher nyther. But if you do n't know me, your figger head tells a lie, that's all; such men as you, don't get as white as a sheet for nothin'."

"This is strange insolence from one of your station, to one of mine," said Mr. Ferris with a desperate attempt to appear calm.

"Aye, that's all the difference between us. You planned the villainy, and I acted it out. Now don't you know me, George Ferris? or must I ask where is the girl you paid me to get out of your path to all that makes you a gentleman, and the want of which, makes me an out-cast."

"My God! my God! my punishment is more than I can bear," muttered the unhappy man. Speaking aloud, he said—"I know you now; but I have thought for years, that you had perished at sea. What brings you hither now, Dick Garwood?"

"I came in search of you, though I didn't know I was on your land, or I should not have made such a mistake as to come so nigh killing the man who is to be my best friend."

Mr. Ferris shuddered; Garwood grinned, and went on—

"I was wrecked, and got picked off of a floating timber by an English ship, bound to Rio Janeiro. I rather liked a

sailor's life, so I joined a sort o' privateer that did business on her own account—"

"In short, a pirate," interrupted Mr. Ferris, bitterly.

"Ex-actly; you hit the right nail on the head that time, comrade. Well, as I was saying, after many ups and downs, too numerous and strange to mention, here I am without a cent to my name, or a morsel to eat. You came down the path with that glittering stone in your bosom, which I knew would be worth money, and the temptation was too great; besides, I hate the rich, and I would ha' taken your life, if you had not turned just as you did. It is fortunate we have met, for I was growin' desperate from want, and I don't know what I might n't ha' told, if I had been rested as a robber or vagrant before I seen you."

"Do you intend that as a threat?" asked Mr. Ferris.

"Oh, no! merely an insinuation—a very gentle one, as to what might have tuck place; it's jest within the bounds o' human probability, as the preachers say."

Mr. Ferris sighed heavily. "Tell me at once, what will relieve me of your presence, now, and forever?"

"You are easily answered: money—money—the bright, sparkling, darling little shiners. Give me a plenty of them sweet-saers o' life, and you may take your way through the world as far from mine as you wish it to be."

"How much do you require as the price of secrecy?"

"Let me calculate. You can not have gained by the death of little Emma Walton, less than half a million. I will not be hard upon you: two per cent. on all this money, paid annually, would be a fortune for me. Yes, I will be moderate; I think that will do."

"What do you mean by her death?" asked Mr. Ferris eagerly. "Do you know—can you assure me, of her death?"

"No; only her legal death, which took place when she lost her claim to the property you possess. If necessary, I have no doubt, I could find her onderneath the shining sun yet, though it might be a heap o' trouble; and if I am paid to let her alone, I'm willin' to do so."

"You shall be paid—all—more than you demand, but on one condition; you

must leave this country. I can not look upon you, can not know you near me, and live."

"Ah! well I'm not particular, only some men's consensus is mighty queer; they can't bear the looks of those what does their biddin' in committin' a crime, though they can keep evil shet up in their hearts, and keep on doing wrong all the same. Hous'ever I'm agreeable; pay me the rhino, and I'll go to any place, where there's plenty o' blue ruin, and chaps as knows how to handle the papers."

"It is gambling then, that has brought you so low? How am I to reckon on a contract made with a gambler? At one sitting, you may lose the whole amount of your year's annuity, and then ——"

"And then you will honor an extra draft, old fellow. Nothin' like life, say I."

"But suppose I may not choose to honor drafts, that may continually come in?"

"Oh! that is supposin' an impossibility. Must, has no law. If you do n't choose to pay, I can find them as will."

"You will not find that so easy as you suppose. The girl has no friends, has long been believed dead. You do not even know where to find her."

"That's true enough; but there is a certain lady who would see her righted; and all I have to do, is to walk up to yonder house, which I see through the trees, ask for the mistress, state my facts, and then ——"

"Wretch! do you dare to dream of breathing a suspicion against me, into the mind of my wife? I would take your life, sooner than permit a word to be uttered."

Garwood chuckled—

"I knew I'd have you there. Come; let's be accommodatin', and settle the affair without any more palaver. Words don't signify nothin', so it's no use talkin'; my mind's made up."

It would be useless to attempt to delineate the tempest of bitter and insulted feeling, which careered through the breast of this haughty man, while his low-bred confederate in crime, thus addressed him. With a feeling of irrepresible and scornful loathing, he felt himself in the power of a being he regarded as utterly contemptible;

and the thought that murder would free him from this horrible thralldom, crossed his mind. He eyed the strong form before him, whose sinews were like iron, and then glanced at his own white hands: though a man of powerful frame, he felt that in a struggle for life, with such an antagonist, he could scarcely hope for the victory. Garwood seemed to understand something of what was passing in his mind, for he placed himself in an attitude of defense, and kept his eye fixed warily upon the working features of his companion. At length Mr. Ferris said—

“Meet me here three evening’s hence, and I can settle this matter in a manner satisfactory to you. In the meantime, here is money; clothe yourself decently, and obtain food.”

Garwood eagerly clutched the purse which was extended to him, and nodding familiarly, said—

“I’ll not fail; you may take your oath to that. Good bye, old feller; you’re not so bad, after all;” and he went away, whistling a gay tune as carelessly as though he had not been so near violating the solemn command, “thou shalt do no murder,” upon the very sod he so recklessly moved over.

Mr. Ferris remained in the park until darkness had shrouded every object, in a state of wretched bewilderment as to the end which was yet to come. At any moment a discovery might overwhelm him; the dissipated ruffian, in whose power he was, might, in an hour of drunken revelry, betray the secret which was of such vital importance to him; and he—his soul quivered in agony at the view of the precipice on which he stood.

When he returned to the house, the servants were startled at the wild and haggard look he wore, and they whispered among themselves that he seemed even more overcome by the long-expected death of George than he had been at the catastrophe which destroyed the child’s intellect. He did not seek his wife; he could not bear to meet her eye; and through the long hours of that night his step might have been heard, pacing up and down the library; and the impatience and rebellion of his proud spirit was evinced by the quick stamping of his feet at intervals, when the stormy nature

of his emotions would not be repressed. Mrs. Ferris was so entirely occupied with her daughter, that she dared not leave her an instant. Of a nervous and highly excitable temperament, the young girl was frequently seized with violent nervous spasms, which threatened her life; and this night was one of intense suffering to her. The dawn of day found the exhausted mother slumbering upon the same pillow which supported the head of her child, utterly worn out by excitement and suffering.

While death, anguish, and despair reigned in that house, a party stood upon the deck of a magnificent steamer which passed up the lovely river Montalto overlooked.

“What a beautiful place,” said a young man; “how charming it would be to exchange situations with the owner of such an earthly Eden.”

And thus superficially the world judges. The outward signs of prosperity are ever looked upon as indications of happiness. The speaker was eager, active, and impatient to gain life’s high places: could he have looked into the aching heart of the mistress, have read the blasted self-respect of the master of that noble residence, he would have shrunken humiliated at the thought of such an exchange.

### CHAPTER III.

Spring had opened, and the day rapidly approached which had been appointed for the union of Herbert and Clarice. The two families met daily, and all seemed happy in the anticipated marriage, save the bride-elect. On a bright evening the affianced pair sat together on the gallery, engaged in a conversation which seemed often to flag; for many moments elapsed in utter silence, during which, painful emotions seemed to be agitating the mind of Clarice. She was much changed; her complexion had assumed a marble whiteness, and her stately figure had lost much of its roundness; her eyes looked unnaturally large and bright, and the faint crimson of her

lip indicated the presence of fever. Herbert gazed on her in painful silence, for she seemed wrapped in deep thought, and he could not flatter himself that he was the cause of her abstraction. At length he took her hand, and gently said—

“My dear Clarice, I see you day by day fading before my eyes, apparently without cause, unless—” and his voice faltered, “unless my love is a persecution which is hurrying you to the grave. Speak, is it so? I can resign hope, I can condemn myself to the bitterness of all disappointments, if the sacrifice can restore to you a gleam of happiness.”

Clarice wept some moments before she was sufficiently calm to reply. She at length said—

“I asked this interview to tell you all that should have been revealed long since. You! the noble, the generous, the cause of my sorrow? Oh, no; be more just to yourself; you are worthy of my love, and I—oh! I have been a wretch, to practice deception toward you.”

She threw herself back in her chair, so convulsively agitated, that Herbert became alarmed.

“Compose yourself, dearest Clarice. Do not permit words, which were intended to soothe, to agitate you thus. In what have you deceived me?”

“In all, in every thing,” she passionately replied. “You have given me a true, generous, and feeling heart, and I—oh! forgive me, Charles; I have but bestowed upon you the dust and ashes of a despair which, if all this continues, must end in death. Day by day this conviction darkens around me; it blots out my peace of conscience, and renders me a prey to the most bitter regrets.”

Herbert buried his face in his hands, and his strong frame quivered with emotion.

“Clarice! Clarice, do not speak thus! you rend my heart,” he exclaimed, in an agitated voice. “In what have you wronged me? I was to blame; I was too impatient to secure my own happiness; I should have given you time to know me better, to—” his emotion overcame him, but he instantly proceeded, with a burst of such strong passion as made her tremble.

“Oh, my God! Clarice, is this true? Am I, after all, but endured? Is the thought of my unutterable tenderness for you but a cause of such sorrow as the grave alone may remedy? I, who fancied myself dear to you! Oh, blindness of heart, dearly, dearly is it avenged!”

The sight of his overwhelming emotion seemed to calm Clarice. She spoke in a firmer and more assured tone.

“Do not misunderstand me, Mr. Herbert. It is not the proffer of your love, which has reduced me to this; but the consciousness of how unworthy I am to possess it. The crime another practiced against me, I, in my turn, have been guilty of toward you, though not without a shadow of excuse on my part—deception.”

“Deception! again I ask, in what have you deceived me? Speak the whole truth without disguise, Clarice, that I may see at once what my future certainty must be.”

In low and broken tones, Clarice repeated the whole history of her engagement to Allan, up to the hour of their final separation. Nothing was concealed from him. She then continued—

“From the hour that his perfidy—his utter want of truth became known to me, my love for him was at an end; but it was replaced by a contemptuous loathing of myself, for having so utterly loved such a being, which rendered me inexpressibly wretched. From early girlhood his image was entwined with all my dreams of the future, and all the wild fantasy of a romantic imagination was employed in sketching scenes in which he was ever the most prominent personage. In one instant my fairy palaces crumbled into ruins at my feet, and my occupation gone. Once he had expressed jealousy of you: after the first crushing sense of the blow had passed, I recalled his words, and my heart cherished the purpose to wound him through you. I knew that a little encouragement would induce you to declare yourself my lover, and this I gave. One pang at least, was returned to the being who had so deeply wounded me, in knowing you successful where he had humbled himself, and failed.”

Herbert gazed on her in silence, but his heaving breast, and the drops of anguish that stood like rain upon his brow betrayed the fearful struggle within.

"And why is this revelation, so long withheld, now made?" he inquired in a hollow tone.

"Because it is necessary to my peace. I did not then know you as I now do. The whole race of men appeared to me alike hollow and deceitful, and in thus avenging myself for the bitter wrong I had suffered, I was but meting to you the reward which all deserved. My uncle, my mother, wished me to marry you: by so doing, I gained their approbation, and secured a brilliant worldly position. All these thoughts passed almost mechanically through my mind, but they would never have influenced me, but for the stronger motive; but"—and her voice faltered—"as day by day your true character was developed to me; as your genuine worth became known to me, my heart awoke from its torpor. The image of good I had worshiped in a treacherous soul, I found enshrined in one that was devoted to me, and I had wrapped myself in a web of falsehood that rendered me unworthy to become his. I had lost my self-respect. Behold the cause of all my sufferings, of my drooping health, my clouded spirits. I dared not plight my faith before heaven, with this sin upon my soul. I could never again have raised my eyes to yours without a feeling of remorse, as this concealment recurred to my mind; and I weakly feared to divulge all, lest the love I have deserved to forfeit, should be withdrawn from me. Now you know all; can you forgive me, Charles?"

Herbert had listened with varied emotions, to her words, but their conclusion illumined his face with a joy and happiness language can not express. He clasped her hands in his, and raised them reverently to his lips.

"Forgive! yes—forgive and bless you my own, my beloved"—he said in a voice tremulous with emotion—"Beautiful conscience, heavenly truthfulness of mind! Oh! Clarice, you were never half so dear to me as now."

"I thank you, deeply thank you," murmured Clarice, "and now I have but one more request to make. Grant that, and I shall be happy indeed."

"It is already granted, dearest."

She smiled faintly—"Nay hear it first: it may not please you. My uncle intends

to visit the North this summer, and I desire that our union may be deferred until after his return. I wish to accompany him, for such a tour will probably restore my health, and I can in the meantime, endeavor to render myself more worthy to become yours on my return."

Herbert's brow clouded.

"Why not go as my wife? You know that my affection for you, would lead me to promote your health and happiness in every possible manner."

"That is true; but I would not have our earliest wedded life darkened by sickness, and clouded spirits. Let me accompany my uncle, and I will return to you in a few months the same light-hearted Clarice you first knew, and I shall feel that in giving myself to you, I am bestowing an affection warmer, truer, firmer than that I once experienced for another. Are not my reasons sufficiently convincing?"

Herbert smiled, and yielded his consent, though not without a struggle with himself. He was rewarded by seeing the effects of this conversation in the improved cheerfulness of Clarice, and in a few days she began to move about the house with something of her former animation.

#### CHAPTER IV.

The family from Ruggleston had been spending the day at Oaklands, and returned home at a late hour. Wearing by the long drive, and the excitement of the day, Emma retired immediately on her arrival, and was soon buried in the profound slumber of innocence and youth. The movements of the household had been sedulously watched for many weeks by the emissaries of Wickem; and this was judged a proper opportunity for executing the scheme, by which he hoped again to get Emma in his power.

The night had waned to the small hours, when suddenly Emma was startled from her slumbers with a vague impression of terror on her mind. Some seconds elapsed before she could recall perfect consciousness of her whereabouts, and then her heart beat wildly with terror, as

she saw that the door which communicated with Mrs. Elmore's room was closed, and stranger still, the shutter of the window farthest from her bed stood open. She lay in breathless alarm, gazing around the room, and as the dim light became familiar to her vision, she could distinctly discern the outline of a human figure standing in front of the armoire in which her clothing was kept. A sickening feeling of terror came over her, and she made a vain effort to utter a cry, for she knew at once why that midnight intruder was there; but her voice died away in a husky murmur in her throat. For an instant she closed her eyes to shut out the terrible vision, and when she again opened them, she beheld the form bending over her. He, for it was a tall man, had raised the lace musquito-curtains, and stood with a knife in his hand, looking down on her.

Emma started up, and tried to shriek. A rough hand was pressed on her mouth, and a hoarse voice said, close to her ear—

"One cry, and I plunge my knife in your heart. Arise, put on your dress, and come with me. A comrade watches over the slumbers of your protector, and one cry from you is the signal to murder him as he sleeps. Hurry, and be noiseless, or—" he laid his hand menacingly on the blade of his knife, and, more dead than alive, Emma arose and obeyed his commands.

She saw that he had already made up a large bundle, which was lying on the floor beside the bed; and in a few moments she was ready to accompany her terrible companion. He threw the bundle from the window, and then drew the terrified girl forward. She fell at his feet, and said in an agonized whisper—

"Mercy! spare me! Oh God! I can not go!"

"You must," he replied in the same tone. "Resist, and I swear to you my knife shall do its duty."

Emma heard no more; her senses reeled, her head bowed upon her breast, and she felt motionless at his feet.

"This is well," muttered the man; "it saves a deal of trouble," and lifting her light form in his arms, he sprang from the low window, on a mound covered with flowers, and thence into the

yard. The bundle had already disappeared, and rapidly threading the walks of the shrubbery, he soon reached the road, where a close carriage was waiting, in which sat a man. The new comer placed the lifeless form of Emma on the seat beside him, as he said—

"Take her, old Wick; for it's at the risk of my neck I have got her. She's safe enough, if you do n't try to bring her out of the dead faint she's in, before we get out of hearing."

"Humph! I try, indeed! She'll do without her wits a long time, before I try to bring 'em back to her. Where's Brady? You've had plenty of time to secure the silver and other valuables."

"Oh yes; all safe. Brady has already retreated to the bayou, where he thinks it's best to bury his spoil for a while. This bundle has the girl's wardrobe in it; as I did n't wish you to have the expense of buying clothes for the little duck, I thought it would be best to bring hers along; thoughtful of me, was 'nt it, old feller?"

"In with you, Bolt, and do n't make a fool of yourself," growled Wickem; "and tell Sam to drive to our place of rendezvous."

The door was closed with a crash, and the carriage drove off at a furious pace.

Mr. Ruggles was a very early riser, and on the following morning he was up even earlier than usual; he had made an appointment to ride over to the neighboring town with Mr. Herbert on that day, and they had agreed to avail themselves of the cool hours of early morning for that purpose. On rising, he remarked with surprise, that some one must have visited his room after he retired on the previous night; for several articles were removed from their usual places; and, as the dim light of early dawn struggled through the blinds, he, with increased astonishment, saw that his secretary was partly open. On a further examination, he found that his repositories had been dexterously entered, his papers scattered, and a considerable sum of money removed. His first suspicion was that some of the slaves about the house had perpetrated the robbery; but, as he was a just man, and never acted in a hurry, he

determined to wait some hours before he acted on such a suspicion; hoping, in the meantime, to obtain some clue to the guilty party, as he was extremely averse to making an indiscriminate accusation, which must carry consternation among his household. The mild and equable sway he exercised over his slaves had endeared him to them greatly; and he could not think, without much pain, of harboring among them one capable of committing the robbery of the previous night. He walked hurriedly to and fro in the dining room, while the sable handmaid was setting his early breakfast, and Phillis wondered in her own mind, "Why master was so flustered like, she never seed the like afore." Determined to be wanting in nothing herself which could restore his usual serenity of aspect, she diligently prepared every thing for his repast. A small table was drawn in the deep recess of a window draped with the multiflora rose, and opening upon a pleasant prospect of undulating forest and cultivated fields. On the snowy cloth were placed delicately-wrought straw mats of brilliant colors, and upon them pearly china, containing figs, oranges, and melons; these, together with a bottle of claret, a bowl of cream, and a plate of bread formed the repast. The old gentleman fancied that coffee affected his nerves, and rarely indulged in its use. He ate sparingly of the luxuries spread before him, and then summoned Pompey to his presence.

To his great surprise, the negro was commanded to replace his master's horse in the stable, and ride over with all dispatch to Mr. Herbert, with a request to him to defer his intended visit until the following day, and come over to Ruggleston as soon as possible, on business of much importance.

Pompey had left the room but few moments, when Clarice entered with a morning wrapper thrown around her person, and her hair hanging in disorder over her neck and shoulders; she was very pale, and seemed dreadfully alarmed.

"What is the matter, child? Speak quick; why are you looking so white and faint?"

"Emma— Have you seen Emma this morning?" she hurriedly asked.

"Emma! Good heavens! is she not in her room?"

Clarice sank on a chair.

"She can not be found; her apartment is in the wildest disorder; the flowers are trampled beneath her window, and some one beside herself was evidently there last night."

"Good God! that explains all; and the poor child is in the power of that miscreant again, when I thought I had at last freed her from him. If there is justice in the land, I will have him hung as high as Haman, for this double robbery."

He rushed from the room, and issued his orders at once. A body of slaves was divided into two parties. The overseer took command of one, for the purpose of searching Black Bayou; while Mr. Ruggles placed himself at the head of the other, to examine the open country.

Clarice and Mrs. Elmore remained at home, in a state of wretched uncertainty; but before many hours had passed, a new discovery was made, which, for an instant, diverted their attention from the abduction of Emma. A closet, containing several valuable pieces of plate, was found broken open, and a vase of fine workmanship, peculiarly prized by the owner, had been abstracted, together with a tea equipage, and a set of spoons and forks. For the latter articles Mr. Ruggles had no particular value; but the vase had been presented to him by his fellow citizens, when a merchant of New Orleans, in commemoration of his far-reaching benevolence and self-sacrifice during a season of great suffering and distress in that city. On one side was an exquisite bas-relief, representing the ravages of disease and want in a graphic manner; and on the other, the figure of Mercy pouring wine and oil from her stores. Mr. Ruggles called it his patent of nobility, and prized its possession even above his well-earned wealth. Clarice trembled for the effect of this double blow on his excited mind; but she soon forgot her apprehensions for her uncle, in her increasing solicitude to hear from Emma.

The different parties returned, tired and worn out, but with no success in tracing the robbers. And even the loss

of his beloved vase was heard by Mr. Ruggles with indifference.

"Restore Emma to me, and the wretches are welcome to all the house contains," was his reply to the announcement.

Dinner was served, but scarcely tasted; and the old gentleman laid down to rest, after deputing Herbert, who had aided him in his search, to ride over to —, and offer large rewards for information of the fugitives. They now felt as if every thing had been done which could hold out a hope of the ultimate recovery of the lost girl, and they must sit down in restless inquietude, and await the result of their efforts in her behalf.

Mrs. Herbert and her daughter joined Mrs. Elmore and Clarice in the course of the afternoon, and vainly endeavored to console the latter for the loss of her sweet companion. Emma's many attractive qualities had completely won the affections of Clarice, and had even reconciled Mrs. Elmore to her claims on those of her wealthy brother-in-law. She was not a selfish or grasping woman, and had long since overcome the slight feeling of irritation with which she had found a stranger preferred to her own daughter, and Clarice only received under her uncle's roof as the preceptress of his adopted child.

Mrs. Elmore had bitterly suffered from the privations most keenly felt by those reduced from luxury to a life of poverty. She had struggled through many difficulties, with a reckless husband, who had estranged from himself all the members of his own family who could have assisted him. Dreading poverty as the worst of all evils, she was extremely desirous of seeing her daughter placed in such a position as must insure to her the enjoyment of worldly prosperity; but could the half of the broad lands she hoped might at least be shared with Clarice, have purchased the redemption of the lovely girl, who had been so ruthlessly torn from her home, Mrs. Elmore would gladly have consented to their sacrifice.

## CHAPTER V.

THE motion of the carriage and the cool night air gradually restored Emma, and with sickening terror she recognized the voice of Wickem in the first tones that fell on her ear. She sat perfectly motionless, unwilling to suffer her companions to know that she had recovered consciousness, and with the hope that their conversation might afford some clue as to their ulterior intentions concerning herself; but they sank into silence almost immediately, and soon from their deep breathing she felt assured that they slept. Emma leaned her throbbing brow against the window of the carriage, and gave free vent to her tears. The hope of making her escape soon inspired her with new courage. She was light and active; why not descend from the window? True, there was danger of breaking her limbs, in making the leap while the carriage was in such rapid motion; and the terrors of the lonely forest were to be encountered, even if she accomplished her object; but any thing was preferable to this state of bondage.

She held her breath, and listened to the deep breathing of her captors; they both seemed buried in profound slumber, and she attempted slowly to raise herself upon the seat. The first movement showed her, that in anticipation of such an attempt, her safety had been cared for: her feet were bound together by a silk handkerchief, and lightly but securely fastened to the ankle of the man who had captured her, so that the slightest motion caused him to stir; and as she sank back she thought she heard the sound of suppressed laughter, though the next instant he snored louder than ever.

In despair, she clasped her hands over her streaming eyes, and prayed earnestly for deliverance or death. For a few moments her prayer seemed to be on the eve of fulfillment, for the sound of rapidly-approaching wheels smote on her ear. She leaned forward, ready to cry for help to those the vehicle might contain; but, with a fainting heart, she heard them dying away in the distance, and her last chance of rescue seemed to have departed with them.

They continued their route until about an hour after daylight, when the driver turned suddenly from the road, and winding a few hundred yards among the trees, he drew up in front of a small hut built of bark and logs. It was a wretched looking hovel, and evidently untenanted.

The first beams of daylight had enabled Emma to examine the features of her captor: she found him an utter stranger, and a man of most brutal and ferocious aspect. A herculean frame, heavy features, and deeply-embrowned complexion, were embellished by an unkempt growth of black hair both on his head and face. As the carriage stopped, he yawned and opened his eyes with a broad stare at the pale face opposite to him. She shrank from his cold, inquisitive look, and made an effort to move from her seat, but the handkerchief which confined her feet reminded her of her helpless condition.

"Ho! ho! all in good time, my pretty lady. By Phoebus! but you *are* a dainty damsel," he said in a rough, jovial voice. "A bird of rare plumage has old Wick, or old Nick, at your service, nabbed this time. Which do you think the most appropriate name for him, pretty one?"

"Hold your tongue, Bolt, will you?" said Wickem sternly; "and help the girl from the carriage. Her feet must be numbed with the pressure of the handkerchief."

Emma heard him speak thus, with surprise. She had expected from him mockery and abuse, such as he had formerly lavished on her, and he spoke of her almost with kindness. She rejected the offered assistance of Bolt, and, encouraged by Wickem's changed manner, she placed her hand lightly on his shoulder, and sprang to the ground. She instantly saw that she had presumed too far; his brow grew dark, and he muttered a curse before he spoke—

"You'd best be on your good behavior this time, Miss Kate, and do n't be too willing to come nigh me; for I am dangerous at times."

Emma shrank back, and Wickem hobbled away and entered the hut.

The next time, the pretty, dainty, blushing, frightened little dear wont refuse Bolt's assistance; will it now,

sweetly?" asked that personage, placing his face almost in contact with hers, as he addressed her. Loudly laughing at her look of alarm and disgust, he obeyed the call of Wickem to prepare their breakfast."

A fire was soon kindled in the open air, and Bolt drew from the carriage-box materials for a substantial meal. Mr. Bolt soon showed himself no mean proficient in the art of cookery, and in about half an hour he served up the repast in dishes of smooth bark, torn fresh from a tree; plates of the same primitive material were provided; and, seated on a rude log, these lawless men made their morning meal with a keen appetite. Emma felt too faint and ill to eat; at the command of Wickem she endeavored to swallow a few morsels, but she found it impossible, and she sat apart, indulging in painful thought.

When they had dispatched the viands, Bolt employed himself in getting things in readiness for their departure, while Wickem approached Emma—

"Why do n't you speak?" he savagely said. "Why don't you ask where you're going? and what I am going to do with you?"

"Because I know already; but weak and helpless as I seem, I will die sooner than become the wife of your son, or the companion of such as you."

He raised his hand menacingly, and for an instant, she thought he was about to strike her, but he changed his mind, and laughing hoarsely, said—

"After all, what a spirited little d—l it is. Really I almost like you for your boldness; but in the end it won't avail you. Your fate is what I shall make it. Remember that, Kate, and do not foolishly struggle against my power. As to dying, that's all stuff."

The carriage was now in readiness to proceed, and at Wickem's command she entered it. In the driver Emma recognized one of their old troop, but she turned with a hopeless heart from the look of compassion he gave her: she knew that he would never dare to disobey Wickem; and from that quarter she could hope for no assistance. Her former tyrant was unusually quiet, and poor Emma only dreaded him the more on that account.

She thought that he must be secure of retaining her in captivity, and waited until they arrived at the end of their journey, to display his former ferocity toward her.

Daylight rendered it unnecessary to take any precautions for securing their captive, and Emma sat perfectly free. The carriage rolled rapidly onward, and again the two men betook themselves to fitful slumbers, during which Bolt held her dress grasped between his fingers.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE road wound through a dense forest during the greater portion of the day; occasionally a plantation would appear in sight, but they were whirled past it with a rapidity that defied all attempts to make an appeal for assistance on the part of the captured girl. As the sun began to decline in the west, they were approaching a bayou, with a steep hill on either side, clothed with thick undergrowth; at the foot of the one they were about to descend, and over the narrowest part of the chasm, a rude bridge had been constructed. The road was slightly winding, and the driver had commenced the descent, before he ascertained that the dell was already tenanted by another party. Voices were distinctly heard, and soon figures were seen flitting to and fro, busily engaged in repairing what appeared to be a dilapidated stage-coach. Emma uttered an ejaculation of thanks, and the two men aroused themselves from their slumbers.

"What shall we do now?" inquired Bolt in an enraged tone. "See, that stupid Waters has commenced the descent, and there is no retreating."

Wickem swore terribly.

"I see nothing for it, but to brave them all; they have no right to stop us on the public road, and the girl here is too much afraid of me to disobey me. Hark! ye, Miss Kate, hold that tongue of yours, or you'll bitterly repent it."

As he spoke, he drew a pistol from his bosom, and deliberately leveled it at her. "One word now, if you dare."

His commands were briefly given to the driver, to proceed without regard to any call for assistance that might be made. The carriage reached the bridge, passed it, and was rapidly driving past the group of men who were trying to replace one of the wheels on their vehicle, when a voice hailed, and commanded them to stop.

The driver whipped his horses in reply, and in the next instant a pistol was fired after them. He instantly dropped the reins, leaped from his seat, and fled toward the bayou, in whose friendly shelter he was soon concealed. Bolt quickly unclosed the door, leaped out, and gave a practical illustration of his name, by following the example thus set; leaving Wickem to face their pursuers alone. For an instant Emma feared that the pistol he still held pointed toward her breast, would be discharged; but after a scowl of deadly hatred, he threw it on the floor, and muttered—

"No; not yet—not yet; all in good time."

A middle-sized man wearing a full suit of white, and a large straw hat, approached the carriage, and said to a smaller person who accompanied him—

"I can swear that this is the carriage and horses belonging to me, which were stolen from the stable in ———, three days since."

"Aye, aye indeed; let us arrest the rascals, Col. Montes. Hillo there," he cried to Bolt, "I'll send a bullet after you."

"No, no," replied the gentleman. "I would not have blood spilled, for twice the worth of the carriage. Besides, there is a girl with them. See how pale and frightened the poor thing looks."

Emma raised her head as they approached, and uttered a wild appeal for help; while Wickem sat in dogged silence. The attention of the new comer was centered on Emma, and with an expression of amazement he rapidly asked—

"Who are you? whence do you come? how came you with these ruffianly-looking men?"

"I am the adopted daughter of Mr. Ruggles of Ruggleston, and these men have torn me from my home within the last twenty-four hours. Aid me to return

to my protector, and my peculiar position will be made known to you. You will then understand why they have thus acted."

"I esteem it a fortunate chance which brought me to your rescue," replied Montes courteously. "If I am not mistaken, Mr. Ruggles resides in the next county: I will with pleasure accompany you to his abode."

Emma returned her thanks in her usual graceful and self-possessed manner, and sank back to screen herself from the gaze of curiosity and admiration, which greeted her from the group assembled around the carriage. Wickem, too much disabled by rheumatism to attempt an escape, sat in sullen silence, as if deaf to the inquiries and menaces addressed to him. He was securely bound, and the small man, who seemed to be the companion of Col. Montes, took his place on the seat beside him. A servant of the former, mounted the box, and the party drove off, promising to send assistance from the nearest village, to their late fellow-travelers.

Emma had now an opportunity to examine her rescuer. His figure was above the medium height, and slightly inclined to corpulency; his complexion had originally been fair, but it bore evidences of a long residence in a southern climate. His eyes were dark, full, and sparkling, and his luxuriant black hair was lightly sprinkled with gray. The face at the first glance was eminently pleasing, but the second, enabled one to read something more of the inward man: but we will let circumstances develop what the real man was.

He said little to Emma, for he seemed to feel sympathy for the embarrassing position in which she found herself, and he hurried their movements toward her as rapidly as he possibly could. They deviated slightly from the road she had lately traveled over, to obtain refreshments in the village of —, and to send the promised assistance to those they had left behind. Fresh horses enabled them to pursue their journey without stopping for rest, as Emma declared it impossible to stop longer than absolutely necessary, thus adding to the suspense of her beloved guardian. Col. Montes avowed himself ready to proceed, if she could bear the continued fatigue, and by

the light of a clear moon, they continued their route.

Quite exhausted with so many hours of intense mental suffering, Emma toward morning, fell into a profound slumber; and as the early light of dawn played upon her perfectly moulded features, Montes gazed upon them with unchecked admiration, and some unwonted emotion seemed struggling in his mind.

He drew from his pocket a small painting, set in chased gold, representing a youthful female, and he seemed to compare the features there delineated with those of the wearied girl. He presently held it beside her face, and by a gesture invited the attention of the person who accompanied him.

"I would swear that was the likeness of her mother or her sister," replied he to the mute inquiry, "Who was that painted for, Colonel?"

"For my wife," was the brief reply.

The person addressed shrugged his shoulders, and said—

"It is the first time I ever knew that such a lady had ever existed."

"There are many things of more importance of which you are in profound ignorance," replied Montes, dryly. "I married in early youth; circumstances over which I had no control, parted me from my wife within two years after our union. We had then an infant daughter, and I have for many years believed that both mother and child perished within a few months of each other. There is a most extraordinary likeness between this young girl and the miniature of my lost Ellen. She stated herself to be the adopted daughter of Mr. Ruggles. A wild thought, a vague hope, that this beautiful being may prove to be my child, has sprung up in my mind. Oh! Arrambria, I scarcely dare hope that such happiness may be mine."

The other only answered by another shrug, and a look of half comic sympathy; he examined Emma's face again, and then slowly said—

"She certainly does resemble the picture; but it would be too much like our stage denouements, to be true. It would be queer for you, who play so much mimic life, to act in a real drama; besides, I do not know why you should wish it to be

true. Our vagabond kind of life, though pleasant enough to us, would not be quite the thing for a pretty young girl. She would prove a sad encumbrance."

"Not if she —," he suddenly interrupted himself, and said—"It is possible after all, that I but delude myself with vain hopes."

When Emma awoke, Montes endeavored to draw her into conversation, and gradually drew from her the history of her adoption by Mr. Ruggles, with as much of her previous life as she chose to communicate. He appeared deeply interested, and by the time they reached Ruggleston her shyness had entirely disappeared, and she conversed with him with a freedom which surprised herself.

#### CHAPTER VII.

THE same party had assembled at Ruggleston. Clarice looked pale and anxious; scarcely listening to the hopes which Herbert endeavored to instill into her mind. Her mother and Mrs. Herbert sat together on one side of the large apartment, talking in low and monotonous tones. Mary was promenading the long gallery with her father, while Mr. Ruggles wandered like a perturbed spirit, from room to room. His quick and irritable temper, vented itself on all who attempted to console him; for after the lapse of so many hours, he thought it impossible that the measures he had taken to regain the lost girl, should succeed. Messengers had arrived throughout the day, all bringing the same report; of utter failure in their endeavors to gain a clue to the course of those who had perpetrated the abduction.

Suddenly the noise of rapidly approaching wheels was heard in the avenue; the whole party rushed on the gallery; a white handkerchief was waved from the door of a carriage, and exclamations of wonder and joy, greeted the appearance of Emma's face at the open window. Mr. Ruggles, forgetful of his years, and the fatigues of the past forty-eight hours, was beside the carriage as

soon as the more youthful Clarice reached it. With tears of joy, and many expressions of the fondest welcome, he pressed his recovered darling to his heart. Emma, nearly wild with joy, was caressed by every one, and questions poured upon her without intermission. Recovering a little from her emotion, she turned to Col. Montes, and presenting him to the party as her deliverer, informed them in a few words of the manner in which they had met.

Mr. Ruggles grasped his hand, and warmly thanked him again and again. He ended by saying—

"My gratitude is even deepened by the capture of that wretch who sits pined yonder. Only within a few days ago I paid him a large sum, to leave my Emma in peace with those who would cherish her; and he and his confederates in the same week robbed me not only of my child, but of property to a considerable amount. The law shall deal with the miscreant this time."

"I thought you would be pleased to have him brought on," replied Montes, with a polite bow; "and, as you see, submitted to his presence in the carriage. Do I understand you rightly, sir, as to this young girl? Is she really your daughter?"

"Only by adoption; but I love her as well as if she were my own. She is the liveliest, most affectionate little fairy you can picture to yourself. She makes half of the sunshine of my life, the precious gipsy!"

They entered the house. Mr. Herbert issued a warrant for the committal of Wickem to the county jail; and Arrambria was commissioned to see him safely deposited in the jail in the neighboring county seat. Montes was glad to be relieved from the presence of his companion; and when the party reassembled around the evening board, he thought Emma, in her fresh, white dress, more charming than ever. Excited by her recent escape, and the happy restoration to those she loved, she was in the wildest spirits; though the stranger remarked, that even in their gayest excess, there was a native grace and refinement which prevented any approach to rudeness.

"Perfectly developed, such a woman as she will make might rule the world."

he muttered, and his eyes followed every movement of her light figure.

George Herbert whispered—

"I think you must have made a conquest of your *preux chevalier*, fair Emma. He seems to study every varying expression of your countenance with deep interest."

Emma looked up, and encountered the large, dark eyes of her new friend fixed upon her, with an expression that made her feel uncomfortable; and, in spite of her glowing gratitude for his recent service, she felt that his countenance was not altogether pleasing, yet she was too young and inexperienced to know why. There was about her deliverer that indescribable air which marks the man of convivial habits and slack notions of morality. Self-indulgence was impressed upon his full, red lips, and read in the good-natured sparkle of his brown eyes; and in his manners the elegance of the gentleman by education was united with the reckless air which distinguishes the habitual frequenters of the gambling saloons.

During the evening Col. Montes solicited the young ladies to favor him with some music. Clarice played on a fine-toned piano, and Emma sang. He listened with great delight to the full, clear tones of her remarkable voice. Again and again she sang at his request; and she remarked that he selected the most difficult music on the stand. He at length thanked her, and said—

"I have heard all the queens of song, Miss Emma, and your voice; if equally cultivated, would excel all of them. I have never listened to so brilliant a soprano; and that I am no inferior judge, you may ascertain by my own performance."

As he spoke, he seated himself at the piano, and executed, in a brilliant and masterly manner, some of the most exquisite *morceaux* from the most popular operas. Several songs were then called for by the delighted listeners, and many expressions of pleasure greeted him as he arose.

Mr. Ruggles said, "Your voice sounds very familiar to me, my dear sir, but I could certainly never have heard it before to-night."

"It is very likely you have," said Montes, smiling. "Have you ever been in Havana, and, while there, visited the opera house?"

"Yes, about two years since; and now I remember, I must have heard your voice among the singers in the operatic corps."

"You are right, sir. I have been for many years a professional musician. That life was not voluntarily chosen by me; but misfortunes, which for a time threatened to mar my earthly destiny, threw me upon the world, a destitute and sorrow-stricken man: my musical abilities offered me the means of subsistence. At first I used them to gain bread; but gradually the free and social life of the profession offered many attractions to one who believed himself destitute of natural ties; and now, I would not exchange it for any other mode of living. Your daughter's voice, when properly trained, would annually be worth a prince's ransom. She would cast into the shade both Malibran and Pasta."

"Her voice sounds sweeter within the shadow of her own home than elsewhere," said Mr. Ruggles, drily. "I should earnestly deprecate such a lot for any woman in whom I felt the slightest interest. Nothing on earth appears to me more mournful than the life an actress is compelled to lead."

"But the triumph, the magnificent reward," said Montes.

"A few feverish and brilliant hours, before an audience she must strain every nerve to please, even when the overwrought frame is often quivering with repressed suffering; the voice must send forth its unbroken gush of melody, when the heart is often overflowing with anguish, or the bubble reputation is tarnished. Believe me, the triumph won by the sacrifice of self-respect is vain; it brings with it no joy, and the wealth thus accumulated is often squandered on the useless gauds, in the glitter of which the poor victim vainly expects to find the reward of her self-immolation at the shrine of vanity and gain. No sir; no woman can voluntarily lay aside the shrinking delicacy of her sex, and become a spectacle for the crowd, without losing nearly all that made her lovely in

the eyes of man. We are the talent, the genius thus developed, and often wonder at the self-possession necessary to their display; but I consider it a most unenviable lot, even for the most worshiped star that ever graced the drama or opera."

Montes smiled rather superciliously.

"Ah sir, you know little of the children of song and frolic. You can not imagine the excitement of a successful debutante, and therefore you are not prepared to judge us as we deserve. I regard the lot of a woman celebrated as the prima donna of a fine operatic corps as most enviable. How far superior it must be to the life led by a lady in the dull seclusion of a country residence, whose monotony is only varied by an occasional visit to a neighbor as dull as herself. What think you, Miss Emma?" he inquired, turning suddenly toward her, and fixing his eyes full upon her blushing face.

"I agree with my father. I could sooner die, I think, than sing before a crowd of people."

"Pooh! nonsense; that feeling of timidity is soon overcome. With your voice, and the beauty you possess, your fame might at some future day fill the civilized world."

"I have no desire to be known beyond the circle I love," was the simple reply; and Montes turned away, with an expression of disappointment.

Toward the close of the evening, he drew Mr. Ruggles aside, and said to him—

"You have said that this lovely and gifted girl is not your daughter. Will you be so kind as to inform me of the circumstances which threw her under your protection? It is no impertinent desire to pry into the affairs of your family, that leads me to ask this information; I have a deep interest in learning all that relates to her; and it is of much importance to her, I assure you, that I should learn all that can be told respecting the events of her childhood."

Mr. Ruggles listened in surprise, and with a painful presentiment of evil to his beloved Emma.

"Am I to understand that you have a clue to her family?"

"I have," replied Montes, emphatically; and, drawing forth the miniature, he continued—"The remarkable resemblance she bears to this picture, may induce you to tell me what I desire to know; as it proves to you that I have a deep interest in learning all that can be told respecting her."

With many misgivings, Mr. Ruggles briefly related the wanderings of Emma; before she came to reside beneath his roof.

"And her early recollections?" asked Montes: "Can she not remember the name of the man who first gave Wickem the power over her, which he so ruthlessly abused? Was it— was it Garwood?"

"It was; and you— who, what are you?"

"Her father," replied the singer, with much emotion. "I sought for her for years through the agency of others, and long since gave her up as lost to me forever. Though struck with the singular resemblance she bears to my deceased wife, the instant I beheld her, I scarcely dared to flatter myself with the hope that she would prove to be the child I have so long thought of as an angel in heaven."

"This is very singular, sir," replied Mr. Ruggles, thoughtfully, "and you must excuse me, if I require other proofs to substantiate your claims, before I yield up my adopted daughter to you. Pardon me, but I am a matter-of-fact person, and I am slow to come to a conclusion which may seriously affect the destiny of one I love very dearly."

"You are perfectly right," said Montes, frankly. "My proofs are, I think, incontrovertible; they shall be placed in your hands at an early hour to-morrow. I have never parted from them in all my wanderings; as a vague hope still lingered; which is thus unexpected fulfilled."

"You will hint nothing of this to Emma to-night? Her mind has already been sufficiently harassed, and she must have a good night's rest before encountering any new cause of agitation."

"Certainly. It is not my intention to speak to any one on the subject, until your doubts are completely set at rest. My feelings are always under my own control, so there is little danger that I shall betray myself, until the proper time arrives."

Mr. Ruggles was painfully abstracted during the remainder of the evening. He could not refrain from casting many melancholy looks at Emma, as she sat with her hand clasped in those of Clarice, her long, curling hair hanging over her lovely face, brilliant with love and happiness, as she looked up to her fair companion. He remembered the profession of Montes, her musical talents, and, with a prophetic spirit, he beheld her future destiny mirrored before him: her gentle, loving nature impelling her onward in a path most distasteful to her, to gratify the wishes of her newly-found father; her delicate sensibility crushed and destroyed in the process of becoming what Montes would undoubtedly wish her to be; and then the earthly nature of that parent, the evident signs of a dissipated life, which he bore about him, made him tremble for the fate of the refined and fastidious daughter.

Emma was now in her fifteenth year; and the varied misfortunes she had encountered, had developed her character far beyond her age. Mr. Ruggles felt that he had no longer the power to control her destiny; for he knew that obedience to her father, however repugnant his wishes might be to her own taste, would be the rule of her future actions.

He retired to his room, deeply saddened at the prospect of losing his interesting protegee, and execrating the agency of Wickem in bringing about such a discovery.

## CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE breakfast on the following morning, the promised proofs were placed upon Mr. Ruggles' table. They consisted of a package of discolored papers, a curl of hair a few shades darker than Emma's, and the miniature which Montes had displayed to him on the previous evening. The letters were carefully arranged according to their dates, and on a slip of paper folded around them, Montes had written, "Before reading these, you should be aware that my present name is assumed. Such a practice is common

among persons of my profession; under my own, I could never have attained success in the career I have chosen."

Mr. Ruggles patiently toiled through the letters, and many times he wiped the moisture from his eyes. The most of them were addressed to Henry Walton at Havana, by his wife, whom he had left in one of the cities of his native land, while he went on a trading voyage to Cuba, in the hope of improving his circumstances. Though her letters breathed the warmest affection for her husband, Mr. Ruggles gathered from them, that Walton was not so tender toward his wife, nor so careful of her happiness as might reasonably have been expected; for she had sacrificed brilliant prospects, and abandoned an affectionate and indulgent father, to become his bride. In all these letters the mother dwelt, with the fondest affection, on the beauties of her infant daughter. She described her as transcendently lovely and winning, but lamented that in her infantile features she could trace no resemblance to the father, whose return was so anxiously looked for.

"She is the living image of my sister," she wrote; "but much as I love my dear Emma, I wish that my child had looked upon me with her father's eyes. Dear as she now is, methinks I should then have clasped her to my heart with even a deeper rapture than my maternal spirit has yet known. Yet think not, dear Harry, that the precious little immortal is in danger of becoming your rival. I love her as the embodied spirit of our united existence, and behold in her the fairest traits of both, yet to be developed beneath the fostering care of affection and sound principle. When she is buried in the sleep of the pure and innocent, when smiles dimple over her sweet face, and according to that most beautiful superstition, angels are whispering happy thoughts to her innocent soul, I kneel beside her cradle, and raise my heart to Him who will not close his ear to the prayer of the wife for her absent husband, breathed over the slumbers of her sinless child. I then arise comforted, and once more hopeful. Alas! this is a tedious and mournful separation. I almost rebel against it at some moments; but patience comes to my aid.

Patience, without whose divine influence no mortal spirit could sustain the load of uncertainty and anxiety appointed as our portion at the moment of birth: yet life has many bright spots, many holy memories, to be carried with us even into the darkness of the grave!

"I often sit and muse upon the past, and the scenes of other days come thronging upon my busy brain and saddened heart. Years pass, and each one weaves its varied tissue of smiles and tears, over the wide gulf which separates us from our childhood and our youth; how often do their phantoms unbidden arise to darken, or brighten the passing hour. Like hidden streams which force their way to the surface, and pour their gushing tide in sparkling beauty over the green vale, the memories of our glad some days, when the lip was eloquent with song, when the heart was rich in its unfathomable love for all things bright and beautiful, come thronging to the soul. Dark threads may be woven with the bright woof—friendships forgotten—love estranged; yet there is a sweetness in recalling the hours of happy intercourse, ere doubt darkened, ere the certainty of wrong came, and we trusted no more.

"Ah! who would not exclaim with the poetess—

"Pour the sweet back on their own rill  
I must remember still—"

"I have read over what I have written, and I fear you will consider me a melancholy dreamer. No, Harry; hope is with me; the hope of soon seeing you beside me, when the restless present will be forgotten, or only remembered as a contrast to that happy time when your dear voice will speak to me in tones of love. Hasten beloved; come, come to your devoted Ellen."

The next letter was written under the pressure of great affliction. Her child lay at the point of death, and she was alone in this overwhelming sorrow. She had learned that the health of her father was rapidly failing, and had made an ineffectual attempt to be restored to favor; at least to have forgiveness for her clandestine marriage accorded to her. The stern father, replied—"She has chosen her own lot, let her abide its consequences.

Into my arms, one who voluntarily abandoned me shall never again be received."

The infant was spared, to endure sufferings which, if foreseen by the fond mother, would have given her fortitude to have laid her fair form in its mother earth, and raise a thankful heart to heaven for removing her from the evil to come. The future is a dark curtain, on which we mirror our hopes and wishes in hues so bright, that they stand forth from the somber canvass in brilliant relief; but like the mirage in the desert, they flit before us as we advance, and if grasped at last, are found to have lost all the glory with which a vivid imagination had invested them. The realities of life! what are they but vanity and vexation of spirit? The dreamer awakes, and finds his fancied elysium but a barren waste, over which the voice of mourning pours its wail, bitter as that of Rachel over her children that were not.

Poor Ellen felt all this with the keenness of undisciplined sensibility. It was evident, from the tone of some of her later letters, that her heart was wounded by the unnecessary delay made by her husband, and her spirits sank beneath the haunting conviction that her affection was slighted, and the great sacrifice she had made for him, was unappreciated by her husband. Too late, awakened remorse for the kind old man who had been deserted by her, arose in her mind; and she spoke of her health as declining beneath the pressure of so many accumulated sources of uneasiness.

The next letter was from Walton, in reply to this announcement. He expressed his sorrow in strong terms, and informed her that arrangements were already made for his departure. Many excuses for his apparent neglect were given, which were extremely plausible, but they were destined never to reach the eyes for which they were intended. On the envelop was written—

"A false account of the result of an encounter with a person who had insulted me, was published in one of the Havana papers. Unfortunately, it was copied among the items of foreign news in one of the journals in the city where my wife resided. She read the account of my death, from the wounds received, and

before her last communication reached me, my beloved Ellen was dying of a broken heart. My vindication was addressed to the dead: it was scarcely completed, when a letter was placed in my hands announcing her untimely fate."

The proofs of Montes' right to a father's authority over the fate of Emma appeared conclusive, and Mr. Ruggles closed the packet with a deep sigh. He sank into an unpleasant reverie, which was interrupted by a knock on the door, and Montes entered. He seated himself opposite to the old gentleman, and said, as he glanced toward the letters—

"You have finished the perusal of those, I perceive. I presume you are now ready to listen to the remainder of my story."

"I am quite ready, pray begin," replied Mr. Ruggles, seriously. "I must say Mr. Wal—Montes, I mean, that those letters do not impress me with the idea that you were as attentive to your wife's happiness as you were bound to be."

"That is true; but poor Ellen was very fanciful, and inclined to be rather jealous in her temper, but her faults should be buried in the grave which cancels all wrongs: not that she ever wronged me, except in imagining that I had been indifferent to her, and in fancying that I voluntarily remained in a foreign land. It is hard to be mistrusted by those we love. You have learned from those letters, Mr. Ruggles, that I was poor, and my wife had preferred sharing poverty with me, to the splendor of her father's mansion. I went out as supercargo on a ship of the first class, with a handsome venture, from which I hoped to realize a sufficient sum to start in business in my native land. Ellen's father was enormously wealthy, but from him I never expected to receive any portion of his property, as he had renounced her when she became my wife. I could not bear to see her deprived of the elegancies which had always surrounded her, and it was this feeling, which drove me from my home in search of wealth. It was impossible to take my wife with me, for our child was but a few months old, and I feared the effects of the climate on her delicate frame.

"I need not detail to you the circumstances which detained me in Cuba.

Eighteen months rolled by, and I was still in the island, engaged in speculations which promised a rich return. I joyfully anticipated the hour, when I could clasp my beloved Ellen once more to my breast, and lay the fruit of my toils at her feet.

"One evening, one fatal evening! an acquaintance met me on the street, and invited me to accompany him to a neighboring saloon, where the fashionable Spanish game of monte was played every night. I at first refused, for I could seldom resist the temptation to play, when I saw others thus engaged. My companion insisted; said that I owed him his revenge, as I had won from him a hundred doubloons at our last meeting. I reluctantly yielded, for I had often resolved never again to be tempted to gamble, and had as often broken my resolution. There was a fascination in the excitement which daily seemed to become more necessary to me.

"We entered the capacious saloon, which was furnished with great splendor, and was appropriated exclusively to the use of the higher classes of society. We proceeded to the farthest end of the room, and joined a party already deeply engaged in the game. Among the persons around the table, was a young Englishman who had lately arrived in the city. He appeared to be a mere looker-on, and professed to have little knowledge of any game. We played at first with varied success; but soon my luck deserted me; my opponent won back all I had previously gained from him, and several hundred dollars besides. I half rose, declaring that I was quite satisfied, and would play no more. The Englishman drew near and whispered a few words to me, and I seated myself again, and recommenced the game. My losses were soon doubled, and I looked anxiously toward my new friend. His eye was fixed on my antagonist, and he loudly proclaimed that he had secreted a card.

"There was a dead silence for an instant, and then ensued a perfect Babel of sounds. Every nation seemed to have its representative in the confusion of tongues which prevailed. The partisans of my opponent rallied around him, for he had long lived among them, and had many friends; swords were drawn, and in the melee the lights were extinguished. I

sprang over the table to grapple with my adversary, and in so doing received the sword of my friend, the Englishman, through my body. By the dim light which came through the open doors of a neighboring apartment, he had made an effort to pin the sharper to the wall, and would doubtless have succeeded, but for my unfortunate spring at the moment the attempt was made. We were both borne from the house as dead; but after many weeks of delirium I awoke to a consciousness of my situation. My companion in misfortune had already recovered, and was on his way to his native land.

"So soon as I was in a state to read it, my wife's last letter was placed in my hands. Sincerely penitent, I instantly wrote the vindication you have seen. My servant was ordered to prepare for our departure, so soon as my strength would permit me to leave my bed. Alas! before that day arrived, I learned that my Ellen was no more."

He paused, as if overcome by his feelings.

"I wrote to Mrs. Garwood, the nurse who had attended my wife during her last illness, and directed that the child should be placed with an excellent woman who had been kind to me during my own boyhood. Before I was sufficiently recovered to close my business at Havana, I learned that the woman was dead, and the child had disappeared, no one knew whither. I caused every inquiry to be made, but without effect, and with great sorrow, I was forced to relinquish the hope of ever again beholding my lost one.

"And now, sir, to conclude in as few words as possible, my heavy losses at the gaming-table, and the expenses incurred during my long illness, absorbed all my previous gains. I soon found myself in a foreign land, nearly destitute of resources, and I was glad to close with the offer of the manager of the opera company, to take the place of a subordinate singer, who was lately deceased. I had always passionately loved music, and for amusement had cultivated it with some success. My voice was good, and soon by sedulously cultivating it, I took a higher station among the votaries of melody. I have never attained to the distinction of becoming a star, but I have acquired a

respectable standing in the corps, and my salary is good. I have recently filled an engagement in New Orleans, and having saved a small sum which I wished to invest in lands in this state, as a future place of refuge when old age shall have crept upon me, and deprived me of the power to minister to the pleasure of the musical world; and I was returning from —, where there is a land office, when my carriage was stolen from the village in which I passed the night. How I recovered it, you already know."

"And the result, my dear sir, seems to have been ordered by Providence, and therefore I will not murmur at the event which deprives me of my claims on my adopted child," replied Mr. Ruggles; but he could not shake off his melancholy, at the prospect of losing one who had become so dear to him.

"Your niece," said Montes, "will still be with you; and, if I do not deceive myself, a nephew will, before long, be added to your household."

"True; but Clarice is grown, she is a companion for me; but Emma is my pet, my darling; and I can not bear to see her go forth from the shelter of my roof, to brave the uncertainties of such a life as yours. Your profession is unsuited to her, Mr. Montes; suffer her to remain with me, and I will pledge myself to provide for her as if she were really my child."

The face of Montes clouded.

"Your offer is kind, and worthy of you, my dear sir; but I should not feel justified, in burying so much talent and loveliness in the obscurity of a newly-settled country like this. Emma's objections to the career before her, will soon be drowned in the voice of adulation; and the destiny she now dreads, will, at no distant day, be regarded by her as the most brilliant of a woman may embrace."

"Aye, brilliant enough, I admit; but far, far from happy."

Montes shrugged his shoulders.

"As to that, it will be just as her mind is trained. The plaudits of a fashionable house carry with them a deeper thrill of happiness to the heart of the public singer, than is felt by a domestic woman in a whole year. I do not undervalue your your kind and liberal offer as it regards

Emma's future settlement, my dear sir; but, with proper attention, she can, in two years from her debut, receive as much as would purchase your whole estate. Of my daughter's abilities I undoubtedly have a right to make the best use, even for my own advantage; but I could not honorably consent to live as a pensioner upon your bounty."

"Poor Emma! then she must go from me; but remember, your child though she is, if any evil happens to her through this removal, I will hold you responsible for it."

"You may; I shall guard her as the treasure of my life; for a treasure she is likely to prove to me in more ways than one."

Mr. Ruggles did not like this play on words, where so serious a subject was under discussion; it seemed to him to indicate want of feeling; but he said nothing more.

The breakfast bell rang, and as they walked into the hall, he again spoke.

"Suffer me to make this revelation to Emma, if you please. The poor child loves us all; and her natural grief at parting from those who have been kind to her, may not at first be entirely overcome by the joy of finding a parent so long unknown."

"Ah, true; and you would save me this mortification. Thank you. Certainly; I am not fond of scenes, and I would prefer having the affair quietly managed. I have acted so many of those passionate heroes in public, that I am rather sick of them." Emma looks like a sensible, well-behaved girl; and, I have no doubt, will reconcile herself to what is inevitable, without boring me with tears and sentimentals."

"An affectionate father he is likely to prove," thought Mr. Ruggles; and they joined the family circle.

Emma looked fresh as a rose, and buoyant as a bird; and Mr. Ruggles listened to her glad, young voice, with the painful thought that within a few more hours its music would cease to echo around him. His heart felt heavy and desolate; for the lovely, unconnected orphan had seemed to him peculiarly his own. With Clarice her mother was first, but with Emma he was the best beloved.

He, old, weather-beaten, battered by time, as he was, had attached this fair young flower to himself, by ties as strong as the human soul can know. He felt that he stood to her in the place of father, mother, friend; for he had done every thing for her that each and all could have accomplished; he had given her a home, education, and a parent's affection.

#### CHAPTER. IX.

EMMA saw that the brow of her guardian was overcast, and a shadow fell over the brightness of her own spirits. She was quiet and demure as a little quakeress during the progress of the morning meal; and, as the party arose from the table, she watched her opportunity, and drew near Mr. Ruggles, holding in her slender fingers the cigar he was accustomed to regale himself with after breakfast. He had purposely withdrawn himself, expecting her to follow him. She turned her fair hands in his rough, gray hair, and, looking half archly, half timidly in his face, said—

"What is it, dear father, that renders you so unlike yourself to-day? Your grim visage almost reminds me of the ogre in the fairy tales I used to read. I hoped you would be so happy in the restoration of your spoiled child, that you would not again look cross, for a month at least."

"What if I have only found to lose you again, my darling?"

"That can not be, unless Mr. Montes has put it into your dear old head to make me a musical prodigy. Then I know I should be forced to have other instructions than those of my dear Clarice; but you are too well satisfied with your little Emma as she is, to send her away only to gain an accomplishment."

"Yes, my precious one; to keep you just as you are, would be the highest ambition of the old man's heart; but it may not be. Come with me to my room, Emma, I have something to reveal, which will change the whole tenor of your future life."

Emma followed him, trembling and pale. Mr. Ruggles closed the door carefully, poured out a glass of water and placed it near her, and then seated himself. But one thought occurred to the young girl—

"Have you learned any thing from Wickem, that can throw light on my family?" she asked.

"Not from Wickem himself, but through his means. Emma, what if this last adventure should lead to the discovery of your father?"

She leaned forward and grasped his hand, with a force he had not believed those slight fingers capable of.

"Tell me—tell me how, where! Yet, if my father lives, why should I desire to see, to know him? when he has so long abandoned me to chance, when he has permitted me to suffer all the tortures that terrible man had once the power to inflict on me? No, no; you are my father; you alone have claims upon my love and duty; for you rescued me from suffering."

"My child, your own parent believed that you had died in your infancy. Those who sold you into your terrible slavery could easily forge falsehoods sufficiently plausible to impose on the agents employed by him to claim you after your mother's death."

"And where was my father himself, when my mother lay upon her dying bed? His place was surely by her side, in that awful hour."

"True; but necessity sometimes compels us to painful sacrifices. Your father was in a foreign land, seeking to amend his fortunes, for the sake of his wife and child."

"And through what means have you learned this? This Mr. Montes must have informed you. How did he learn it himself? In pity, tell me all."

"Mr. Montes has for many years resided principally in Havana. It was there your father was supposed to have died from a severe wound. Scarcely rescued from death himself, he heard that your mother was no more. He wrote to have you placed in safety with a friend. The answer returned was, that the Garwoods, who were your mother's attendants in her last illness, had removed from Balti-

more, and no clue to their residence could be obtained. It was, however, almost certain that the child in question had died shortly after its mother."

Emma looked so pale and excited, that Mr. Ruggles forced her to swallow a few drops of water before he offered her the package of letters.

"These are the proofs which Mr. Montes has furnished me with. They are your mother's letters; and here is a miniature of her, so like yourself that no one can hesitate as to the relationship between you."

Emma grasped the picture, and faintly said—

"I must believe it; and Mr. Montes—what is he? who is he?"

"Your father."

The shock had been greater than he anticipated: his arms unclosed to receive her lifeless form upon his breast, and many moments of agonising suspense passed before the faintest shade of color returned to her pallid face, before the breath of life again issued from those locked and rigid lips. Though dreadfully alarmed, and quite unused to such scenes, the good old man forbore to call for assistance, as he did not wish the newly-found father to see the stunning effect the announcement of their relationship had produced upon his child. At length she unclosed her eyes, and half raised herself from his supporting arms; then the recollection of the revelation so recently made, rushed back upon her mind, and she clung to him, and wept with such violence, that he could do nothing but weep with her.

"Oh, this is dreadful! I must leave you, for that stranger."

"My child, he is your father."

"My heart disowns the relationship," said she impetuously. "The only feeling he inspires, is fear: he will tear me from you, to force upon me a life I loathe and dread; I see—I know it all. But for my voice, do you think he would have been so anxious to proclaim our relationship?"

"Emma—Emma, do not speak thus; it is unkind to your only parent; it is unjust. You will regret having so expressed yourself, even to me."

"Forgive me," moaned the helpless

and sternly-trying child; "I am wayward, ungrateful. Doubtless, God, who has ever watched over me, and rescued me from evil, knows what is right and best for me, and I submit to his will. I will endeavor to love my father; but— if he will only leave me with you!"

"That I fear is an impossibility. He naturally wishes to take you all to himself, as is his just right."

"And he will tear me from you! from my beloved Clarice!" she exclaimed, with a fresh burst of sorrow.

"My darling, he rescued you from Wickem; does not that service demand eternal gratitude?"

"It does, it does; and I will repay it in time with love. But this is so sudden; so unexpected. Mr. Montes is so unlike what I can fancy my mother to have loved."

"Read her letters, my child; see in them her earnest devotion to him, and it may arouse in your heart a similar feeling. Your father seems a man of the world, but beneath his calm exterior, I have no doubt he conceals deep and earnest feeling. The attachment he inspired in your mother, seems a proof of that, for no man of cold, hard heart, ever retained the affection he may have been fortunate enough to win."

Emma took up the letters. "I will read them;" she said, "they may draw my heart nearer to him. But is it not said, that some mysterious sympathy links together those so nearly related as we are? How is it, then, that, spite of my gratitude for the service he rendered me, the feeling I have toward him is almost that of repulsion? As if our very natures are so dissimilar, that we can never find a single point of sympathy."

"There is one strong one, Emma, which you have forgotten. The love of music, and the remarkable talent you both possess for it. No, my Emma, it is not your heart that disowns the tie, but the dread of the future that instinctively feel is before you. Your talents can command triumphant success in the career your father has chosen; and he certainly possesses the right to bid you use them as seems best to him. He must be the arbiter of your future destiny."

Emma sighed heavily, and took up the letters.

"Calm yourself, my dear, and read them. The emotions they will naturally excite will account for your weeping eyes, for I would not have your father surmise the real state of your feelings toward him. It would be a cruel wound, and might give a fatal stab to his affection for you."

"Thank you, dear sir; kind, considerate as you always are; I will endeavor to obey you."

"In half an hour I will return with your father. Be ready to receive him as such, I conjure you. If I read him aright, he is not one to be slightly offended."

Mr. Ruggles passed from the room, and after gazing fondly upon the lovely features of her mother, Emma wiped away her tears, and applied herself to mastering the contents of the letters. Mr. Ruggles had judged correctly; they opened a spring of tenderness toward the living parent, and spoke to her as from the grave, to supply to him, as far as in her power, the place of her who had proved the depth of her devotion, by that anguish which refused all consolation for his supposed loss, and consummated her sad fate by a broken heart.

Human love is often a fearful thing. Yet, how much of ingratitude, how much of coldness of heart, have been its reward, who shall chronicle? Emma, fortunately, knew little of the struggles of her mother's soul before the final blow came, for Mr. Ruggles had kindly withdrawn several of the letters, which would most strongly have reflected on her father, leaving him to relate that portion of his story in as plausible a manner as possible.

## CHAPTER X.

WHEN Mr. Ruggles again entered the room, he was pleased to find Emma more composed than he had dared to hope; and when Montes came forward, she arose and met him with the embrace he had a right to claim.

"My child," he murmured, "my beloved Emma, so long mourned as dead; this moment almost repays me for the anguish of my early bereavement. I

may not be all you can desire in a parent; but I will, at least, endeavor to render you happy."

"Thank you, my father; I will love—I will honor you as such. But oh, leave me—leave me, as you found me, contented with my lot."

"We will speak of that hereafter, my love. You are not now in a state to reason and choose for yourself. When you are calmer, we will converse on the subject of your future destiny."

"Oh, father! I have been so happy here—so tenderly loved."

"Happier than you hope to be with me, my Emma?" he asked in a voice of pathos. "This is a wound you might have spared my heart. The voice of duty bids you accompany me, why did you not suffer me to remain under the pleasant illusion, that inclination would prompt you to the same course?"

"Forgive me," said Emma, touched by his apparent emotion. "I shall soon learn to love you dearly, I know; but this is so new—the situation so strange, I am like one bewildered."

"I will give you time to love me, my dearest girl, before I take you from your kind friends. I could not be so cruel as to tear you from them suddenly."

"Thank you; but at last, I must go. You will make me—"

"What? my darling child?"

"An opera singer, like yourself. Oh, it will be like death to me!"

"On the contrary, my dear, you will acknowledge that you have hitherto known nothing of life. No woman's heart is inaccessible to flattery, and when you once begin to comprehend that brilliant mimic existence, wreathed with flowers, and gorgeous with all that can woo the fancy or intoxicate the heart, you will thank me for withdrawing you from this homely, every-day life. Do you think I would ask you, my only child, to embrace my profession, if I saw danger or degradation in it? God has gifted us with various talents, and we are commanded not to bury them. You possess one glorious one in perfection; would you keep it for the entertainment of those who can only imperfectly appreciate it? No! go forth to dazzle—to conquer—to reign a queen, without the incumbrance of her dull and

pompous state. Oh, my child, my heart exults in the vision of your future success which rises before me."

Emma listened with some appearance of interest. She possessed a vivid imagination, a glowing fancy, and the enthusiasm of her father kindled her own. She placed her hand confidently in his, and with a faint smile said:

"I can at least make the effort, father; that much is due to your wishes. I will accompany you, and seek to reconcile myself to the career you have marked out for me, but one thing you must promise me. If my courage fails—if I have an unconquerable repugnance to this life, you will suffer me to return to my present asylum. Here a kind heart will always be open to me."

"If you should desire such an impossibility, I sacredly promise you it shall be so. But no; you will feel your own powers; you will desire to test them, and then you will thank me for placing you where they can be properly developed. And now, my daughter, that we understand each other, sit beside me, and hear my sad story."

With her hand clasped in that of Montes, Emma listened to the history of his elopement with her mother; her grandfather's anger; his efforts to render himself independent, and the fatal catastrophe which caused the death of his wife. He glossed over much that would have been painful to her, and by his command of words, interested her so deeply in his struggles, that she felt as if she loved him already for the sufferings he had borne. When he had finished, she said:

"And my grandfather—did he never relent? Why was I so mysteriously put out of the way, if I had no interest in the succession to his estate?"

"Well and shrewdly thought of," replied her father. "There was a will, and it was said at the time, that the old gentleman had repented of his hardness toward his daughter, and had munificently provided for her child; but I believed you dead, and made no claim to the fortune which had been denied to my suffering angel. I disdained to accept it for myself; and now that I claim you, the other heirs have been so long in possession, that a suit to establish your

rights would probably last a life-time. No, let the estate go; you possess the means of making a fortune so brilliant, that the whole of your grandfather's wealth can not equal it. Let us not be too mercenary, pretty one."

"Perhaps," said Emma, with some hesitation, "if the other heirs were allowed to keep the bulk of the property, they would be willing to give me enough to avoid the necessity of going on the stage."

Montes slightly frowned, and Emma paused, fearful of having offended.

"Speak no more of that," said he; "your inclinations shall not be forced. You must study four years before you can even appear at a private concert. By that time you will better understand the life I offer you, and will embrace it without repugnance. The fortune which should have been your mother's, is irrecoverably lost to you. Let my assurance of the fact suffice, since you are too young to form a judgment on the subject yourself."

Four years! and Emma's countenance brightened. Four years seemed to her an age, in which a thousand things might occur to avert the dreaded destiny. Poor child! she little knew the will of iron she had now to deal with. As effectually might she have dashed herself against a massive wall of stone, expecting it to yield before the pressure of her light weight; as to hope this smooth-spoken, red-lipped man, would give up a scheme which promised him immunity from toil, and the luxurious enjoyment of wealth, purchased by the labor of another.

"Yes," said she, "four years seem to me a long time. I will study very hard, father, and my progress shall surprise you."

"That will be right, my darling, for your instruction will cost a great deal of money, though I shall consider it well invested. Listen, Emma, to my plans for you. I think they will give you pleasure. I have accumulated enough to live several years in comfort in a foreign land. We will go to Italy; beautiful, glorious Italy. We will settle in Rome."

"And I shall see the bay of Naples; Mount Vesuvius—perhaps in a state of eruption; the blue waters of the Mediter-

ranean, that I heard Mr. Herbert read of to Clarice!" she exclaimed, with newly-kindled enthusiasm.

"All of them, and also the Eternal City; St. Peters, the Pope's palace. You shall make your debut in the magnificent theater of Naples, where your fame will at once receive the stamp of approbation from the most critical musical audience in the world. Then you may make your own terms with the managers in London or Paris; or, what say you to a summer tour to St. Petersburg?"

Emma laughed merrily.

"We are traveling fast. Let me see; yes, I should like to behold that magnificent autocrat, who looks what he is, the kingly ruler of the largest empire in the world. So pray consider the journey to St. Petersburg as settled."

"Right, you shall sing before him in private first, and on the following day a magnificent *parure* of diamonds will arrive with all due ceremony, accompanied by a most flattering autograph letter from his imperial highness. You will be *feted*, caressed by all the court. Confess, now, my little rose-bud, that this life of brilliant triumph and constant novelty, is better worth enjoying than the tameness and insipidity of what is called a happy domestic home in this stupid country."

He had touched the wrong chord. Her face again clouded.

"I have been very, very happy here. Oh! if you knew what I have suffered before this noble-hearted friend found me, desolate, uncared for, and took me to his home, where he has made me feel that I am of some value; that I can contribute to the happiness of at least one human being. But you have not asked me of them, you do not care to hear my sad wanderings related; of the sufferings that dreadful Wickem inflicted upon me."

"Yes, my love, I was about to request you to tell me the whole story. Mr. Ruggles has given me an outline of it, but I wish you to fill up the picture. Tell me every thing, my Emma; the most minute details will possess deep interest for me."

Emma commenced with her earliest recollections; and with a power of language and an impulsive eloquence which delighted the listener, she related her

childish trials in her impassioned manner; in her varying and most expressive countenance he beheld the elements of great tragic power, which he felt convinced would at some future day hold spell-bound the most hypercritical audience the world could assemble.

"And I shall be the means of introducing to the world this creature, so variously and magnificently endowed," was the thought that was uppermost in his mind. "I really must be very careful of her. So rare a flower can not be too cautiously nurtured."

He spoke words of sympathy to her, and vowed vengeance against the brutal tyrant who had so cruelly treated her. Before their interview ended, he proved himself a consummate judge of human nature, for Emma had almost forgotten her extreme repugnance to a life of publicity; nay, to her excitable imagination, it was even invested with a charm. He had won her entire confidence, and she felt that it would not be impossible to love her own father quite as well as her adopted one. Montes read what was passing in her heart, and he knew that he might now safely allow her to meet Clarice.

But with Clarice he was quite safe. Her uncle had informed her of the extraordinary development of the morning, and the substance of his subsequent conversation with Montes. His unhesitating refusal of Mr. Ruggles' offer, made them all feel that the lot of Emma was decided; and it would be wrong to arouse any feeling of opposition to the wishes of her father. Though Clarice met her with deep emotion, and wept bitter tears over her, as she held her clasped in her arms, she uttered not a word to encourage rebellion against the new duties, and new ties that opened before her.

"It will be hard to part from you, dearest Clarice; but I will write to you so often, and I shall see so much, and have so many things to relate that will be amusing. Will you not prize my letters?"

"So long as they mirror your fresh, earnest soul, my Emma, they will be invaluable to me; but you will be taken far away: you are but a child, and new impressions will weaken, perhaps, in time obliterate the old. You will learn to be happy without us."

"Do you mean that I shall ever forget?" asked Emma, quickly. "Would you, Clarice? Think one instant; you have been received here, and cherished as a child; such was your right; his blood flowed in your veins, and he wronged none by taking you to his home. Will not your love, your gratitude for this, be lasting as your life? Then why shall I, who had no friends—no protector, a lonely, helpless outcast, dashed about at the mercy of every wind of misfortune, forget the generous heart that claimed me as the child of its affection? Oh, no, Clarice! when I cease to cherish a grateful remembrance of my life in this beloved asylum, think me lost indeed; an alien to human sympathy; unworthy to live in the light of heaven's sunshine."

Clarice looked at her in surprise.

"Emma, whence comes this sudden power of eloquence? I never heard you speak thus before."

"It seems to me," said she, simply—"that I arose this morning a child, and by some mysterious process I now find myself almost a woman in thought and feeling. Perhaps it is, that I know a destiny is before me, and my own efforts must make or mar it. We must part, Clarice; but I here promise you, before heaven, to return to you with the purity of my soul undimmed—the tenderness of my love for you all, unquenched. The same power that has hitherto protected me in so remarkable a manner, will enable me to accomplish this, and all other tasks it may please Him to impose upon me."

Clarice had hitherto loved her gentle companion, but now a new feeling toward her sprang up in her mind; that of respect for the pure and guileless spirit which so truly and confidently trusted in the Divinity that ruled her destiny.

"Have faith and ye shall remove mountains," she softly said, and she imprinted a kiss on the smooth brow of Emma.

"I have love and reverence, dear Clarice," was the quiet response as she returned the caress. "Mrs. Brandon taught me to confide in a higher power; orphaned and homeless, she knew not what trials might be before me, and she impressed upon my heart many passages from Scripture, that will occur to me through life, to

strengthen me in the hour of need. This morning I was weak enough to faint, when Mr. Ruggles revealed to me the change in my future fate, which this discovery involves. At first, I rebelled against it, but suddenly a passage occurred to me which gave me power to control myself—'As thy day is, so shall thy strength be,' and I feel it will be so."

"My darling Emma, young as you are, you have taught me a useful lesson. Lately, when my soul was dark—dark, I forgot those things of higher import; I thought only of earth and its sorrows; I groped in the night that had suddenly shrouded the brightness of my future. If I thought of God, it was only to rebel against him, and ask of Him why the great joy of my life should have been turned into bitterness. Now, I can see and feel the reason: I shall remember this conversation throughout my existence, and when sorrows press upon me, I will recall your consoling words, and feel that He who sent the affliction, will also send the power of endurance."

## CHAPTER XI.

MONTES consented to remain a week at Ruggleston, and during that time he treated Emma so gently and affectionately that she became quite reconciled to the change in her prospects. He held long conversations with her, in which he related the most amusing and brilliant events of his artistic life, and she began to see many charms in the profession he wished her to adopt. For the first time, she felt an emotion of pride in her wonderful voice, and practiced many hours without becoming wearied. Mr. Ruggles sighed, and her father smiled, at this demonstration of what passed in her mind. There was something charming too, in the idea of independence, wealth, acquired by her own exertions; and already many *chateaux en Espagne* were erected and inhabited by those who had been kind to her. One of the most magnificent was for dear Mrs. Brandon; and in her imaginary distribution, even Mrs. Latimer was not forgotten. The vision of the basket of dilapidated

stockings arose before her, and she determined that she who had once given her shelter, should at least be placed above such vulgar cares.

On the third morning after Emma's rescue, the companion of Montes appeared at Ruggleston in a considerable state of agitation. He came to announce the escape of Wickem from the county jail in which he had been lodged. The building was constructed of logs, and during the night, an opening had been made, and the prisoner removed without alarming the jailer. Mr. Ruggles was deeply chagrined, and declared he would leave no efforts untried to recapture him. Montes swore several oaths, in as many different languages, and then subsided into his usual calm; for he loved comfort too well, to expend much vexation on any event, which did not materially interfere with his own plans.

Mr. Ruggles invited Arrambria to remain to dinner, and to the evident chagrin of Montes, he consented to do so. The latter assumed toward him a patronizing air, which appeared to surprise the Spaniard, and several times his familiarity was so decidedly checked that he began to look rather puzzled, and a little angry. It was evident that he was a vulgar, ignorant person, entirely unacquainted with the usages of polite society, and Montes vainly endeavored to make him understand that the best thing he could do, would be to remain as quiet as possible. Arrambria had been drinking, and that did not tend to render him more manageable.

"By Jupiter! now quit that face-making to me, if you please," said he to Montes, in French, in the belief that their host was ignorant of that language. "I should like to know what such cursed impertinence meant; you know I could, in a moment, pitch all your cursed plans to—"

"Hush, for your own sake, Arrambria," said Montes sternly. "You are talking perfect nonsense, and I am ashamed of you. You know that in all essentials you are my brother; you share with me in every thing, but you should never intrude yourself on a higher order of society than you have been accustomed to. It leads you into unpleasant difficulties, especially when you have been drinking, as is now the case."

"Who says I am drunk? I am ready to prove that I am sober; by fighting three rounds in scientific style, with any man who dares to insinuate so foul a stain upon my unblemished honor. And moreover, Don Henriquez Montes, alias—"

Montes cast a menacing glance upon him, and the sudden contraction of his bloodless lips, with the flashing of his dark eyes, seemed to betoken a terrible internal struggle. Arrambria laughed coarsely.

"Do not be frightened, old cove; I sha'n't betray—"

"There is nothing to betray, which is not already known to the family here," replied Montes, coolly. His sudden anger had passed from his face, leaving it as calm as usual. "Mr. Ruggles is aware that Montes is an assumed name. But if you can not behave with more respect to a gentleman and his family, you had better retire. You *know me*; you dare not rebel against me. Return to —, and remain there until Monday morning. See that the horses are properly taken care of, and bring the carriage here by sunrise on that day, to take my daughter and myself to Memphis, on our way to New Orleans."

"Whew! well, that beats all! Daughter, sure enough he said. And what on earth is to become of a girl, who follows such a will-o'-the-wisp existence as yours? If the young one is your child, you had better leave her where she is. 'Let well enough alone,' says the proverb, and in this case it is likely to prove a good one."

"My plans do not admit of such an arrangement, and you must await my own pleasure to unfold them to you. In the mean time obey; it is some thing new for the jackal to revolt against the lion."

"Oh! it was only the spirit that spoke. You know I am easily managed, and have your interests as much at heart as my own."

"Truly you may; for without me you would have starved long ago."

"But what excuse can I make to the old cove yonder? He has my promise to stay and take wine with him."

"You have already had more wine than is good for you. Your invention is seldom at fault; recollect some ur-

gent business which had escaped your memory."

Montes spoke in Spanish, for he had ascertained that Ruggles understood the French language, and he did not wish him to comprehend what was passing between himself and his companion; but to a man who had traded in a city like New Orleans for many years, few modern languages are entirely unknown, and the old gentleman understood, at least, a portion of what was said. It aroused many vague and painful suspicions, which he felt his inability to prove. Should this man not be Emma's father after all? He looked at him searchingly; tried to detect the secrets of the dark prison-house within. The exterior was smooth enough; nay, rather handsome and prepossessing, though there was certainly not a single trace of resemblance to Emma; but then she was the living image of the miniature he claimed as the picture of his wife; and the letters—no, the story was too well sustained to be false; but he would, nevertheless, endeavor to discover something from the cunning confidant.

When Arrambria approached with his apology for breaking his engagement to dine, Mr. Ruggles received it with a few expressions of polite regret, and when he found him determined to leave, he said:

"As there are several hours yet before dinner, Mr. Arrambria, I will ride with you a few miles on your way, and leave Don Henriquez to the companionship of the ladies."

Arrambria expressed himself as highly honored in having the company of the excellent friend of his friend, and Mr. Ruggles went out to order his horse. Montes rapidly spoke:

"He will endeavor to find out all you can tell of me. Be cautious, I warn you! if you betray any thing to my prejudice, I will avenge it with all the bitterness of my nature. The plan I have before me, will make me rich beyond your dreams. You know that I am no niggard, and you have faithfully served me more than once. He may even offer you a bribe. Remember your habits; you can never be placed beyond want, by living as you do with me. A fortune would not last you a year; I give you ease and plenty for life. Heed what I say; go to the cistern

and have several buckets of water poured over your head, to cool your brain, for you will need all your wits; go."

The energy of a strong mind exerts a species of magnetism over a weaker one. Arrambria felt himself compelled to obey the commanding voice that spoke to him, as if the right to control had been born with its owner. A few dashes of cold water cleared his intellect, and left all his natural cunning at his command.

Mr. Ruggles thought he could not mistake the sort of person he had to deal with, and after a very slight preamble, he plunged into the subject which possessed such engrossing interest for himself.

"You have been the companion of Mr. Montes for many years, I believe?" he began.

"Ah, yes: let me see; for ten years I have been his humble follower. You see, sir, some men are born to look up to others; I am not ashamed to own that I am one of them. Montes is to me something superhuman. I love him for his goodness; I admire him for his talents; for I assure you, he is a wonderful man—quite wonderful."

"In what respect, may I ask?" said Mr. Ruggles dryly. "He seems to take a respectable rank among persons of his own profession; but beyond that, I have discovered nothing remarkable about him."

"Because you do not know him, as I do, sir. Oh, he is benevolence itself! for I have known him to supply the wants of the needy, (meaning myself, he mentally added) without wearying in well doing. Yes, Mr. Ruggles, you need not hesitate to give up his daughter to his protection; for I can see that is what presses upon your mind. The girl will be happy and well cared for by her father, for he grieved over her loss many, many years after I first knew him."

"You were not associated with him until after the death of his wife?"

"Oh no; we first met in the theater in Havana; and, though I am only a miserable poor devil of a chorus singer, through the patronage of this excellent friend, I obtain a better salary than others of my class, beside something over, which he allows me for such services as my friendship for him induces me to perform."

"Did Montes often mention his wife to you?"

"A thousand times; and often has he wept over the miniature, which, I must say, is the image of the young lady."

"That is true; and I am an old fool to doubt a fact which has such proofs to support it; but I had hoped to glean something from this conversation, on which to hang a doubt, and then I should have felt justified to myself, for refusing to give up my adopted daughter. If she is really his child, God forbid that I should endeavor to do so unnatural a thing as to withhold her from her natural protector."

"There is not a doubt of it, my dear sir. I can not see why he should wish to burden himself with her, if the relationship does not really exist."

"You are not then aware of the transcendent musical abilities of this young girl? You do not know, that she may become a distinguished vocalist in a few years."

"Ah—h—h—yes, I see, I comprehend," said Arrambria, slowly, as the future, to which Montes had alluded, became clear to him. "Very natural that she should inherit musical talent from one so gifted as my friend is. He is right, to remove her to a sphere better suited to develop her genius. With his views, I can not blame him. I can only regret that all this should have happened; for I love the child most sincerely, and would promote her happiness in any manner that lies in my power."

Finding nothing more was to be gained from his companion, Mr. Ruggles soon parted from him, and rode slowly homeward. He met Montes in the avenue, walking in the shade of the trees. He glanced keenly at the old gentleman's face as he drew near, and seemed satisfied with the scrutiny, for he smiled, and said—

"You returned sooner than I anticipated. I am afraid Arrambria proved bad company; he is a good fellow, but not particularly well-bred, nor overburdened with intelligence."

"He possesses at least one good quality, for which you should value him; the fidelity of the hound to the hand that feeds and caresses him."

As he spoke, Mr. Ruggles dismounted,

and, throwing the bridle of his horse over his head, left him to find his way to the stable himself.

"I will be frank with you, Mr. Montes," he continued, "for I believe I have wronged you by my suspicions. I wished to learn from your companion, if his account of you, and your own would agree."

"And they did?" asked Montes, quietly.

"They did; nay more; he unfolded traits in your character, which are honorable to any man. I give up your child to you, more willingly than I believed I could; but I conjure you to guard this delicate and lovely being as you would your own existence. To me you shall be accountable for her future happiness."

"This interest in my daughter, charms me, my friend. I trust you will continue to cherish it; and, so far as I am concerned, I will endeavor to screen her from all that can render her less happy than she would have been with you; I swear it to you."

"As you are true to this oath," said the old man solemnly, "may God prosper you."

"Amen," replied Montes, raising his eyes with a great show of reverence, and they passed into the house.

## CHAPTER XII.

TIME rushes on his resistless course, and human wishes have no power to stay his steady and rapid march. The hour too soon arrived, so much dreaded by the family at Ruggleston, which was to remove Emma from her happy home, and take her to scenes so different from all she had hitherto known. At the last, her affectionate heart seemed torn between conflicting feelings—her duty to her father, and her love for her protectors. Mr. Ruggles saw her alone a few moments, and he held the weeping girl in his arms, while he endeavored to soothe her sorrow.

"My darling Emma," he said, "I wish you to calm yourself, and listen to what I am about to say to you. No human being can tell what destiny awaits

him; and, in the chances and changes to which you are about to be exposed, a time may arrive when the shelter of my roof will again be necessary to you. Ever think of my home as your own; of my heart, as that of a fond father, which is always open to you. Call on me for any thing you need, and, if my means can compass it, you shall obtain it. Your father has promised me that your inclinations shall not be forced; that, when you have seen enough of life to judge for yourself, you shall choose your future lot. I have no hope that you will voluntarily return to the privacy of domestic life, after the training you will receive. But circumstances may arise, which will render such a friend as I am invaluable. All I desire, is, a promise that you will appeal to me without hesitation."

"I have no words to thank you," said the distressed girl, as she clung to him with passionate sorrow. "My destiny seems to tear me from those best worth loving, just as I learn to appreciate all their excellence. Yet I am ungrateful to heaven, which has bestowed such kind friends on my state of orphanage, to utter what sounds so like a reproach."

"As the child of my adoption, I claim the right to render you in some measure independent of your father. In this purse you will find half the amount of an annual allowance I shall make you, with the understanding that it is to be appropriated solely to your own use. Men situated like your father, are often in need of money, and it is to spare you inconvenience at such times, that I make you this gift."

Emma thanked him, and took the purse, but she was too young to value money for itself.

"If my father should really need it, I must not consider myself prohibited from sharing my superfluity with him?" she asked.

"Oh no; not absolutely, if you should consider him an object of charity," replied Mr. Ruggles, with a half smile. "But seriously, Emma, I do not wish my gift to be thus appropriated. I am afraid that— But let us not speak any more about it. Your own heart must guide you in its disposal; only I must lay one injunction upon you: you must retain

enough to place you above absolute dependence on any one, even your own father, or my object in bestowing it will be defeated."

"Oh! be certain of that. My father would not take my last penny from me; and I am afraid I have a little, selfish corner in my heart, which would make me hesitate about giving it, unless it were to relieve real suffering."

Clarice here came in, and was soon followed by Mrs. Elmore. Each had a parting gift, and many affectionate wishes for the welfare of the departing one. The servants, with unfeigned sorrow, were weeping in the hall, for the glad young spirit had cast sunshine upon them all, and won love from each one in the household. They had a vague idea that she was going to some foreign land, quite on the other side of the world, and the wide ocean that would separate her from her late home, must prove an effectual barrier to her future return.

"Oh, Miss Emmy, darling," said the elderly woman, who had performed the office of attendant to her since her residence at Ruggleston—"You never will be seen here no more; your blessed angel face will come to me in my dreams, and bime-by in heaven, but on yearth I shall see it never no more!" she exclaimed, with that natural eloquence which is often found among the most uncultivated.

"Yes, Rose, I will return, if my life is spared; and I will bring you a beautiful string of beads from Italy, which bears a part of your name. The finest rosary I can find you shall have."

"Darlin', I shall vally anythin' from you; but, the old woman can pray for you without the beads; and night and mornin' the prayers of the humble heart shall ask the Giver of all Good to bless and save you."

Montes manifested some impatience at the protracted farewells, and it was with a feeling of pleasure that he at last gave orders to the driver to go on, though to the end he maintained the courteous bearing he had hitherto worn. He returned his thanks for their hospitality in well chosen and eloquent words, and kissed his hand gracefully to the ladies, as the last turn in the avenue hid them from his view. Emma threw herself back in the

carriage, weeping violently. Montes, with an immense feeling of relief, stretched out his feet, placed them on the opposite seat, and hummed a tune. In a few moments he took out a cigar case, and a box of matches, and applied himself to smoking vigorously.

"The pungent odor of the smoke will do you good," he remarked, by way of apology. "I have never heard that the fumes of tobacco are good for the nerves of young ladies who are given to 'the melting mood,' but it may not be amiss to try the prescription on you."

There was something so hard and cold in this speech, that Emma felt shocked and repelled by it. She removed her handkerchief from her face, and regarded him with a look of wounded feeling, mingled with surprise, which elicited a laugh from him.

"Oh, I do n't object to your crying to-day, for the old man up yonder *was* kind to you; but after this burst is over, I wish you to remember that I love sunshine. You are young and gay, and I expect you to enliven me by your sprightliness, not sadden me by your gloom."

"I will endeavor to please you," said Emma, sadly, "but you have never thus spoken to me before, and I was ——" She hesitated, at a loss for a word that would not offend.

"A teetle shocked my dear, eh? Was that it?" he asked. "Do n't be afraid to speak the truth. I don't wish to be any restraint on you, and don't intend you shall be any on me. I have been playing the gentleman up yonder, until I am heartily tired of it, and I must resume my natural man for a little while."

"Are you not then a gentleman at all times?" asked Emma, with a look of bewilderment.

Montes laughed aloud.

"I was born one, I believe, and received what is called the education of one, but hang me if it do n't come rather stupid to carry on the farce now; for I have been so long accustomed to the free life led by the merry sons of Apollo, that the conventional shackles of society galled most confoundedly, if worn too long."

Emma reflected a few moments, and then said: "Pray let me return to my late home. I fear I shall never willingly

follow such a life, and you will save yourself much expense, and vexation, by suffering me to remain in the obscurity in which you found me."

He stared at her, as if doubting if he heard aright; she, however, looked so much in earnest, that he laughed louder than before; but this time there was nothing pleasant in the laugh; its bitter taunting sound, filled her with a vague feeling of dread.

"Must the struggle commence so soon?" he muttered between his teeth. "Better, perhaps, that it shall be so. She shall see at once who she has to deal with, and then there will be no more nonsense. Hark ye, Emma," he continued in a decisive manner, and in a tone which admitted of no appeal, "I found it to be the fashion at the old trump's up yonder, to pet you as if you were the daintiest little bit of porcelain in the land, and I humored you to the top of your bent; but now the tables are turned. You are no longer the spoiled darling of a rich old fellow, who could find no better use for his money than to lavish it on you, but the daughter of a poor opera-singer, who has a right to make the best use of your talents he can. You know the destiny I have marked out for you: follow it you must. Consider that point as settled, for my will can master yours, and my authority as a parent gives me unlimited control over your actions."

Emma's cheek flushed, and her heart swelled indignantly, at so sudden a change in his language and manner.

"Suppose I should not choose to apply myself to such severe study, as will fit me for your profession?" she asked.

"That you can not help. The musical soul is within you, and you will only be too eager to avail yourself of all opportunities to master every expression of which it is susceptible. On *that* score I have no anxiety; and, when that part is accomplished, there is a way, if you refuse to obey me, to force you to accede to my slightest wish."

"And this, in violation of your late pledge to Mr. Ruggles, that my own inclinations should decide for me at last?"

"Pooh! Do you suppose that I should have refused his offers, if I had contemplated such a possibility as your return to

private life? You are more of a child than I took you for."

"Your first lesson to me, then, is one of treachery and deceit?" said she indignantly.

"Use softer words, little lady, or we shall not remain as good friends as I could wish: in the meantime, do you desire to know by what means I can bend your stubborn will? But, on second thought, you need not answer my question, for I shall not tell you. I will keep it *in terrorem*; and if you exhibit a disposition to rebel, I will soon show you how absolute is my control over your fate."

Emma looked steadily at him, several moments, and then said, in a tone of touching entreaty—

"Are you really my father? Have you not by some fatal chance, found means to obtain those proofs of your claims upon me, without having a just right to them? I do not believe that parents willingly torture their children; why then should you have begun to practice it on me, the first day I have fallen wholly in your power, if I am really your child?"

"Do n't be a romantic little fool, Emma. My proofs would establish my right to you in any court in Christendom, so make up your mind to do as everybody else does; make the best of the lot that has been awarded to you. Such as I am, I'll not be unkind to you, if you will be a sensible girl, and act as I wish, without grieving after those you will probably never meet again."

At this idea, Emma, in spite of herself, wept more bitterly than ever, and Montes whistled a lively air to the accompaniment of her sobs. At length, wearied with what he called her cursed unsociability, he called Arrambria, who had placed himself beside the driver, and commanded him to get in the carriage. A lively conversation was carried on in Spanish, between the two worthy associates, and Emma was left to the indulgence of her own sad regrets and darkened anticipations for the future. Much as she endeavored to do so, she could not quell all feelings of bitterness toward her father; he could so easily have kept up the pleasing illusions with which he had filled her mind, but his coarseness and selfishness

induced him to lay aside the mask, in the first moment of her entire dependence on him. With her heart sore and wounded, from the recent trial she had borne, he wantonly struck another blow upon its quivering cords, as if to destroy the young affection which was beginning to blossom there for himself.

More desolate than words can express, was that young spirit, as she shrank into a corner of the carriage, and endeavored to shut out the lively tones, and coarse laughter of her companions. She shuddered with disgust, as she viewed her future linked with such associates; yet one of them was a parent to whom she owed love and obedience! And thus the hours sped along, as the carriage rolled rapidly onward. She could not rally her spirits sufficiently to converse during the whole journey, and Montes resented her depression as sulkiness. She had reflected, she had prayed earnestly, during those weary hours, and when they reached Memphis, on the second evening after their departure from Ruggleston, she was outwardly calm, though the natural buoyancy of youth had not yet enabled her to greet one ray of sunshine on the path she was called on to tread.

"Patience, endurance, and all will be well," she mentally murmured.—"In God's own time, he will deliver me. Yet, oh Father in heaven! this trial is hard to bear. My dear home! beloved father! darling Clarice, I go from you never to return!"

### CHAPTER XIII.

MONTES determined to leave in the first boat that passed; and, under pretext of watching for a steamer, he and Arrambria spent the night in dissipated orgies. The hotel was built on the street fronting the river, and not very far from the landing; the room they occupied was beneath that allotted to Emma, and both looked out toward the river. She could distinctly hear the sounds of drunken revelry, and her heart grew yet heavier as she listened to the rich voice of Montes trolling a bac-

chanalian song, occasionally interrupted by violent bursts of laughter.

Since she took possession of her little, desolate-looking apartment, she had been left entirely alone, and there are few who have not felt how homeless is the feeling with which a traveler enters the quarters appropriated to him in a large hotel. A strange and unfamiliar aspect do they wear, with no associations, either of joy or sorrow, connected with them: yet with what strange vividness do we often remember the very color and pattern of the paper on the walls; the dingy carpet, worn by the careless feet of hundreds; the scratched furniture, for who cares to preserve the freshness of upholstery dedicated to the use of the public? and above all, the worn-out weary feeling, with which we drew the comfortless chair to the window, and sought to find something in the unknown world without, to link ourselves with it, by some new train of thought, perchance by some new sympathy, with what was so lately uncared for.

Emma recalled the miserable weeks of captivity she had endured in the vicinity of the town she was now in; and thence her thoughts wandered to those who had rescued her—to their subsequent kindness, and the tears slowly rolled over her cheeks in spite of her efforts to repress them. She looked out upon the placid river, and gradually the calm and even flow of the vast volume of water quieted her grief. The Mississippi was unusually high for the season, but it was nearly free from driftwood, and the surface of the flood was broken into tiny ripples, which gave back imperfect reflections of the firmament with its glittering stars. The thickly-wooded shores in the curves of the river, cast their dense shadows far into the stream, and from their darkness gleamed at intervals the red glare of a fire, which flared in the night wind, and gave token to the approaching boat, that a wood-yard was kept there, in readiness to supply fuel at any hour. A snatch of wild song—a shout, were at intervals borne over the waters, showing that even at that late hour, the mirthful or money-getting spirit of man was yet awake.

The young girl did not attempt to retire, for at any moment a boat might arrive, and she feared to give any new

cause of complaint to Montes, especially in the state in which she feared to encounter him at their next meeting. Just as the first faint light of dawn began to quiver along the eastern horizon, a dark speck appeared rounding the point above the town. Emma threw up her window, and heard the booming sound of the escape-pipe, as the steam sent forth successive explosions, then the dash of the paddle-wheels in the water, and a steamer of the first-class, rushed like an avalanche of fire, noise, and smoke, toward the town.

There was a bustle below—a few muttered curses, and then the voice of Montes commanded Arrambria to bring his daughter down. Emma did not wait for his summons, for there was something inexpressibly repugnant to her in his presence. She hurriedly tied on her bonnet, threw her shawl around her, and descended. Their trunks were already collected in the hall, and Montes seized her arm and drew it in his with the assurance that they must walk fast, for it was a St. Louis steamer, which would merely touch at the landing, and barely give them time to get on board.

In spite of his injunction to her to hurry, they had scarcely stepped upon the street before Emma discovered that Montes was barely able to sustain himself in an upright position, and, had it not been for her firm grasp on his arm, he would have reeled from side to side on the pavement. Much suffering had the poor child known, but it had been inflicted on her by strangers; but this mortification came from him she was forced to acknowledge as her father; and thus inebriated, he would present himself on a crowded boat as her protector! Shame and wounded feeling gave an unwonted color to her cheek as she descended the steep pathway leading to the river, jostled every moment by eager passengers, who fearfully jeopardized the equilibrium of her companion, and at moments she almost expected to see him topple forward and roll into the flood below.

Arrambria had taken charge of the baggage, and from him she could look for no assistance, even if he proved more sober than her father, which was extremely doubtful. They at length reached the deck of the wharf-boat in safety, and

with a maudlin chuckle, Montes turned to her—

"Ah, ha! all right; we'll soon be stowed away as snug as a—as a—hang me if I can think of a comparison. But never mind; the ancients chanted hymns of thankfulness to their gods, and I will sing one to mine, for sending us so fine a boat." And to poor Emma's inexpressible horror, he began to shout one of the songs he had been singing over his cups. His voice was of such compass, that it arose even above the noise around them, and swelled clear and high over the waters.

It was now quite daylight, and every eye was turned toward the pair who stood together, the slight figure of the girl almost sustaining that of her companion. Emma hastily drew down her veil to conceal the tears of bitter mortification that sprang to her eyes. Among the rabble which usually collects to witness the arrival of a steamboat, there were several respectable looking persons, and she felt that compassionate glances were directed toward her, while the comments of the coarser ones were distinctly audible.

"Go it old one," said a half-grown boy; "thought 't aint the most suitablest place for singin' that could be thought on, still its worth listnin' to, till that old snorter yonder comes along. Hooray!" and he took of his hat and waved it three times around his head as the boat came booming down, dashed out into the stream, and after performing a graceful curve, came with a crash and a bound against the wooden barrier opposed to her, and lay with her bow up stream, bellowing, hissing, sputtering such clouds of steam and sparks, as made even the early morning a scene of hideous uproar and confusion. Before the plank from the guards could be thrust forward, nimble feet had sprung over the intervening space and lit upon her decks; they rushed past the sailors in wild confusion, the only object of many apparently being to obstruct the motions of those who really had any thing to do.

Amid the rush, there was some delay in getting the gangway in order, but Montes drew Emma forward, so soon as a pathway was opened in the crowd. He would not listen to her timid remonstrance, but pulled her along, saying:

"All will be right by the time we get there; come."

She reluctantly followed him, at the imminent risk of being thrust overboard; when they at length reached the place where the walk should have been, the boat had swung around, and there was a space of several feet of water between the end of the plank and the spot on which they stood. The man had left it to attend to other duties, and Montes vainly uttered a volley of curses, commanding them to prepare the way for him to reach the steamer. One or two glanced over their shoulders at him, gave them a contemptuous shrug, and disregarded his objurgations.

Presently the loud, full-toned bell rang out a sudden peal, and the voice of the Captain, from the hurricane deck, was heard shouting:

"Clear away there! make ready to start!" then came the faint tinkle of the engineer's bell, and a slight motion in the paddle wheels, as if the huge monster was about to plunge forward on her fiery course. Montes stamped and swore dreadfully; at that moment the motion of the boat brought the plank in contact with the one on which they stood:

"Now, now, Emma," said he, "it is our only chance; let us rush across. In a twinkling it is done, and we are safe: once on board, and I'll make that captain stop for Arrambria and the baggage."

Emma shrank back, but he would not listen to her.

"Little idiot! come along, or you will be too late."

Frightened and bewildered at all around her, she stepped forward, when a clear youthful voice, from the guard overhead, called out:

"Stop! stay! merciful heaven, you will be lost!"

It was too late, her foot was already on the plank; her veil fell back as she raised her pale face to him who had uttered the warning; at the same instant, the bow of the boat veered widely from the shore, leaving many feet of turbid water between them, and the slight form of the helpless girl balancing for one instant on the end of the plank, while Montes stood trembling and white as death, suddenly sobered by the imminent

peril into which he had thrust her. She made one frantic effort to spring forward and throw herself upon the deck, but in vain; with that sick death-like feeling she had experienced once before in her life, she grew dizzy, and fell into the rushing river. It was but the work of a moment, with him who had uttered the warning, to throw off his coat and plunge in to the rescue. Though youthful, and slender of frame, he was an expert swimmer, and doubted not that he could sustain her slight form until assistance reached them; whereas, if he delayed one instant, the current would probably sweep her beneath the boat, and she would inevitably be lost. With the rapidity of lightning all this flashed on his mind; and with a short ejaculation for protection, in which the name of his mother was mingled with that of the Divinity, he plunged in. The form of Emma had scarcely touched the water, before he was beside her with his arm around her, and striking out boldly from the boat. The accident had been seen, and assistance was instantly rendered; yet when the two were taken on board, they were nearly in a senseless state.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Emma recovered entire consciousness, she beheld Montes hanging over her, with an expression of such deep solicitude upon his features, that she forgave him at once for all she had recently suffered. He uttered many petitions for pardon, called her by every caressing name he could think of, and vowed that until he saw her perishing before him, he had not known how highly he valued her. Her wounded heart was soothed by these assurances, and again her own sweet smile greeted him.

She had been taken into a state-room opening into the ladies' cabin, and a group of eager and curious faces had gathered near the door, among which Emma thought she recognized one that was familiar to her. She raised her languid head, and the lady stepped forward.

"Bless my soul! if it is n't Emma

Garwood, sure enough! How on earth came you here? and where is my uncle? I should as soon have expected the moon to step down, on a visit to us, as to see you on a Mississippi steamboat, with strangers."

Poor Emma shrank within herself, at this address from Mrs. Latimer; who, in a most extraordinary traveling dress, and coiffure to match, stood beside her. She put out her hand, and said in a faint tone—

"Permit me to present to you my father, Mr. Montes. This lady," she continued, addressing him, "is Mrs. Latimer; she was once very kind to me."

"Ah, true, I remember," said Montes, bowing with the politeness he so well knew how to assume. "I thank you, madam, for the evidence of a generous nature you exhibited; when you gave an asylum to my daughter in her hour of need."

Mrs. Latimer bowed affectedly, and again turned to Emma.

"How is all this, my dear? I am quite in the dark, as one may say. So your father has turned up, at last; but really I think I should have been informed of it, as I stand in the light of one of your benefactors."

"The discovery was so recent—but I can not tell you how it was brought about, before all those people," said Emma, almost fainting with exhaustion and mortification. "Close the door of my room; my father will leave us together, and I will relate the story to you."

Montes took her hand with a theatrical gesture, pressed it to his lips, and said—

"I go, my most precious child; your kind friend will see that you want for nothing; and, in the meantime, I will make up for my loss of sleep last night."

He closed the door after him. Mrs. Latimer drew forward the only chair, tilted it backward, and soon settled herself to her satisfaction.

"Come, let me hear the whole story, my dear; for I am dying of curiosity to find out how this romantic discovery was brought about; for romantic it unquestionably is. By the way, your father is a very handsome man, and so polite too. His thanks to me were so neatly turned, quite Coleridgian, as one may say; but

now I think of it, I don't believe it was Coleridge who wrote letters on politeness; but somebody else did, whose name begins with a C. Never mind, 'a rose by any other name' says Byron; and why not a man by any other name, too? Go on, my dear; let me hear the whole story, from beginning to end."

"First tell me, if Mr. Latimer is with you?"

"No; I left him to attend to things at home, while I go to New Orleans, on a visit to Georgiana, who you know is going to school there. Uncle wished her sent north, but I could not bear to have her so far away from me, so I overruled that arrangement. I brought my eldest hope, Cicero Jefferson along, as a protector. Oh, he is grown so much, and promises to be so handsome! But merciful gracious! I wonder where he can be! for I have n't seen him through all this fuss; and he may be in the Mississippi, too, for all I know; I must see after him this minute."

Emma suggested that a young gentleman who was old enough to travel with his mother as a protector, was surely able to take care of himself. This did not satisfy Mrs. Latimer; and she rushed out, making frantic inquiries of every one she met, for her darling son, the joy of her heart, the light of her existence. As she was in full career down the gentlemen's cabin, a rough-looking lad, with an untamable shock of stiff, light hair, and reckless cast of countenance, stepped out from a group of persons, and said—

"Do be quiet, mother; you are always contriving to make a precious old ninny of yourself. I am safe, and likely to be so; besides, you know if I should get into this old rip-roarer of a river, I can swim like a duck."

With a hysterical shriek, Mrs. Latimer threw herself toward her impracticable son, and endeavored to embrace him, while she ejaculated thanks for his preservation from imaginary dangers. The boy dexterously dived, just as her encircling arms were about to close around him, and, for the intervention of a gentleman who stood near, she would have fallen to the floor.

"You ungrateful boy!" she exclaimed. "Ah, sharper than the serpent's tooth it

is, to have a thankless child,' as that divine writer of my native land, Bryant, says."

"I told you, before I started, that I would n't have no goin' on over me, old lady; so jist let me alone, if you please, and I'll behave myself like a gentleman."

"Come with me, then, unmannerly lad, and see your old friend, Emma Garwood, but now bearing another name."

"What! is that young one married a'ready? And was it her that got such a precious ducking, this morning?"

"No; she's not married. But come; I'm going to hear her tell how her father found her out, and you can sit by, and listen too; it will keep you out of mischief for a little while."

"Oh, if there's any thing to hear, I am your man."

Throwing his arm roughly across her shoulder, he accompanied his mother to Emma's room.

"You won't care my dear, if I bring this great rough boy in to see you?" she said, as she thrust him in before her. "You know you played together as children; and, although you are almost a young lady, he is still only a child."

Emma colored as she offered him her hand, for she too vividly remembered the rude jests he had played at her expense while she remained beneath his father's roof. But hers was not a nature to bear malice, and she laughed, in spite of her vexation at such an intrusion, when she looked at his sheepish face and crimsoned cheeks. Emma had grown so tall and womanly, since their last meeting, that she appeared to the discomfited cub quite an elegant young lady.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Emma, for tumbling in here without ceremony; but the old woman, here, is always doing some thing that nobody else would think becoming. She's the oddest fish, in my opinion, that swims the sea or walks the earth; but, after all, she's my mother, and one must put up with her, with all her short-comings in the way of sense."

"You ungrateful wretch! How dare you speak thus of as tender a mother as I have been to you? Are you not afraid the thunderbolts of Plutus shall strike you dead for such impiety, not to

call it nonsense; for who ever heard of fish walking on land before?"

"That's neither here nor there; they may walk, or they may ride, whichever suits 'em best; and if I do make queer comparisons, I get it very naturally. But it is no use talkin'. I came here to listen to Miss Emma. Pray, begin; you need n't be afraid to say before me, whatever you would say before the old lady, because I sha' n't speak of it half as much as she will."

Painful as it was to Emma, she recounted the history of the last few weeks as briefly as possible. When she had finished, the boy clapped his hands together with a loud noise, and snapping his fingers, said:

"That beats the Mysterious Mother all to smash! and the best of it is, it's all true as Scripture. I must hunt up that old trump of a father of yours, Miss Emma; so good-bye."

Before his mother could arrest him, he burst out of the room, slammed the door behind him, and was gone. Mrs. Latimer settled herself comfortably in her chair, careless of the sinking voice and pallid features of the wearied girl, and commented on the relation she had just heard with that absence of tact peculiar to herself.

"Well, my dear, you are very fortunate, after all; for if your father is only an opera singer, he seems to be quite a gentleman. There seems, to be sure, a kind of destiny in all this, that dooms you to the stage. Your beautiful voice will be quite a fortune to you, I dare say; and at all events Mr. Montes is better for a father than that vulgar old rope-dancer, who used to claim you. But now tell me about my uncle's family."

"I left them all well, and—and happy, unless my departure has rendered them otherwise."

"Oh that, of course, for a few days; but by this time they have reconciled themselves to what was inevitable. I regretted your absence, myself, for two or three days after you left."

Emma's heart swelled at the thought, that any period of time would render those she so fondly loved, indifferent to her absence, but she repressed the burning tears that rushed to her eyes. The quivering of her colorless lips, and a convulsive sigh,

were the only outward signs of emotion, for it seems an outrage to the soul to weep in the presence of the superficial and heartless.

"Now tell me of Mrs. Elmore and her daughter. Did you really think the mother so kind as you represented her in your letters?"

"She treated me as if I had been her own daughter. I love her very dearly; and my affection for Clarice is beyond expression."

Mrs. Latimer looked disappointed.

"And is Clarice so very, very beautiful? If she is, I wonder she remains Miss Elmore still, with the prospect, too, of being portioned by a rich uncle."

"I think she will not long remain Miss Elmore. Mr. Herbert, of Oakland, has been betrothed to her for some time, and at the desire of Clarice the marriage was deferred until fall."

"What! the son of those proud English Herberts, marry Clarice Elmore! the child of that woman, poor Nat condescended to introduce into his family! Really, they must have expected the whole of my uncle's fortune to descend to her, or they would never have sought such an alliance."

"You are quite mistaken, madam. I believe, if Clarice were destitute and alone in the world, Mr. Herbert would think her the best gift life could bestow upon him. He is devotedly attached to her."

"Possibly—possibly," said Mrs. Latimer, incredulously. "All I say is, she had better not defer the marriage, lest he should change his mind. It is not every day that such a girl as Clarice Elmore can entrap a good match."

"There are few such girls as Clarice," said Emma, with spirit. "You asked me if she is really beautiful? Yes, of a style of beauty that is unrivaled; for she has the noble form and dignified mein of a queen; with the graceful sweetness of a warm-hearted and affectionate girl."

"Really, you quite fall into raptures about your paragon. For my part, I am glad she is to be married and out of the way; perhaps my uncle may then remember that he has other relations. If Georgy was n't my only daughter, I would offer to let her live with him after Clarice was married; for of course the mother will

reside with her daughter. I hardly think I can bear to part from Georgiana; but my maternal partiality should yield to a sense of my daughter's interests, and my uncle's loneliness."

"Your feelings will not be put to so severe a test," replied Emma; "for Mr. Ruggles has exacted a promise from the betrothed, to remain with him. And as the residences of the two families are near enough to permit daily intercourse between them, the Herberts consented to the arrangement."

"I dare say. They do not choose to allow that fine property to escape them. They must be always near the old man, to remind him of their claims. For my part, I consider it downright robbery of me and mine; and if I could see that prim piece of deceit that calls herself my brother's widow, I would tell her so."

Emma thought, that under the influence of Mrs. Elmore's stately reserve, even Mrs. Latimer would find it difficult to utter a word calculated to offend her; but she said no more, and she lay so still, and exhibited such unequivocal signs of utter exhaustion, that obtuse as Mrs. Latimer was, she finally arose and said:

"I will leave you to get a little sleep, for I expect you need it."

With a feeling of deep thankfulness for her release, Emma closed her eyes, and was soon in a profound and refreshing slumber.

## CHAPTER XV.

AGAIN night, majestic, solemn, beautiful night, cast its spell upon the world; and night is always lovely upon the water. The boat plowed her way through the waves, and the long line of foam she left in her wake, sparkled in the rays of a new moon, which hung like a bow of silver upon the edge of the horizon. The deep shadows of the unbroken forest clothed the banks of the stream, and the sudden bends gave it the appearance of a succession of vast lakes occasionally studded with islands, covered with the abounding verdure of the season and the climate.

Late in the day, Emma had risen, and, finding herself an object of unpleasant observation among the passengers, after supper she retreated to the guards, and was leaning over the railing, watching the parting of the flashing waters, and, if truth must be told, occasionally a bright drop would fall from her own eyes, sparkle an instant in the soft moonlight, and then be lost in the world of waters below. She had not thus stood many moments, when another figure appeared on the guard; his light step was unheard as he drew near the young girl, and he stood some moments contemplating the picture of youthful beauty and sorrow before him. Fatigue and mental suffering had robbed her features of every shade of color, and, but for the tears that slowly fell over them, the slight and motionless figure might have been mistaken for marble, in the clear, white light of the queen of night.

The stranger was a youth who might perhaps have numbered eighteen summers; his figure was tall and well-knit, and he bore about his person that air of high-breeding which marks those who are, by innate feeling and refinement, the gentleman of nature's mould, as well as such by education. On the broad, open brow, as fair and delicate as that of a girl, was stamped the seal of generous thought and noble intellect, which time alone was needed to develop. His eyes were dark gray, and the lashes, brows, and hair were black. The nose was straight and well-formed, and the chin softly rounded. The mouth, which gives most character to the face, was delicately curved, and the slight elevation at the corners truly indicated a mirthful and joyous temperament; but the decision with which it closed, showed also that strong will and concentrated perseverance would form a predominant trait in the future character of the man. Be it for good or evil, the course he had once determined on would be continued to the end: but, few who looked on the bright countenance would have doubted that the native promptings of the spirit within were elevating, and his course would be upward and onward in the race of life.

He gazed in silence upon the girl, until

he felt all the beauty of the pensive face stealing into his heart of hearts. He knew that, to the latest hour of his life that scene would be stamped upon his soul, as vividly as it now stood before him; the spirit of the embryo artist stirred within him, and he mentally said—

"I will make a statue of sorrow, from my recollections of this hour, and it shall move others to tears, while it moves me to worship the creation of my own art."

That keen appreciation of the beautiful in nature and art, had always been with him; but, until this moment, he had never dreamed that the power to embody them was his; but now a new revelation had dawned on his soul, through the inspiration of love; for love, deep and strong, for this beautiful, though unknown being, had sprung into existence as by enchantment. He at last approached her, and said—

"If I had never read Paradise and the Peri, I believe the poet's thought would have spontaneously presented itself to my mind at this moment. Young and lovely one, why do you weep?"

Emma raised her head, without appearing startled at this sudden address, for the voice had no unfamiliar sound to her, though it was only the second time she had heard it.

"I weep because I am lonely and desolate," she said. "But I should not greet you with tears, for to you I owe my life. Whether it were worth preserving, the future must tell; but my thanks for the service are not the less sincere."

"Life is always worth preserving to such as you and I, for it is a sparkling draught almost untasted. The waters of life may struggle over obstructions, but even there hope scatters her rainbow hues, and gathers her brilliant promise in a bright future beyond. I rejoice that I saved your life; for it would have been a sorrow lasting as life, if I had permitted such beauty as yours to perish in my sight, when a small risk would have saved you."

"Would you not then have rescued me, had I unfortunately been ugly?" she asked, with a half smile.

"Undoubtedly; for I acted from the impulse of the moment. I had nearly

thrown off my coat, to make the plunge, when you raised your pallid face, and a vision beamed on me, which will accompany my waking thoughts, and haunt my dreams, to my dying day."

Emma did not listen to his words as most girls of her age hearken to the accents of flattery. She knew she was beautiful; she had been told it from her early childhood, by all who had ruled her fate in her wandering life; and it was this gift she believed, which had caused her so much suffering. But for this, Wickem would never have sought to purchase her of her first protector, from which circumstance sprang all the after events of her life. Besides, there was an earnestness and passion in the tones of the young stranger, which touched an answering cord in her own soul; he was not uttering the mere conventional words of flattery, but what he felt to be true. She neither blushed nor smiled, but merely held out her hand in the most natural manner possible, and said—

"I am glad you will think of me. The memory of my preserver will always be precious to me; and I would not have him forget the chance encounter with an insignificant little girl, like me, which enabled him to exhibit the noble courage which led him to risk his own life, to save that of a stranger. Tell me your name, that, in my daily prayers, I may commend the bearer to the God I have been taught to worship."

"My name, beautiful angel, is Walter Murray, and I am from New York. The thought that such lips breathe my insignificant name in their nightly orisons, will inspire me with such noble ambition as might have animated the gods, when they dwelt amid the woods and fields. And now, your name, my Peri?"

"Mine," replied Emma, with slight hesitation; for deception toward him who had saved her life, seemed, to her truthful nature, a sacrilege. "My name is Emma—Emma Montes."

And thus met the two whose fates the mad Hunter had, in his fantasy, long since linked together. We would call it a strange coincidence, yet such things are continually happening around us. We utter an exclamation of surprise at the workings of Providence, and pass upon our course, forgetful of what has excited momentary

attention, though human destinies are wonderfully interwoven with it.

The two talked together for hours on that lovely night, with no sound to interrupt their voices, save the dash of the waters as the boat rushed on her course, and the deep boom of the steam escaping at regular intervals, like the far-off report of cannon, alternately echoed from shore to shore. The communings of intellect, gayety, wit, and love, are common enough on the Mississippi, under similar circumstances; but it is rare that such unfolding of simple and truthful character takes place, as was displayed in the conversation between the two young beings who sat with their hands clasped together, with all the affectionate confidence of near relatives.

The events of the morning had broken down the usual social barriers to free intercourse, and both were too young to have been subjected to the rigid etiquette of society. Walter described to his new friend, his parents, his beautiful home on the Hudson: he won her enthusiastic admiration and warm sympathy for his beloved mother, by picturing vividly before her the sorrows she had borne in the loss of her children. In spirit, she leaned over the pillow of the young cripple, and wept with the agonized parents; little dreaming that the father for whom her heart ached in sympathy was the author of all her own sufferings, and whose hard heart was not even yet melted by all that retributive justice had inflicted upon him.

Evening after evening they met thus, and, mingled with such discourse, were words of deeper meaning, gleams of high poetic feeling in the extravagant metaphors Walter sought, with which to illustrate the impression his fair companion had made upon his fancy. He felt as if they had known each other all their lives, and at length, Emma yielded to his solicitations, and related to him the events of her wandering existence. At some scenes, he started up, clenched his hands, and exclaimed—

"Ah! if I only had that Wickem here. I think; yes I am sure, I would pitch him into the seething foam in our wake, and leave the old river, with its remorseless eddies, to settle with him for all his villainies."

"Come, sit down, dear Walter; it is all past and gone now, so we will leave him to the justice of heaven."

"Pardon me, my Peri. Proceed, pray; I listen not alone with my ears, but with my heart."

Emma laughed; but his words did not seem to her exaggerated. There is so much enthusiasm in early youth; the impressions made on the brilliant and fanciful of mind are so vivid, that strong language seems necessary to their expression; and the two who sat there in their child-like simplicity, were endowed with genius of a high order, though developed in each under a different form.

When she had finished her recital, Walter said, quite seriously—

"Must you indeed become a public singer? I must rescue you from such a fate, my charming friend; for do you see, although my mother was only the daughter of a sea-captain, and my father a poor lawyer, my step-father is rich and aristocratic, and he would not like the only son of the family, although not his own, to marry one who had appeared on the stage. It is a prejudice I know, but still I must save you from such an objection on his part."

"I think your imagination travels very fast," said Emma, quite as demurely, "for we are much too young to think of such a thing as marriage, and our fates too widely separated to render it probable that we shall ever meet again after we part at New Orleans. I accompany my father to Italy; you return to West Point to resume your studies, and in a few months to forget me."

"Never!—No, I am not born to forget what has once deeply interested me. I love you, Emma; I feel as if I have a right to love the being I rescued at the risk of my own life; and at some future day, when I can command my fate, to make her mine forever, provided there is no objection on her side. We will part. It may be years before we meet again; but I will tenaciously preserve the memory of this night, until we do. I will pursue the career I have marked out for myself, without swerving, for I feel that my will is strong as death; and when I can claim you, I will seek you. Protract your studies five years, if you remember with interest what I now say, and I will surely come, if life is left me, before you make your debut in public. If you forget; if

another seem preferable to you, consult your own inclinations alone, and think not of me. In that case, I shall remember you as a bright star, snatched from my grasp; as a shattered link in the chain of life, never to be replaced by one as fair; but my heart will not break. I feel that I am made of sterner stuff. I shall then live for a career."

"I will never forget you, Walter; and if you wish it, it seems to me that I owe you the delay you speak of. Five years of arduous study will not be too much to give to the cultivation of my musical powers: but my father? What shall compensate him for his disappointment, if I do not at last comply with his wishes?"

"I have no wish to say any thing disrespectful of your father, Emma; but it does seem to me that as he was so indifferent concerning you for so many years, it does not much matter about his disappointment. It certainly was his duty to ascertain, beyond a doubt, if his child still lived; but we will not discuss that, since it must be painful to you. When the time arrives, your father shall be duly considered; rest confident of that."

"I know that I can trust you," said the girl, as she turned her bright face to his; "but do you know we are forming something very much like an engagement of marriage, which is absurd in two such children as you and I,"—and her merry laugh rang out clear and distinct, over the dash of the water.

"You may laugh, if you choose; but I am in earnest; and I tell you I never, even as a child, determined on a course I thought right, that I did not pursue it. Besides, I am man enough now, and have seen enough of the world, to understand myself." And Walter drew up his graceful figure, and looked quite important upon this early acquired knowledge of the world.

"Well; I am willing to take it on trust," was the frank response. "I do not think I shall meet any one, I shall like half so well as you; for you are very handsome, Walter, with your high brow and waving hair, and your kind eyes. But then, when I look at your mouth, there is an expression about it, I don't half like. I am afraid it says, I never shall have my way the least little bit, and

you know there is nothing on earth so dear to woman, as to do as she pleases."

"Ah! but my beautiful Peri, you will always be pleased to do right, and I will worship your purity of soul, and sun myself in its mild light, until it imparts to me some of its own loveliness, and enables me to conquer this imperious will of mine, except where it subserves a good purpose. If you knew my mother, she would tell you that her Walter never willingly gave her one heart-ache."

"Your mother is the dearest woman in the world, I have no doubt; and I believe I must cherish the hope of one day calling her mine, too."

Walter raised her hand to his lips, and his long eyelashes were humid with tears of happiness as he relinquished it.

"Remember, Emma, though a boy in years, I am a man in feeling; and as you shall keep or break this troth, you shall answer for trifling with that most terrible thing, a strong, passionate, human heart."

Emma felt half frightened at his vehemence. She was about to reply, when a shrill voice, just over her head, called out—"Emma! Emma Garwood! Bless my soul! Is that you, sitting there talking with a stranger, till this late hour? How very improper!" And Mrs. Latimer wagged her be-capped head with great energy, at the two offenders.

"You are mistaken in the person, madam," replied Walter, gravely, "Miss Garwood is not here; this young lady is the goddess Venus, who has risen from the waves to hold a *tele-a-tele* with me, favored mortal that I am!"

"Pooh! stuff! Don't talk to me about goddesses, young gentleman, when I'm telling you of propriety. Where is your father, Emma? He's a poor apology for one, if he permits you to act as you please."

"Mr. Montes sleeps soundly, and I enact, meanwhile, the part of father confessor to his peerless daughter. I here give her absolution for all her sins, past, present, and to come, and return to her my thanks for the most pleasant evening I have ever spent. Good night, angel of my destiny," he whispered, as he arose to leave, "dream of me sleeping—think of me waking. Let your life be one long thought of me, as mine will be of you."

"A fair good night to you Mrs. Latimer, and sounder sleep the next time the drowsy god visits your pillow. You have needlessly given me a heart-ache, and yourself the rheumatism."

"Well, I wonder what the world will come to, with all the pert boys and girls that are growing up in it!" ejaculated Mrs. Latimer, as she followed Emma into the cabin. "That young Murray thinks he is handsome enough, and rich enough, to say just what he pleases to everybody. His mother must have a rare time of it with him."

Emma smiled at the thought, that Mrs. Latimer, with her household of ill-managed children, should find sympathy to waste on the mother of so noble a youth as Walter Murray; but she made no reply. She paid, apparently, the most submissive attention to the lecture on propriety which followed, but could any one have looked into the dreamy eyes, interpreted the soft smile that lingered around her rosy lips, they would have seen that the ideal world, just opened to the young heart within, suffered not the jarring discord of words to penetrate the mystic chambers of the soul, in which are stored the bright, the beautiful visions of life.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Montes paid no apparent heed to Emma, beyond seeing her placed beside him at meals. The remainder of the time she was at liberty to employ herself as suited her own inclinations. She managed to escape Mrs. Latimer's surveillance, and spent the greater portion of the hours upon the hurricane deck, or on the guards, in company with Walter Murray. On the second day after their departure, they reached Vicksburg, a city built on a succession of broken hills, with streets cut through the heart of many of them. The houses rising in successive rows above each other, imparts a picturesque appearance to the place. They passed the City of the Bluffs in the night, and on the following day reached that portion of the river known as the coast. This part of

Louisiana was early settled by French planters of limited means; many of them the unhappy Arcadians, who were so ruthlessly torn from their country and their homes. The small French houses occurred so frequently, that the whole seemed a continued village for more than a hundred miles above New Orleans, and the love of flowers, which appears indigenous in a southern country, made miniature Edens of many of the yards which lay on the side next the river.

Walter was enchanted: this gloomy verdure, contrasted with gorgeous flowers in such variety and profusion, was so different from his far northern home, which lay, when he left it a few weeks before, under a mantle of snow. He and Emma sat together on the hurricane deck, and gazed upon the peaceful scene, until lights began to glimmer from the windows, and, occasionally, the sound of a violin or flute was borne across the waters, accompanied by the fitting of figures to and fro in front of the houses, showing that the national passion for the dance was in full force among this happy and contented race. Before the Americans, with their love of show, made inroads among them, and introduced their own customs, few evenings passed without a social gathering of the neighboring families, and dancing and innocent games filled the hours pleasantly. A basket of fruit, and a glass of *eau sucrée*, were all the refreshments needed by those who looked to other sources of enjoyment.

"Mais vous avez changé tout cela," said a French lady to me. "The Americans come in among us; we take his hand, and make him welcome; but he curl up his lip; he see no party without a banquet, without a full band, and a thousand thing we never know we want till he tell us. Ah-h, that breaks up our little soirees, the women get discontent. No party but one grand party; they dress fine, they set up stiff, and there be an end to our happy evenings under the trees, with the fire-flies flitting around us, and the stars over our heads. Oh, les bons jours! les bons jours!" and she clasped her hands, with all the theatrical effect of her country-women.

"What a charming life these people must lead!" exclaimed Walter. "Their

pursuits seem so rational: the day is devoted to industry, to procure the means of living, and their evenings—the true time for social enjoyment—to amusement. Our countrymen, in their headlong pursuit of wealth, might learn a lesson of them well worth remembering."

While Walter thus spoke, Montes approached them, and listened to his remark. In compliance with a hint from Mrs. Latimer, that he left Emma entirely too much to the care of young Murray, he had left the card table, and ascended to the hurricane deck, to make his own observations. He now replied to Walter:

"You speak of money, young man, with the contempt of one ignorant of its importance in the game of life. Even in the game I have just left, the ace, which represents money, takes every other card. So in life—the victory is not to the strong in mind—the noble in intellect, but to him who bears the heaviest purse. Confined to the sphere of those people whose lot you consider so enviable, you would soon yearn for a wider sphere of action, until even the grave would seem preferable to you to their eternal round of labor and amusement."

"Aye—if that were all; but we are not to suppose that none of them possess that cultivation of mind which elevates and refines, whatever the condition may be. I do not undervalue money, for I can well remember the time, when, as a little child, I would almost have coined my blood for gold to relieve the toil of a beloved mother. But the acquisition of money should be made a means, not an end, as is too often the case. Many of my countrymen seem to forget that man was created with any higher instinct than the accumulation of wealth, for they put off the hour of enjoyment until the desire of the heart faileth; till life becomes a burden—"

"There are many thus idiotic, I know," said Montes, drily, as he turned away, as if disdaining further colloquy with so young a person. Emma looked at Walter with deeper interest than she had yet felt.

"I did not imagine that you had ever known poverty. Such bitter poverty as you just now alluded to, Walter?"

"Ah! it is long ago. My father destroyed himself by application to his

studies. He possessed no property, and my mother was left destitute, with me to take care of. I remember the little room with its faded furniture, its small fire, and the delicate face of my mother bending over her sewing; always, always when I was in the house. I awoke in the morning, and found her at this toil; I closed my eyes in sleep at night, and left her at it; and this constant labor barely obtained the necessaries of life. It was gloomy, was it not, Emma? And my little brain used to spend all its energies in thinking of some plan to assist her. She would always kiss me, and tell me I was too young; I must study like a good child, until the time should arrive when I could really assist her to some purpose. One day she received a letter over which she shed many tears, and in a few weeks afterward my step-father, Mr. Ferris, accompanied by my uncle Hunter, came to our humble cottage, and my mother was married a second time. But I always have thought, Emma, that the welfare of her boy induced her to wed again. Mr. Ferris is haughty, but he is kind to me; and he adores my mother."

"You have not told me why you left your home, and came South all alone, Walter."

"It was on account of my health. I have had a slight cough during the winter, which alarmed my mother; she thinks I applied myself too closely to my studies, for I was very desirous of taking the first rank in my class. Mr. Ferris obtained leave of absence for me, and so soon as it was possible to travel, I started for the South. I am already quite recovered, and shall only remain long enough to see the country."

"Are you sure that you are quite, quite well?" asked Emma, anxiously.

"Never better, my angel; so beam upon me your most radiant smile." The large clear eyes of the youth were fixed full upon her's, and with a blush Emma met their gaze for an instant, and then dropped her own. Montes was watching them keenly, for he began to think this intimacy would bode evil to his plans for the future. True, they were but children in years, but impressions received at that age are often lasting as life itself; and the son of a wealthy and aristocratic

family, he felt would be no match for one whose brightest and best years must be devoted to an exacting profession; to the acquisition of the wealth he expected to derive from her talents. To be in any measure dependent on a rich son-in-law did not suit his views, and the interests of his daughter must, with him, be a subject of minor consideration, for he was thoroughly and irreclaimably selfish. He drew near them, and smiled blandly as he addressed her:

"This evening air, I am afraid, will render your voice hoarse, my love, and I wish it to be in all its brilliancy when we reach New Orleans. I hope to meet a friend there, who is a distinguished vocalist; if he approves your voice, you are as certain of success in your career as if it had already greeted you."

Emma instantly arose. Walter remonstrated:

"This soft southern air can produce no injurious effects, Mr. Montes, I am certain; and the moon shines so beautifully, it seems a shame to lose its light. It is our last evening, too, pray let Emma remain a little longer."

"Miss Montes," he pointedly replied, as if reproving the familiarity of Walter, "knows how important to her it is to preserve the gift nature has bestowed on her. If she chooses to remain in direct violation of my wishes, and her own interests, she can do so."

"Pray, pray let us go," said she, hurriedly; "we shall find it quite pleasant in the cabin."

"I did not ask this young gentleman, whose name I believe is Murray, to go below—I merely wished to take you down. We can very well dispense with his company, especially as I have some private conversation for your own ear."

Walter's face flushed as he drew haughtily back, and suffered them to pass, while Emma, pale with mortification, was led away by Montes. She turned her head just as she was about to descend, and waved her handkerchief toward him. He kissed his hand and smiled, for his contempt for Montes was too great to permit him to resent an insult from him beyond the moment of its infliction. Young as he was, he had fathomed the character of the selfish sensualist, and

intuitively understood all the difficulties which lay in his path, before he could claim the troth Emma had plighted to him; but his will did not falter. "She shall be mine," he said, as confidently to his own soul, as . . . he had been Jove himself, willing mortal destiny.

In the meantime, Montes and Emma stood together on the guard below. After expressing his disapprobation of such constant association with her new acquaintance, and his joy that their speedy arrival at New Orleans must put an end to their acquaintance, he ended by saying,

"I suppose you must have some money with you. Liberal as Mr. Ruggles was in his offers to me, if I would relinquish my claims on you, he would not permit you to leave him without providing you with funds to minister to some idle girlish fancy."

"He gave me money," replied Emma, "but he exacted from me a promise that I would retain it for myself, unless you absolutely needed it; then a portion of it might be given to you. Oh, father! do not so soon compel me to abuse his generosity!"

"Little simpleton, what do you mean? I am just now out of funds; I will repay you, if you are such a niggard as to refuse to share it with me."

"It is not that; indeed I do not value the money for itself, but I know you had money when we started. I saw you take out your purse the day we left Memphis, and there was a large sum in gold in it. This may go the same way, and—"

"True," interrupted he with a heartless laugh. "I have gambled; you saw me, for nothing seems to be lost on you, you little gipsy. I have lost; lend me your money; I will stake it for you, and share my winnings. Will that satisfy you, young Jew that you are?"

Emma looked shocked.

"I—I think it wrong to gamble. I would willingly give you all the money I have, except a few dollars, if you would not use it for that."

"Pooh! are you afraid that I shall lose it all? I had no idea you were so mercenary."

"You misunderstand me. I would sooner lose my own, I believe, than take that of others so unjustly gained."

"Hey day! How came you by such Puritanic notions? Pray get rid of them as fast as you can, for half my living is made in this very manner; therefore, you must submit to be supported on means gained in this very honorable amusement. I have been unlucky since I came on this boat, but I shall soon recover my losses, and make those fellows pay back with interest."

Emma looked distressed.

"If such is the case, I rejoice that Mr. Ruggles has promised me an annuity, which may be sufficient to support me independently of your acquisitions. Suffer me to retain what he gives me, and I will be no further expense to you for my mere support."

"How much will he give you?" asked Montes, impatiently.

"I have one hundred and fifty dollars, which is my allowance for six months. The same amount will be paid half-yearly to a firm in New Orleans, whose address he gave me."

"Let me see," said Montes, with a calculating air. "In Italy that will be something. Three hundred dollars a year should keep such a bird as you, and allow something over to pay for the instruction you must have. I will say of this old fellow, that he has acted handsomely by you. But you must let me have this money as a loan. When we get to New Orleans I can replenish my purse, and if you insist on it, I will repay you."

Still Emma hesitated. She felt how contrary to the designs of Mr. Ruggles, was such an appropriation of his gift. It seemed to her wrong, to allow any portion of it to be devoted to such a purpose. Montes coolly said:

"Use your own pleasure about it, but money I must and will have. If you do not choose to advance it, I will get up an impromptu concert in the gentlemen's cabin, at which you shall be the principal performer, and your beauty will insure handsome pay from the audience."

"You surely would not think of such a thing!" said Emma, in dismay. "I would sooner die than come forward as a public singer, before the promiscuous crowd on a steamboat."

"You will one day appear before quite as mixed an assemblage, but with the

advantage of scenery and brilliant costume; this, perhaps, may reconcile your woman's heart to the necessity which will compel you to seek applause from the million. To-night the plaudits of your young friend may compensate you for the want of a more brilliant audience."

Emma silently entered her state-room, unlocked her trunk, and taking from it about two-thirds of the sum in her possession, presented it to him.

"Ah, that is right. Was it the fear of the public exhibition, or the thought that your aristocratic acquaintance would see you paraded as the singer's daughter, that unloosed your purse-strings, my sweet nightingale?" he mockingly asked.

"Neither," replied Emma, with effort, "but the wish to prevent my father from degrading himself in the person of a daughter too young to protect herself, by resisting commands she would have felt to be wrong."

"A moral lecture again! But this is beyond my patience. Know, child, that you are absolutely and irrevocably mine, to do my bidding in all things; and I will not have my authority questioned. Be humble, docile, and obedient, and I shall be kind to you; but beware how you rouse the tiger in my nature! it can rend—it has rent those who resisted me. So once more, I say, beware! Retire to your state-room, and remain there; there shall be no more words with this bold youth."

He led her in the room, closed the door on her, and left her to loneliness and tears. A week had scarcely elapsed since she parted from her beloved friends, and in that short time, her father had exhibited himself to her as a drunkard, a gambler, and a tyrant. Every natural emotion of affection was stifled in its birth, and she only thought of him with a feeling of dread and repulsion, which she vainly strove to overcome. The years of her future arose darkly before her, while she thought of him as the arbiter of her fate; but soon the natural buoyancy of youth dried her tears. She turned to the new star which had risen on her horizon, and the bitterness of her sorrow subsided. She had implicit faith in the promises of her young lover, and with the sanguine spirit of her age, Hope came bounding

over the darkened waters she was called on to navigate, casting her halo of brightness over the years of separation and effort they must endure.

Walter noted her absence at supper; he knew on which side her state-room was situated, and no sooner was Montes safely placed at the card-table for the night, than he wended straightway to her door. He knocked lightly, and then breathed her name, in his softest tone.

"Go away, pray," said Emma. "I dare not speak to you again to-night; my father has forbidden it."

"Well, my angel, I do not ask you to talk to me the least syllable. Just open these envious blinds, show your bright face, and listen to me; I will discourse—oh ye gods! how I will converse, until your ears will be enchanted. At least, I hope so."

Emma listened, wiped away her tears, and laughed, so contagious was the glad sound of that voice, which had begun to have a music for her soul. After all, it was not so very wrong, she argued; it was their last evening, and years might, nay, must intervene, before they could enjoy the same freedom of intercourse again. She opened a little crevice in the door, and there he stood, so smiling and handsome, and the soft air came so sweetly to her cheek, that she had not courage to close it again. Walter assisted her indecision, by opening it wide, placing a chair beside it for her, and drawing another up for himself.

"Did they give you any supper?" he asked. "I missed you from the table."

"I would not take any; I was not hungry."

"But you are now, I know. I brought you some fruit, which is nicer than tea and bread, on a warm evening."

He peeled an orange, and she ate a portion of it, and prattled away, forgetful of her father's prohibition. Walter quoted poetry, and talked a great deal of nonsense, which seemed to her unsophisticated little heart, like revelations from some divine sphere.

## CHAPTER XVII.

On the following morning, when Emma awoke, the bustle and indescribable noises of a large city, were sounding in her ears. She hurried her toilet, to view a scene so novel to her, as the harbor of New Orleans presents to a stranger from the interior. The shore crowded with shipping for miles, with the flag of every civilized nation represented by the strip of bunting allowed to flutter from the mast-head; the continued arrival and departure of steam craft, presents a scene of activity and enterprise rarely surpassed. She found around them several small boats filled with fruit, which swarthy-looking foreigners were offering for sale, in a patois she could scarcely understand; while the fondness for gay colors, displayed in their dress, their large, dark eyes, expressive features, and agile movements, were an inexhaustible source of amusement to her. The city is situated on a level plain, slightly declining as it recedes from the river, and only protected from destruction by the mound of earth which holds back the mighty torrent that rushes by with arrowy swiftness. The river was unusually high, and, from her station on a large steamer, Emma looked down upon the motley groups that covered the levee, and sent into the clear heaven above them a perfect Babel of sounds.

She had not stood thus many moments, when young Latimer came out, and joined her.

"I am come to bid you good-by, Miss Emma, for the old lady says we must leave directly; and, while she is fussing around, after every stray bit that belongs to her that is an inch square, I thought I would see if I could find you a minute alone, while that handsome youngster is gone ashore."

Emma colored, and held out her hand.

"I hope you will have a pleasant visit, Cicero."

"Pooh! call me Jeff; you know that is more suitable for such a chap as I am. I am sick of big names for little things."

"Well, Jeff, since you will have it so, permit me to ask you one question, before we part. Why do you speak so disrespectfully of your mother? I am sure

she has always been very kind to you; and it makes people stare so, to hear how you talk."

"That! for people!" said he, snapping his fingers. "I like to make 'em stare; it's such precious fun. There'll be, one genteel one in the family, and that'll be quite enough. Georgy will stay here, at a tip-top quality school, until she is quite a prodigy; but I mean to be a plain man, like uncle Tim."

"If you make your uncle your model, you must be very different from what you are, I assure you. He is a man whose goodness, whose natural gentility would put to shame the artificial polish of princes; for he never willingly says or does what will injure the feelings of others."

"All gammon, Miss Emmy; and you need n't tell me that, when I remember that last evening at our house, when he advised mother, what to do with us."

"That was an exception to his usual kindness; but then your mother—"

"Then my mother, sure enough. That's just what I say; no person can have patience with such a fussy, talking, die-away kind of woman."

"What's that you are saying, sir?" said a sharp voice close beside him, as Mrs. Latimer seized her young hopeful, and gave him a violent shaking. "I think, miss, you have little to do, to encourage a young scape-grace, like this, to abuse his own parent."

"Hold on, you old she-dragon!" said Jeff, tearing himself violently from her grasp, "and don't shake the life out of a feller. Let Miss Emmy alone; for she was only lecturing me for not treating you better, and this is all the thanks she gets."

"That was it, was it? Well, she sees what a hopeless task it is, for mother or any one else to make any thing but an unmannerly booby of you. Good-by, Emma; I intended to take you ashore with me, to visit Georgy; but when I spoke to your father about it, just now, he said he could not permit you to leave, until he accompanied you himself."

"Give me Georgiana's address, and, if I can, I will call and see her."

Mrs. Latimer handed her a card, and they parted. Some one has said, "We

do nothing with the consciousness that it may be for the last time, without a feeling of melancholy;" a conclusion which could only have suggested itself to one whose life had been singularly congenial to his tastes. There are few who have not felt when many things were accomplished, that a burden was lifted, the smallest portion of whose weight they would not again willingly assume; and Emma felt relieved of a torment when Mrs. Latimer departed. Her intrusive and dictatorial spirit, her want of delicacy, and her great fondness for talking, rendered her an object of positive dread. Emma fervently hoped their future destinies would cast them so widely asunder, that she would never again cross her path. As she stood watching their progress across the levee, a joyful voice greeted her with the salutation of the morning; and this time she turned with a bright blush, and a radiant smile, to meet Walter. He had been walking in the city, and his animated face wore the flush of health and exercise. In his hand he carried a bouquet of rare flowers, as delicate and graceful as herself.

"See," he said; "I have walked more than two miles to procure these for you; I wish you to preserve them as a *gage d'amour*. Such love as ours is best represented by the most poetic creations in nature, next to the stars; and, as I can not pluck down a bright gem from heaven's coronal, to bestow upon you, I do what is next best—bring you a bouquet of the fragrant daughters of spring."

"I will cherish them as friends, dear Walter."

"Let them be such to you; when their bloom and odor have vanished, let the withered leaves speak to you of a love as bright and beautiful as were these flowers in their first freshness; over them I again vow to you faith, truth unbroken. See that you fail me not, Emma; for I shall garner my soul's best impulses in you."

"Oh, Walter! when you will be all I shall have to look to as a friend, lover, brother, in the years that must pass before we meet again, how is it possible I can prove untrue? I trust you implicitly, can you not have faith in me?"

"I will, my beloved Emma; but if you

knew with what reluctance I see you go with—with—" he hesitated.

"I understand you. My position is difficult; but I must endeavor to make the best of it. I will be so obedient, that my father's harshness will be disarmed."

"I can only hope for the best, for we are too young to act for ourselves. When do you leave the boat? and whither does your father take you?"

"We leave immediately, I believe; but I know nothing of my father's intentions. What are your own, Walter?"

"I have already delivered a letter of introduction to a relative of my mother, who resides in this place. He insisted so pressing that I should accompany him home, that I could barely gain time to fly down here with these flowers, and endeavor to ascertain where you would put up."

"My father generally stays at the St. Charles, and you will probably find us there in the course of the morning."

"Then I shall certainly see you again before the day is gone. Au revoir, my sweet angel."

There was a bright smile upon his lips, as he waved his hat to her from the levee, and in a few moments he was lost to view. They did not dream it was their last parting; but so it proved. Years, with their chances and changes passed over both, before they again stood face to face. They parted in the dawn of life, loving and beloved; how shall they meet again? The progress of fate, and these pages will show.

Walter had scarcely left, when Montes came on board, followed by porters, who removed their baggage. He informed Emma that the friend he expected to meet was not in New Orleans, and he had at once sought for a ship bound for New York via Havana. He had been successful, and they would set sail within the hour. This was a painful surprise to the poor girl, and she said—

"I hoped I should have time to write from this place to my friends at Ruggleston."

"They can wait; besides, you have nothing to tell them except the history of your flirtation with young Murray. My name in your correspondence, is to be lightly touched on—you understand."

She made no reply, but looked so unhappy, he added—

"You can write your letters on the ship, and the boat that tows us to the Balize can bring them back. I shall write myself, and send mine at the same time. Hurry now, for we have no time to lose."

She thanked him for the permission, threw on her bonnet, and in a few moments was ready to accompany him to the carriage which awaited them. After threading several closely-built streets, they again emerged upon the levee, about a mile below the steamboat-landing, and found Arrambria with the captain, awaiting their arrival.

The ship proved to be a respectable vessel in her appointments, with very few passengers. Among them was a clergyman and his wife, and the latter with the spirit of christian kindness, bestowed the care of a mother on the lonely girl during their voyage. Every thing was so new to Emma, that her active and intelligent mind found constant amusement in the novel life she had led. They were detained at Havana a few days, and there Montes found the friend he had expected to see in New Orleans. Emma sang before him, and the commendations he lavished on her voice, raised the hopes of Montes higher than ever. Emma found herself treated with a little more consideration, though still, there was much in the habits, and occasionally in the language of her father, to shock a refined and fastidious taste.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

In the vicinity of New York stands a massive building, whose windows are secured by iron bars, and heavy shutters. The pleasant grounds around it, together with the construction of the pile, proclaim its character, even before the cries and shrill laughter of its unhappy inmates, sends a shuddering thrill to the soul of him who approaches the abode of the darkened in intellect. Mournful and humiliating is the sight of those persons from whom the light of reason is withdrawn;

death were a merciful boon in comparison with such a fate as this.

In the farthest corner of the spacious garden, stood a small clump of shrubbery, whose tendrils had been trained in the form of an arch, over a rustic seat. On it now reclined a young girl, her wild blue eyes lighted up with a strange unearthly glare, and her hair hanging in short tangled masses over her brow and neck. Pacing in front of her, on a pathway worn hollow by his footsteps, was a small, thin man, whose features indicated that he had not yet passed the boundary of middle-age; but his hair lay white as snow above his fallow brow, and emaciated countenance.

Many fantastic figures promenaded the distant walks; but none of them offered to approach the corner occupied by the pair we have described. The girl sang snatches of different songs; and an observer would have gathered from the sentiment expressed in them, that disappointed love had brought her to her present condition: but the man strode to and fro, with a contracted brow, and working lips, without observing her. She presently arose, and crept stealthily after him; as he reached the turn on his walk she suddenly clapped her hands on his shoulders, and exclaimed—

"Poor Gilbert! Gilbert is sorry. He writhes his lips, and makes fearful faces. What is it, my friend? Let Cora know, and she will soothe you with singing, until you forget the griefs that fill your breast," and she commenced one of her favorite strains, in shrill discordant tones.

Hunter, for he it was, gently raised her hand, and led her toward the seat.

"There, Cora; be quiet, and let me think this evening."

"Thinking is not good; no—no—talk to Cora. Thinking will make you light-headed. I know all about it you see; because I have thought too much myself; and as a punishment they brought me away from my brothers, and my darling sister, and put me in chains and darkness. But now, I have found that it is best to amuse myself; and the man who kept me confined in that loathsome cell, lets me out in the beautiful sunshine, where the birds sing, and the rustling of the leaves above my head, seems an anthem of

thankfulness perpetually rising toward heaven."

"But in the winter, Cora," said Hunter compassionately, "Oh! then your lot is hard to bear. Kept forever in that strong, dark house, and hardly allowed to breathe the pure air of heaven one moment. Is it not hard, Cora?"

"The winter garden of the Emperor of Russia is my winter retreat, as I've often told you, Gilbert; and I am sorry that the Autocrat should have refused you, my best friend, admittance there. But then, you know, monarchs are always willful, and I was afraid he might send me to Siberia, if I persisted in my request." By some association of ideas, she then began to sing the Exile of Erin, and took no further notice of her companion. Hunter again resumed his monotonous walk, which was interrupted by the approach of a tall, powerfully made man, with a mild and benevolent cast of countenance. Hunter turned toward him, with an air of expectation, and inquired—

"Has he come at last?"

The gentleman nodded.

"It is about the usual time for his annual visit, my prince."

Hunter turned shortly on him—

"Doctor, I beg that you will no longer give me the title my madness chose to assume; for I assure you I am now as sane in mind as yourself."

"Ah, yes, I understand," replied the doctor, soothingly; "your brother comes, perhaps, to make arrangements for your enlargement."

The blood rushed in a torrent to the brow of poor Gilbert, and his eye sparkled with fury.

"He make arrangements to free me! No, so long as I hold in my keeping a secret, which, if made known, would blast him forever, he will persuade the world that I am mad; though all the tortures I have suffered in this infernal house, have only served to render clearer to my perceptions, the great wrong I assisted him to consummate, and its terrible punishment, even in this world."

"You must calm yourself, Mr. Hunter, or I can not permit you to see Mr. Ferris. The interview might have the worst consequences to yourself."

"I will calm myself; but I swear to

you I am not mad. In all the long, long years I have dragged away in this miserable prison, I have known and felt all the horrors of my position—a sane man compelled to dwell among the outlaws of reason."

The physician listened with compassion, but so firmly impressed was he with a belief in the honor and integrity of the smooth-spoken Ferris, that he could have no other opinion of the man who so violently and perseveringly impugned them, than that he was still laboring under mental hallucination.

Mr. Ferris, with much internal reluctance, but with great show of doing his duty by "poor Gilbert," paid him an annual visit, to ascertain if his mind was in a more rational condition than on the preceding year. His representations prevented his mother from seeing him, except when he slept; Gilbert's violence, he assured her, would alarm and distress her, at all other times; and no entreaties could prevail on him to allow his wife to visit her afflicted brother.

With nerves steeled for the occasion, and a heart of iron, Ferris now awaited the approach of his victim. When Hunter entered, he met him with outstretched hand, and expressions of pleasure at his improved appearance; but Gilbert clasped his hands behind his back, and fixing his keen black eyes on the face of his brother-in-law, said—

"You need not act with me, Ferris; I know you, and your hypocrisy is too flimsy a veil to conceal your true emotions. Shall we meet *alone* this time, for I have that to say to you, which you will not care that another person may hear."

"Certainly, Gilbert, certainly; if Dr. Meadows will leave us together, I have no objection to the interview you desire."

The doctor arose, and whispered a few words in the ear of Mr. Ferris, to the effect that he would remain within call, and one cry would bring him to his assistance, should a sudden paroxysm of fury on the part of Hunter, render his presence necessary. He then left the room, and, as the door closed on him, Hunter approached Mr. Ferris, and looking him steadily in the eye, said—

"Have you come again to triumph in my helplessness? to view the ruin, the

degradation you have brought on me? You know full well, George Ferris, that I am not *now* mad. Think: eight years have been blotted from my existence—eight years of living death have been inflicted on me through your agency—and let one feeling of compassion touch your callous heart. Give me freedom to go forth from my loathsome prison-house, and I forgive you all, *all* I have suffered.”

An expression of softness came over his features, and he looked imploringly on his enemy. Ferris calmly replied—

“It was for your own good, that you were incarcerated here, Gilbert; and I can never consent to turn a lunatic loose upon the world, whose first act would probably be an attempt to ruin me in its estimation.”

“A lunatic! My God, thou knowest how false is this man’s assertion! Is there no justice on earth for me—no mercy from Heaven?” asked Hunter, despairingly, raising his clasped hands. “Must I drag out my life in this horrible place, amid the vagaries of madmen, until I again become one of themselves? Hear me, heart of iron—man of marble—when I was placed in this house, I was suffering from violent illness; and long-continued delirium was stigmatized as madness. My yearning desire to repair the evil I had wrought, kept me many months in a state vibrating between life and death. I recovered, to find myself forever separated from all that can render life endurable—a prisoner among the outcasts of human reason—was not this enough to make me one of themselves? Aye, and for a season it did; and now, is it not terrible? Because I speak the truth, of a base and unmanly hypocrite, such as thou, they refuse to believe that the light of intellect has again dawned upon my mind. Three times, since I have been imprisoned in these walls, has reason succumbed beneath the sufferings I have endured; and, but for the sacred cause of justice, I would pray to Heaven to remain as those around me.”

“Forever harping on that string,” said Ferris, unmoved by that terrible picture of suffering. “So long as you persist in such a hallucination, I must consider you as mad, and confine you accordingly.”

Hunter gazed at him as if stupefied.

“You are not, then, George Ferris, I suppose, the most specious villain that ever trampled upon the rights of another? You did not wrong the orphan child I assisted you to disinherit? You will, perhaps, say that you are not my sister’s husband?”

Ferris replied by a smile, which so infuriated Hunter that he lost all control over himself. His face grew livid with passion, and his eyes flashed with a lurid light over the person of his detested foe. Ferris was alarmed; but remembering that a single cry would bring assistance, he calmly awaited the explosion of Hunter’s rage. He slowly approached him, and said between his clenched teeth—

“The day and the hour are not yet; but they will surely come, when I can go forth and proclaim to the world what a loathsome reptile it has cherished in its bosom. Then fear me, George Ferris! for I swear to you, I will forget the ties that unite us; I will hold you up to the mocking scorn of that world you have made your idol. Great God!” he continued, changing his manner, and raising his eyes to heaven with an indescribable expression of anguish, supplication, and despair—“is there no retribution for this man? Are thy arrows reserved for me alone, and for him, is there no vengeance?”

At these words, the features of Ferris became pale and convulsed, for the recollection of his drowning child; his idiot son, came to his mind, and he felt that the hand of God had been laid on him in vain. Then arose before him the image of the fair and fragile creature yet left to him; and he shuddered as the thought came to his mind, that she too might become a means of a more dreadful retributive justice than he had yet known. Hunter saw the workings of his countenance, and he felt that he had touched a chord which vibrated to agony in that callous heart. He inquired in a faltering tone—

“Is Caroline dead—dead—dead! that your muscles thus quiver, and your lips grow pale? I know of no other calamity your hard heart could thus feel; and the deepest sting in her loss would be the thought that the only tie which might

have restrained me from proclaiming your villainy, is broken; speak—is my sister in her grave?”

“No;” replied Ferris, with effort. “It is not that. I naturally thrill with horror, to hear the only brother of the wife I so truly love, denounce me in such terms: but I pardon you, Gilbert. Your shattered intellect, can not take a clear and correct view of our relations to each other.”

“Oh, no! I can not understand that you, in your exceeding love and compassion for yourself, have incarcerated in this lunatic asylum, a man as sane as yourself, that the words wrung from him by remorse of conscience shall not be interpreted to your injury. Ferris, I *have been* mad, and during my paroxysms, a fiend ever whispered in my ear that I shall yet become your executioner; do understand? your murderer! and during those moments my fingers would work with nervous rapidity, as if clutching your throat, and stifling your cries for that mercy you had denied to others. Ha! ha! it was a glorious dream, and may yet become a reality!”

Ferris shrank from the vicinity of the speaker, whose eyes began to betray the return of the terrible malady under which he labored: they glowed like living coals, beneath his white eyebrows and hoary hair, and foam began to gather on his lips.

“Do you remember,” he continued, in a tone whose forced calmness fearfully contrasted with his excited appearance. “Do you remember the good clergyman who advertised for information respecting Emma Walton? I have already sent him a connected account of the whole transaction, by which she was disinherited, and by this time he knows who perpetrated the wrong. Yesterday evening, I found a messenger, who promised to deliver it before he slept. And thus, for Caroline’s sake, will I deliver you from the disgrace you merit.”

Before Ferris was aware of his intention, Hunter, in a terrible paroxysm of frenzy, sprang on him, and wound his fingers in cravat, with such force and dexterity, that he could not utter a cry for assistance. He struggled with despairing energy against the suffocating clutch of his hands, but he found himself

no match for the maddened and infuriated being above him. The sound of their fall on the floor, fortunately brought the physician to his assistance. Two stout men rushed in at the same time, and Hunter was speedily overpowered, and conveyed to a cell, amid the most frantic cries and struggles.

Mr. Ferris soon revived, under the care of Dr. Meadows, who then said—

“I regret much, Mr. Ferris, that this visit has taken place, as I began to entertain hopes that your brother would soon be restored to health. For many months past, he has been quite clear in mind, except on one subject: his strange hostility to you is the only sign of insanity I have been able to detect. As you have always been his best friend, I could only suppose that this dislike was the last lingering evidence of his disorder, which would soon leave him with a sound mind in a sound body; but now, I know not when he may recover.”

Ferris listened with a most profound expression of grief.

“Poor Gilbert!” he sorrowfully said. “This will be sad news to convey to his family. He seems now in a terrible state, and I beg that you will keep a strict watch over him, as it would render me seriously unhappy to know that he had escaped from your fatherly care. I know not what crime he might be tempted to commit, in the present disordered state of his intellect.”

The doctor assured him that every precaution should be taken to secure Hunter, and he hoped soon to have better news of his condition to convey to him. Before leaving, Ferris ascertained that a gentleman who was perfectly restored to health, left the asylum the day before, and to him, Hunter had probably intrusted the package to which he referred in their interview. He instantly resolved to call on Mr. Wilson, as soon as he reached the city.

## CHAPTER XIX.

MR. FERRIS reined up his high-spirited steed in front of the humble parsonage occupied by Mr. Wilson. The venerable man, a martyr to rheumatism, received

him in the little study, in which nearly all his hours of retirement were passed. In the presence of this meek apostle of Christ, whose pale brow and worn features, proclaimed that he had not spared himself in the service of his Master, even Mr. Ferris felt abashed, when he remembered the errand on which he came.

He felt that he was just in time, for a package with the seal yet unbroken, lay upon the table, and in the irregular and crabbéd direction, the visitor recognized the writing of his brother-in-law. After a few preliminary remarks, he plunged at once into the subject which had brought him there.

"Mr. Wilson, you may probably remember a Mr. Hunter—Gilbert Hunter, who many years since, made strenuous efforts to recover some clue to a child, that had been nefariously deprived of her inheritance. You assisted him I think, in his search?"

"I did sir. Certainly I remember him vividly, for I have seldom taken so deep an interest in any individual as the person of whom you speak. By a singular coincidence, this package, which I was about to open, when you knocked, is from that gentleman."

"I suspected as much, sir; as I was aware that such a package had been forwarded to you. I have arrived in time to spare you the trouble of wading through a tissue of absurdity, which only a brain maddened by one fixed idea, could have put together."

"You speak strongly, sir, and not over feelingly, of this unfortunate man," said the reverend gentleman, gravely.

"I have good cause, sir; for the strange hallucination he labors under, has caused me much suffering. You know the unhappy antipathy the insane ever cherish toward those who were once dearest to them. Such is the case with Hunter: I was his most intimate friend, and have for many years been the husband of his only sister. His madness, he accuses me of being the cause of the child's abduction, and insists that he has proofs which would criminate me in the eyes of the world. Improbable as such a story is, I should dislike, on account of my wife, that such an accusation, coming from him, should become at all notorious."

"Very right sir, a very natural feeling. This package came to me late last night; and the gentleman who delivered it, informed me that he considers Mr. Hunter quite convalescent."

"That person was himself just released from the confinement of the mad-house, and therefore can not be the most competent judge. I left Mr. Hunter within the last hour, and, after a scene of violence in which I nearly lost my life, he was conveyed to his cell in a raving condition. He informed me, amid many denunciations, that he had sent to you an account of the transaction, in which he affirms I was principal, with a request to you, to take such steps as would lead to the restoration of the child to her rights. My family has recently been deeply afflicted, and I lost no time in coming hither, that my wife may be spared this blow from the hand of one who once fondly loved her. If Gilbert were in a rational state of mind, he would sooner die than cause her such suffering."

"Your words appear reasonable, Mr. Ferris; and it seems to me, it would be great injustice to you, to break the seal of this package."

"As to that, sir, you can use your own pleasure; it is addressed to you, and I can not gainsay you if you choose to do so. I can only assure you, that what you will find there will not repay you for the trouble of perusal."

Though almost trembling with eagerness to clutch the parcel, and hurl it to destruction, the consummate actor was too politic to seem anxious to gain possession of it.

"At any other time, I should probably have considered the circumstance as too trivial to deserve notice; if I expected to remain on the spot, I could meet and repel the charges at once; but in a few days I shall set out on an extended tour, and for years may not again be domesticated in my present home. If you prefer it, read, and then destroy those papers. I know they can do me no injury."

"No sir; I should feel myself unworthy of the character, I bear, if I allowed an idle spirit of curiosity to induce me to peruse statements tending to the injury of a fellow Christian, and a gentleman.

This package belongs of right to you; I here deliver it."

With a well-acted air of indifference, Mr. Ferris took it, and dropped it in his pocket. After a little more conversation on the subject of Hunter's unhappy situation, he departed, leaving on the mind of his new acquaintance a very pleasing impression.

As he rode from the door, a pale, dyspeptic-looking man entered, and walked, without ceremony, into the study of the clergyman. They merely nodded to each other, as if in the habit of meeting daily, and after a pause, the new-comer said—

"You have had a strange visitor today; one not much in the habit of patronizing those of your cloth, I fancy."

"What do you know of him? Why should you speak thus?"

"Oh! I merely know him as a man of wealth and fashion, rather inclined to free-thinking in matters of religion, or in fact, if the plain truth is stated, an unbeliever in all creeds; a man who sees no end to be attained by our wonderful gifts, but to eat, drink, and be merry, and then sink into nothingness. I am curious to know what brought him hither."

"He was not seeking spiritual consolation, Thornton; what he did seek, I am not at liberty to divulge, even to you. Have you known any thing of the early career of Mr. Ferris?"

"Oh yes; we were at college together; and a poor unfortunate wretch, like myself, is apt to follow the career of one he knew in youth, whose pathway has lain in the world's sunshine. George Ferris was born to little more than myself, but he has been singularly fortunate; he went south in early life, and married one of two co-heiresses who were very wealthy, spent nearly all the portion of his wife in a few years; but the younger sister offended her father by a clandestine marriage, and he left his whole estate to Mrs. Ferris."

Mr. Wilson listened with breathless interest. The incidents of the story which had so deeply interested him years before, came vividly to his recollection; the position of the parties tallied with singular accuracy. Could this be chance? Was Hunter kept in durance to conceal the turpitude of this smooth-spoken man?

He would have given half the remaining years of his life, to be able to reclaim the package he had so recently relinquished. All he could now do, was to visit the asylum in person, and ascertain, beyond a doubt, the state of his former acquaintance. If he was really mad, there must be an end to all further investigation; if he was in a state to report what he had written, the villainy might yet be unmasked. His suspicions were shaken, however, by the additional information given by Thornton, that the first wife had died childless, and Ferris had married the sister of Hunter, about the time the latter was most active in his endeavors to recover the lost child. Surely the knowledge of this want of principle on the part of his intended brother-in-law, would have induced Hunter to prevent the marriage; and he wavered in his conclusions. He did not know the magnitude of the temptation offered to the needy and eccentric man, the grinding poverty that depressed those who were dearest to him, the irritable and ill-balanced mind of the world's outcast; for such truly was the poor and proud man, who keenly felt his incapacity to win his way in the busy struggle of human life, while others looked to him for protection and assistance.

Mr. Wilson passed a night of anxious thought, and then concluded to visit the asylum in the morning, and satisfy himself of Hunter's real condition. At an early hour he set out, and after a pleasant drive, entered the extensive grounds, already tenanted by motley groups, indulging in every fantastic vagary that can move the disordered intellect. He was accosted by many, and several times was stopped by those who desired to examine the workmanship of his cab, or to ascertain the age of the steady old animal he drove. He safely reached the door, but no sooner made known the object of his visit, than Dr. Meadows informed him that the object of his solicitude was strictly confined, to prevent him from inflicting injury on himself or others. Mr. Wilson was so solicitous to see him, if but for a moment, that finally the physician yielded, and said that he might look at him through the aperture which admitted light and air

into his apartment. With a horrible oppression of feeling the visitor followed him through a long passage, with doors opening from it at regular intervals. At the farthest end the attendant removed a plate of iron which secured the upper part of the door, beneath which was a strong grating. The room was about ten feet square, and opposite the doorway a window similarly grated. Near it, fell the shadow of a tree, in which a bird warbled its early song in melancholy contrast with the scene within. The room contained a narrow couch, on which lay the emaciated form of Hunter, securely fastened. He slept, evidently the sleep of exhaustion, for his features were pallid as death; large drops stood upon his brow, and from his half-parted lips his breath came in heavy gasps.

"Is he often thus?" inquired Mr. Wilson.

"Not lately; until yesterday I considered him in a fair way to recover. Except on one subject he appeared perfectly sane."

"And that subject?"

"As it touches the standing of a highly honorable man, and is only a madman's folly, I do not feel authorized to repeat it," said the doctor, with some reserve.

"Excuse me, sir, but Mr. Hunter was once well known to me; I take a deep interest in his fate. Do you think it possible he can ever recover?"

"Now, I do not; his physical organization is not strong enough to endure much longer. Before the remedies that must be applied to subdue his malady can take effect, he will be in his grave. Another such night as the last, will leave him as helpless as a child. I have relinquished all hope of his recovery."

Mr. Wilson gazed in melancholy reverie upon the wasted features. Had this man connived at the wrong he afterward endeavored to repair, and as a punishment had God refused to him the atonement he desired to see, by casting him in a madman's cell? Must the secret die with him, and the child still remain an outcast? Who could tell? Deeply depressed at the result of his mission, he returned home to ponder on the strange destiny which placed him on the eve of discovering a clue to what had so deeply

interested him, only to withdraw it, and plunge him into deeper darkness than before.

## CHAPTER XX.

THE golden sunshine, the purple air, the stately ruins, with that lofty dome towering toward heaven, proclaimed the locality to be that city around which cluster all that the fancy treasures of magnificence and romance. The capital of crumbled empires, whose very names have passed from the earth, she still retains the might of her ancient glory; but her dominion is not now that of martial pomp and iron power; her rule is over the wide realm of the imagination and the heart.

On the outskirts of the modern city of Rome, stands a lofty palazzo, partly in ruins. But one suit of rooms had been preserved in habitable order, and these were now occupied by a foreigner, from that land whose very existence was unknown in the palmy days of the Eternal City. The apartments were fitted up with some attention to comfort, but very little to appearances. Pipes of various fashion lay on the tables, the wrecks of crushed glasses, wine bottles, and music scattered over the floor, with broken violin strings, attested the habits of the occupant. They were now untenanted: the evening sunshine alone streamed in through the open windows, rendering the disorder distasteful, by the bright glare which revealed all the accessories of the picture. Hark! a strain of music steals in through the open windows, so soft, so clear, that the soul is taken captive at once. Pass through that wide door into the corridor beyond; it stretches away the length of several moldering ruins, which are left to the occupancy of the bats. Tread softly, lest the rapt spirit of the fair musician should be recalled to this world of sorrow and tears, from which she is now soaring upon the wings of her divine art.

A flight of crumbling steps lead down into a garden filled with shady paths, such as the imagination delights to picture on a summer day; and the murmur of falling waters comes from the jet of a broken

fountain, over which hangs a marble figure of Narcissus, still beautiful enough to render it possible to realize the fable of falling in love with his own image. A pavilion of octagon shape, once inlusted with exquisite sculpture in bas relief, stands in the midst of a grove of ornamental trees. The marble steps which lead to the entrance, are discolored by time, but they are still in good preservation, and the gracefully formed vases, which stand in a row on either hand as you ascend, are filled with the blooming orange and oleander, which flourish there so luxuriantly in the open air. The floor of the pavilion was laid in mosaic, divided into compartments by wreaths of vine-leaves; and in each one was a landscape, or a bouquet of flowers, arranged with the taste of a master.

The walls were cracked in many places, and mildewed by time and neglect; but they had once been covered with frescoes, that might have compared with those of Michael Angelo; and the magical beauty of the coloring and designs was still perceptible, amid desolation and decay. There were four windows to the apartment, and one of them looked toward the Campagna, with its ruins, and its associations with departed triumphs and present desolation.

The door opened against a recess, in which was a small French bedstead, with simple white drapery. A few antiquely carved chairs were scattered around the room; and opposite the bed stood a harp, on which a young girl was playing, and with her white robes, her divine beauty, and the rapt expression of her countenance, she might have been taken for the guardian angel of the spot. She was brilliantly fair, with deep, violet blue eyes, and lips of the brightest vermeil tint. Her light brown hair, lay in waves upon her finely moulded brow, like ripples of gold; but was drawn together at the back of the head, and wreathed in rich braids, terminating in a few short curls, which played upon her neck. Though the features were critically beautiful, the expression of the face was so charming, that one thought not of gazing on it with a critic's eye. It fascinated at once, and held the gazer spell-bound; for the beautiful soul shone forth in every expression

of that lovely countenance. It was not the untried soul of joyous youth, which has known no cares, no griefs, but the expression of a woman who has felt, suffered, and triumphed over self. The finer and more beautiful traits of character are not developed, until sorrow has touched the heart, and refined the susceptibilities; the baptism of tears brightens and beautifies in the moral world, as the fountain of perpetual youth was fabled to do in the physical one.

The triumphant strain, which had soared to heaven, dies slowly away, and an expression of tenderness steals over her features, as she glides into a slow, soft strain, addressed to faded flowers; and the association which produced the change may be traced, by observing that her eyes are resting on the remains of a bouquet, which lay, withered and discolored, upon the open leaves of a book.

That there was a history attached to those flowers, might be read in the melancholy light of those beautiful orbs. Yes; the singer is Emma, and the faded flowers are those given her by Walter Murray, on the morning they parted. It is five years since we last looked on Emma, as a girl budding into womanhood; she sits before us, now, in its full and exquisite development. This is the anniversary of the day on which she parted from her young lover; and the dream has been cherished deep within her soul, as only the friendless, the lonely, and the desolate cherish the few bright links that bind them to their "own heart's country people."

Her life, since that day, had been made up of disappointment, privations, and mortifications. Once separated from her native land—from all to whom she could have appealed, Montes made her feel that his grasp of iron was indeed upon her fate. He exacted from her the most unremitting attention to her musical studies; he allowed her no association with those of her own age, and his own companions were such as she intuitively shrank from. Montes had obtained professional employment, and his life was spent in a career of dissipation, which revolted and estranged his daughter still more widely from him.

Emma had long since ceased to hear

from her friends at Ruggleston; and at the end of her second year of exile, her annuity had been withdrawn. Many, many letters were written, both to Mrs. Brandon and to Clarice, but no reply came. A few months after her arrival in Italy, a letter from Clarice announced her marriage with Herbert, and there the correspondence ceased; from Mrs. Brandon she heard not at all. Bitterly painful had this been to the affectionate heart of the lonely girl; but she had learned from it a lesson of resignation and self-reliance, which strengthened, while it elevated her character.

Montes allowed her books, and with these mute yet eloquent companions, and her musical practice, her life was passed. Was it strange, that one who led so monotonous life, should have cherished one thought, dreamed one dream, until it became a portion of her existence? Her only hope of escape from the iron thralldom in which she was held, was in the pledge given her by Walter Murray. In spite of the threats of Montes, she had, on one point, been firm. She resolutely refused to perform in public, until after the anniversary of the fifth year after their parting. This was the last evening. If he came not, she was bound to fulfill her promise to her father. How anxiously she had watched for him, during the long hours of the few past weeks; how drearily the moments of disappointment lagged, there are few who can not tell. Every footstep made the blood leap quicker to her heart; every face that presented itself before her, she scanned quickly, to discover in it the lineaments of her fondly trusted lover.

Alas, he came not! And as the fading sunlight shed its last rosy tint upon her pale face and drooping form, tears of bitterness gathered slowly in her eyes, and fell upon her clasped hands. With that sun passed her last day of freedom from a life she dreaded; henceforth she belonged to the world; to minister to its pleasures; to seek applause from the crowd whose censure she dreaded, yet whose praise she was not solicitous to win. At the moment this great anguish, the certainty that she was forgotten, had overtaken her, she must commence the exercise of her talents in her most arduous

profession. With a heart beating with the agony of slighted and forsaken love, she must utter the brilliant tide of song, and sweep triumphant through her part, though the overburdened heart should break in the trial. A heavy and uneven step was heard approaching; she hastily wiped away the traces of emotion and prepared to receive her father.

## CHAPTER XXI.

One glance at Montes informed Emma that he had been drinking; but this was now of such common occurrence, that it did not surprise her. He slowly ascended the steps, and threw himself into the first seat he came to.

"It is the last day," said he, fixing his glittering, dark eyes upon her. "I have been a most exemplary father, to submit to your whim; but now, that my part of the contract is fulfilled, I shall exact the completion of yours."

"I am ready," she coldly said. "I thank you for the delay; it has satisfied my conscience."

"Hum—a matter of conscience, was it? Now, do you know, I have always believed that cursed young puppy, Walter Murray, had something to do with all this foolery. Did you promise *him* to wait five years? To lose a whole precious year in waiting for a young jackanapes, who thought it fine amusement to make love to such a simple, credulous fool as you have proved yourself."

"It matters not now: the time is past. If I am successful, you will be amply paid for the delay."

There was something so impassive in her manner, that, stupefied as he was, Montes was struck by it. He looked at her scrutinizingly, and said—

"If I did not hold it an impossibility that one of your light and fickle sex should continue so long constant to one idea, I should really believe that you are in despair, because the man, does not come, as the boy promised he would. Ah, never mind, a real sorrow will render you irresistible in tragedy."

Emma shuddered, and covered her face with her hands, that he might not see the expression of repulsion which crossed her features. This stony hardness, this utter want of feeling, had completely estranged her from her father, and she accused herself of wanting the common instincts of nature, because she could not love him. He valued her solely as the medium of acquiring the means of future indulgence, and, with a coarseness which betrayed the base nature of the man, he did not hesitate to show her how little regard he had for her, as a feeling, sensitive, and intelligent human being. After a pause, he said—

"I have already made arrangements for your debut, and you owe me some thanks that it is not to be in a theatre."

"Where, then?" asked Emma, with some show of interest.

"At the soiree of Madame Bascia, to-morrow evening."

"So soon? You have really lost no time."

"Too much has already been lost. A select party will be present to-morrow night, and among them the director of the San Carlos, at Naples. If he approves, your fame is established. I have caused him to hear of your wonderful voice, and he comes to offer you an engagement, if he is not disappointed. That is impossible; I have kept you in such seclusion, that your talents and beauty will take them by surprise. In forty-eight hours, all Rome will talk of the new prima donna. Have you no vanity, to be touched by the homage of the world?"

"I have lived so long without sympathy, with my thoughts, fancies, and feelings locked in my own heart, that I now scarcely know if the voice of applause will awaken one glad echo. But for my passionate and deathless love for music, which so well expresses the deeper and stronger emotions of the soul, I believe I should long since have lost my reason. Father, you have dealt terribly with the child you forcibly tore away from a secure and happy home. In this, the last hour of my dreadful seclusion, I must tell you how much I have suffered."

"For what?" asked Montes, with a stare of astonishment. "You can not say that I have been niggardly toward you.

I have given you a residence, which was once the summer retreat of a daughter of imperial Rome. I have furnished you with an attendant; have allowed you to regulate the expenses of your own toilet: true, you had no temptation to care about finery. Your time, you necessarily devoted to your professional studies. What more would you have had?"

"What more! A word of kindness, from him who claims me as his child—a beating human heart, to which I could turn, without the fear of being repelled. Think for yourself; you have gathered around you such a set of lawless men, that I dare not even show myself in yonder ruined walls. Even Arrambria, your chosen companion, I have been forced to forbid my presence. For nearly five years, I have lived here in utter seclusion. I know not a human being, except the old music master, and Katinka, who is too dull to make a companion of, even if the difference in our station did not forbid the thought."

"Pooh! You have had flowers, books, birds, and sunshine, and they are enough in all conscience for a romantic young lady, who had a lover to dream of. Forget all about it, if it did not please you, for you will soon have your head full of other things. The life of excitement, flattery, and novelty, to-morrow evening will introduce you to, will put to flight all remembrance of the solitude which has enabled you to cultivate your powers in a proper manner. But a word to retrospection, you know I do not love it. I came to-night to offer you a pleasure, which, at least, you have annually enjoyed."

"The chanting of the Miserere," said Emma, with a bright flash of pleasure passing over her features. "That can make one forget their own petty cares and sorrows, in the vastness of the calamity announced to the world in such heart-rending accents."

While speaking, she wore a dark silk mantilla around her, and drew the hood over her features. A carriage awaited them at a gate which opened from the garden wall, and they soon reached the private entrance to the Sistine chapel, which Montes had obtained a permit to pass through.

They obtained a good place, and Emma

glanced around to view again the scene which had before so vividly impressed her imagination. One half of this beautiful chapel was railed off for spectators, with which it was already crowded. The remainder was occupied by the Pope, his cardinals, and the choir, composed of the finest singers in the world. The faint light scarcely reached the lofty frescoed arches, and fell dimly on the motionless figures of the churchmen, grouped around the altar. So deep and impressive was the silence which reigned throughout this immense throng, that even breathing seemed suspended.

From the dense mass that filled the chapel, one group which stood near the railing, at once fascinated the attention of Emma, and held her spell-bound during the whole of the succeeding ceremonies. A tall, grave-looking man, supported on his arm the form of a slender, and very youthful female, whose pallid face leaned against his shoulder. Her large, dark eyes were fixed immovably upon the altar with a mournful expression peculiarly unsuited to one evidently in the morning of life. A graceful woman stood on the other side, in such a position as to shield the girl as much, as possible from the pressure of the crowd; and hers was the face which riveted the gaze of Emma. It was still lovely, though time had stolen the bloom of youth, and sorrow had thrown its touching expression over her features; yet hope had lived on, for the mother's heart had some object on which to lavish the treasures of her warm affections, and life could not be divested all of charms, while heaven spared a beloved one.

In that mild countenance, Emma intuitively felt that she beheld the mother of Walter Murray. There was about the mouth, the same expression of blended firmness and sweetness; the same soul seemed to look forth from their eyes; though hers were blue and his were dark as the midnight heavens. She also recognized Mr. Ferris and his daughter, from the well-remembered descriptions of Walter; but where was he? Her heart beat almost to suffocation, as she scanned the faces around to see if that of her handsome boy-lover was among them; but she saw him not; and a painful chill of disap-

pointment succeeded the first wild hope which had sprung to life in her soul. His family was evidently traveling; where then was he? Had he cast aside his first dream, as a boy's folly, and refused to accompany them to the country in which she resided, because he wished to avoid a meeting? Nothing could be more probable. He had not understood his own position, nor hers, when he promised to win her as his bride. Now he was older; he had entered society, and the voice of ambition had whispered of a higher destiny to be accomplished by him.

"Well, be it so," said the proud spirit which had enabled her to bear suffering without repining. "I, too, will accomplish a destiny. In the brilliant career opening before me, I will forget the past."

The singing commenced; and pressing her hand upon her heart, to quell its wild pulsations, she gave herself up to the influence of the scene. The lamentations were first sung, and at their commencement thirteen candles were burning, representing the great prophets of Israel: as the chant proceeded they were successively extinguished, until the last and brightest, representing Christ, sank into darkness, and the singers wailed forth the thrilling words, "Christ is gone," in tones of wild pathos, which struck an answering chord in every heart. A deep and almost breathless silence ensued, which continued so long as to become oppressive. It was broken by a cry of human suffering; and by the dim light which struggled through a window of stained glass, Emma saw that Caroline Ferris had fainted. To remove her was impossible, and the young girl stooped forward to offer a viniagrette, which was received by the mother with thanks, uttered in a low, sweet tone, and in the words of her own beloved language. When Caroline Ferris again unclosed her eyes, strains of tender, heart-breaking melody were swelling through the vast dome; they became fainter, fainter, as if receding on the distant air, and she wept in sympathy with the desolated world which had sacrificed its Saviour. Then arose to heaven the cry of anguish for the lost, the sacrificed one, gradually dying away in the broken wail of exhausted sorrow.

Borne away by the enthusiasm of the

moment, Emma forgot the vast throng of which she formed a part. She stood with clasped hands, and lips apart, her spirit in imagination in that garden of Gethsemane, where the human struggled with the divine nature, and the *Man* said, "Let this cup pass from me," but the *God* added, "Let not my will, but thine be done."

The crowd departed in silence; for the spell of the recent ceremony was upon them, and the coldest scoffers among them felt that he stood on hallowed ground. Montes allowed Emma to indulge her reverie, until the way was clear before them. They then closely followed the party of Mr. Ferris; for they too departed by the same entrance which had admitted the singer and his daughter.

A full moon was shining through the lucid atmosphere, and Emma suffered her mantilla to fall back, leaving her head of sculptured beauty, and her fair shoulders partly exposed. As Mrs. Ferris was about to step into her carriage, she remembered the viniagrette which had been offered, and turned to look for the person who had extended the kindness to her. She recognized the dress, and spoke in Italian, offering her thanks. Emma answered in English—

"You are quite welcome, madam."

The accent was so pure, that Mrs. Ferris paused, and cast another admiring gaze upon the lovely features of the young girl, as she said—

"Am I indebted for this kindness to an Englishwoman, or an American?"

"An American," she eagerly answered.

"Then I trust we shall meet again; here is my card. You will learn from it, that you have served a countrywoman."

Emma could have clasped to her lips the hand which was extended to her, and wept tears of passionate emotion over it, but her reply was checked by an exclamation from Mr. Ferris. He had been occupied in placing his daughter comfortably in the carriage, and had not hitherto remarked the persons by whom his wife was detained. He at length looked around, and the vision of loveliness which charmed Mrs. Ferris, seemed to paralyze heart and brain, as he looked upon it. He lost all self-control, and exclaimed—

"Great God! is it a phantom, evoked by my own over-wrought brain, or a maddening reality?" His hand was raised, and his trembling finger pointed toward the startled girl. His wife laid her hand on his arm.

"My love! what— what has excited you thus? This young lady has been kind enough to lend Caroline her viniagrette, and I was merely returning my thanks to her."

"Is that all?" said he, in a cold, hollow tone, as if the words conveyed no meaning to himself. "Yes, I remember; but she is wonderfully like one who is in the dark grave now; wonderfully—wonderfully!" And with a hasty bow to the singer and his daughter, he handed his wife into the carriage, stepped heavily after her, and was driven away.

"Quick, Emma! what name is on that card?" asked Montes. "Years have so changed the man, that I scarcely dare trust to my own convictions, until they are confirmed."

She held the card toward him. He read the address, breathed heavily, and said—

"Just as I expected; it is George Ferris. It is more than twenty years since we stood face to face before; and no wonder we did not recognize each other, though truly I should take that man to be nearer fifty than forty years of age."

"Who then, is Mr. Ferris?"

"He was once the husband of your mother's sister, and the possessor of that fortune which should have been yours."

Emma uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Do you know that he is also the step-father of Walter Murray?"

"Ha! then I shall be careful that this encounter leads to no further acquaintance on your side; though young Murray evidently seeks to avoid a meeting with you, for I know he has been in Italy many months."

Emma felt as if a sudden blow had been struck upon her heart, at this confirmation of her own fears.

"How did you learn this?" she faltered.

"Oh, by chance; you need not care how, since he no longer interests himself in any thing concerning you. It is best

so, for I would have prevented a union between you, at all hazards."

Emma said no more. She returned home with a wild misere ringing in her own soul, as full of desolation as the masterly one to which she had so recently listened.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE following day was brilliantly beautiful. Mr. Ferris had rented a palazzo, which opened on one side upon the Corso, and on the other on a picturesque garden, with fountains and statues adorning it. Looking toward the shadiest depths of the garden, was a room of medium size, fitted up with exquisite taste. Its walls were of silver arabesque, on a ground of pale rose color; and several recesses were filled with groups of statuary, on which pink satin hangings cast a rosy and life-like hue. Heavy curtains swept to the floor in thick folds, through which a dreamy light just penetrated into the room. On the floor was a Persian carpet of gorgeous dyes, and the lounges and ottomans were covered with embroidered velvet. A porcelain stove was placed in the center of the room, in which burned some perfumed wood, that sent a soft odor throughout the apartment.

On a couch near one of the windows, lay the slender form of Caroline Ferris, clad in a white muslin wrapper, over which she had drawn the folds of a rich shawl, as if the morning air were too chilly for her languid frame. The excitement of the past night might have rendered her thus pale and wan; but to those who looked upon her as she thus reclined, she certainly seemed like one whose spirit was rapidly shaking off its earthly bonds. Her cheeks were sunken and colorless; her lips slightly drawn apart, as if the effort to breathe was painful to her; and her dark eyes looked so large, so preternaturally bright, that it almost startled one to catch their wild expression. Consumed by inward fever, and a nervous restlessness, for which science had hitherto found no remedy, she could not rest

contented in any place longer than the first novelty had passed away. As if conscious that her time on earth was short, she seemed anxious to fill every hour of her waning life with some new emotion, and the last year had been spent by her parents in continual journeyings from place to place, in compliance with her most capricious whim. Her father hung over her couch, watched her very breath as if his own life were suspended upon it. It was pitiable to see the mute anguish which crept over his features, as he bent above her sleeping form, and felt the conviction sinking upon his soul, that he must go to his grave a childless man. Sometimes a thought of restitution flashed upon his mind: he would seek the disinherited girl, endow her with a portion of her own wealth, introduce her to the world as his adopted daughter; Heaven, thus appeased, might raise its ban, and his own idol be spared. Yet no. If he acted thus, his wife must learn all; and both his pride and affection recoiled from the idea of falling so low in her esteem. Caroline might die after all, and then the sacrifice of the only good left him—the respect and trust of the wife he so highly estimated, would be forfeited for naught.

"Verily the way of the transgressor is hard." On this morning he was alone with his daughter, and after reading aloud at her request, she closed her eyes, and seemed to sleep. He softly laid the book aside, and gazed long upon the wasted features, while he unconsciously muttered half aloud—

"Soon to be dust! soon to be dust! How can it be, that what we so love, what we so clasp to our souls with the iron strength of affection, shall fade and perish into naught? Not even an echo of the voice that was the music of the heart, shall remain to cheer the earth made desolate by the absence of the beloved. I would I could believe in the existence of a God, that I might curse him and die."

Thus murmured he in the midst of his great agony. Earth and all its powers were failing him, and he felt his utter impotence in the hands of that mysterious power he called Fate. When he made an effort to raise his thoughts to heaven, a

dark and formless void, without life, without hope, stretched around and above him. To him indeed, there was no God! Like one on the brink of a terrific precipice, looking down into a fathomless abyss, from which only darkness arises, he stretched forth his arms, and clasped them upon the black vapor which shrouded in night all the beauty, the majesty of faith. He had turned from the light; he had resolutely closed his eyes upon it; and now, tracked by the fiends of despair and death, he had no refuge but the grave, which brought to him only images of the charnel-house and shroud. The resurrection, which is so beautifully typified in nature, was to him but an idle dream, a baseless vision.

"If there be a God, why—why has he punished the innocent for the guilty? Why is the retribution so disproportioned to the crime? There was but *one*, and for her three beautiful and beloved, have been the sacrifice. Money—money—fiend—tempter! curse! can you now console me for the fearful price I have paid for your possession?"

Suddenly the large eyes unclosed, the thin hand of the invalid grasped his, as she asked:

"What was the price? Your mutterings over my couch have such fearful meaning, that I can bear them no longer. Some terrible weight is on your conscience, my father."

In an instant he was calm; he even smiled.

"My darling, you only dreamed. I—I have no sorrow beyond seeing you suffer. Let me behold you once more restored to health, and I shall be happy, oh very happy!"

She looked incredulous, but only sighed heavily, as she asked:

"Have you heard from home—from Montalto, lately? I dreamed of Uncle Gilbert, last night, and his face was bright as that of an angel. It was a strange dream, father. He came to my side, and said: 'You will come when I do, to the throne of the Eternal. Tell him, who has yearned for my death, that his own angel comes side by side with me to kneel before a God of mercy, and plead that he may be turned from the pathway of the oppressor and wrong-doer.'"

"What fantasy, child!" exclaimed the father, though he was so much shocked, he had scarcely breath or presence of mind to reply to her. "I do not think you have seen your Uncle Gilbert since you were a very little girl."

"Only in my dreams," she quickly replied. "He has talked with me in my sleep, many times. I have beheld him in his cell, chained to his bed; sometimes raving in his madness, but as I draw near him, he always becomes quiet, and talks with me."

"Who has filled your fancy with such terrible visions?" he passionately inquired. "It is such folly that is destroying you; that deprives your slumbers of refreshment, and fills you with the spirit of unrest. Tell me, who has talked with you of your insane uncle?"

"No mortal tongue, my father; so he not angry with me. You know that I have been unlike other children, since that terrible calamity which bereft me of both my brothers at once. I know not how I learned that my uncle lived an inmate of a mad-house; but it seems to me I have known it all my life. It was to my prayers you yielded, when you consented that he should be removed to Montalto on our departure, and left under the care of my grandmother. He called me to him when I slept, and asked this service of me. 'He will now consent,' said he, 'for he knows my restoration is hopeless, and I can not betray him.' Father—father! what did he mean?"

"Mercy, mercy! saint or demon that holdest my fate in your ruthless grasp!" muttered Ferris; "for this is more than I can bear."

He arose, so lividly pale, that his daughter started up in alarm. He gently replaced her, and said more composedly:

"Forbear, Caroline, unless you would behold me, too, a madman. Never mention this subject again. Your dreams are merely the result of a morbid state of feeling, produced by infirm health. Your uncle has been the cause of much bitter suffering to me; do not become the means of rendering his name yet more odious to me. Drive from your mind all thoughts of him, I conjure you. Forget that he lives; he has no power

over your fate, either for good or for evil."

A servant entered with a note. Ferris glanced at the superscription, tore it open with nervous haste, and read these words:

FERRIS:

One who knew you long years ago, when we were both poor and full of bright hopes, now demands of you a portion of the wealth so unjustly withheld from the rightful heir of Mrs. Walton. As the protector and guardian of her daughter, whom you evidently recognized last night, I demand an interview. I will reveal myself to you when we meet, which must be instantly, as I await your summons to a private interview.

There was no signature. He quickly asked:

"Who brought this?"

"A gentleman, I believe," replied the servant rather doubtfully; for the dissipated air and shabby dress of Montes, did not impress him with a very exalted idea of his station.

"Show him into my private room, and let no one interrupt me, on any pretence whatever."

With a quick, almost eager step, he passed from the apartment. Here was an unlooked for opportunity to repair a portion of the wrong he had inflicted. He would be liberal in his offers, and place the girl and her protector above want; then his conscience would be appeased. It was impossible that the guardian, who had suffered her rights to lay so long dormant, should be aware of the nature of her claim on his estate; therefore, all he should do, would appear solely as the promptings of his own liberal spirit.

What passed in that interview was only known to the two engaged in it. Montes looked quite elated when he issued from the house; and when he returned to Emma, late in the afternoon, he brought a porter with him, who carried a box, containing a beautiful costume for the evening concert. Emma thanked him with pleased surprise. She had examined her slender wardrobe, with feelings of acute mortification, at the thought of making her debut in any one of the

dress she had hitherto been able to afford. The exquisitely fancied costume, representing the dress of a Greek vestal, and composed of the lightest and airiest of materials, was exactly suited to her classic style of beauty.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

LETTER FROM WALTER MURRAY TO A YOUNG FRIEND.

NAPLES, 18—.

DEAR GRAFTON—I have now been here six months, long enough in all conscience to visit the lions, and to have written all that can be said of them. Fancy me duly inducted into the mysteries of Pompeii, the Sybil's Cave, &c.; as climbing Vesuvius, and looking into its tremendous crater, then gazing away over the matchless bay, seen through the clearest atmosphere, with its islands scattered like green gems over its surface. All this is beautiful I admit, and had my head and heart been only filled with classic associations, it would have been unmingled pleasure, to tread the ground hallowed by the recollections which throw so vivid an interest around these scenes. But as you can read a description of them in some of the numerous books of travel which are constantly issuing from the press, I mercifully forbear.

You know that independently of my desire to visit world-renowned Italy, there was a still more potent attraction than the fame of its beauty, in a lovely human being, known but a brief space, to be remembered through life. I have related to you the romantic adventure I met with on the Mississippi five years since: the troth I plighted to that charming embodiment of my boyish ideal. I know that you laughed at what you considered my romantic folly, and assured me that long before the five years had passed away, I should have forgotten her, and probably my ladie-love be united to some idle scamp in her own sphere. So far as I am concerned, my answer is, *I am here*, and for no other purpose than to discover the

"whereabouts" of her whose image has been the companion of my thoughts, since the day we parted.

So much in earnest have I been, that I no sooner found her father had left New Orleans without leaving a clue by which I could discover whither they had gone, than I wrote to the old gentleman who had at one time adopted Emma as his daughter. He was more considerate; and for nearly two years, when a letter arrived from Italy, he informed me in a few brief lines, that Emma was well, and was successfully preparing herself for the career her father had chosen for her. The first letter mentioned that she was in Naples, and no subsequent one spoke of a change of residence. For the last three years, all communication has ceased between herself and her former friends. They believe it proceeds from some villainy on the part of her father, for the annuity which Mr. Ruggles bestowed upon her, is regularly claimed, though all their letters remain unanswered.

To tell the truth, I consider the father a miserable scamp; and should I succeed in the quest I have undertaken, I hardly yet know how I shall bear the thought of claiming him as mine. Yet why do I say this? If Emma is only true to me, there is no question as to the final decision of my heart. Beneath my calm exterior, you have no conception of the strength of feeling that binds me to what I have once loved; and if ever an angel took on herself the guise of a beautiful woman, that angel is this same Emma Montes, whose fate I must learn before I can obtain rest.

I have sought her now for months, without success. I reproach myself with almost neglecting a sacred duty to pursue, what may prove a phantom after all; for my sister is in such a state, as to preclude nearly all hope of her recovery. Yet, to follow up a deceptive clue, I refused to accompany my family to Rome.

I have a letter from my mother, beside me now, and she informs me that Caroline grows weaker from day to day. She is evidently overwhelmed with a sense of her approaching bereavement, and I am selfish longer to delay my departure. I must be beside her, to sustain her in her grief, for my father, though devoted to

her, gives up to such paroxysms of wild sorrow, when the conviction comes to him that he must resign his last child, that she is compelled to suppress the expression of her own anguish, to offer consolation to him. It seems to me, that my beloved mother almost forgets that she mourns for her own children, in the deep sympathy she gives him for the loss of his. I remain to her it is true, and Caroline is now his only one. I would endeavor to console him; but there has always been a gulf between us, which I can not pass. He is kind and indulgent in all things beyond my most extravagant wish; but there is an instinctive feeling in my soul that my presence does not contribute to his happiness. It is a silly thought; but I have fancied that it may be, because I so strikingly resemble my father, and you know Mr. Ferris loved my mother before either of them ever married.

P. S. I have again met with a disappointment in tracing Emma, and early to-morrow morning I shall leave for the eternal city.

W. M.

In the hush of evening, Walter strolled forth to look once more upon the sapphire dome of night, with its eternal stars reflected in the placid bosom of the bay, Vesuvius in the back-ground, capped with its cloud of red vapor, ever and anon brightening into vivid sheets of forked flame. His artist soul could appreciate all the beauty of the scene and the hour, and on this last night, he surrendered himself to their full influence.

As he walked dreamily along, the sound of voices from a group of trees near him, interrupted his reverie. He was turning impatiently away, when a few words caught his ear, which caused him to pause involuntarily.

"Do you know what took the manager of the San Carlos to Rome, Shelton?" inquired an affected voice.

"No; some new star in the musical world, I suppose. Do you know?"

"My good friend, you are behind the age. There is a young girl in Rome, who possesses the most unparalleled voice, and also the most exquisite beauty. Her father has kept her in the strictest seclusion, that she may burst like a comet upon the admiring world. It was whispered to the

manager, that she would make her debut at a private concert, at the house of one of the *dilettante*, and he was off for Rome that night. If she is the prodigy she is represented, she will appear before this music-loving people, within a month from this time."

"Ah! that is good. I wished for some thing to create a new sensation, and lo! it is granted. If she is handsome, I shall certainly make love to her."

"You will not be singular in that, I fancy. A new opera singer, who is young and beautiful, is quite a godsend. The *dolce far niente* is growing rather tedious."

The speakers were two young Englishmen, with leisure and fortune, which they squandered in the most fashionable follies, and fancied they were acquiring great knowledge of life in their foreign tour. Walter had not a doubt that Emma was the proposed prima donna, and his quick blood bounded in his veins, as he heard one of the speakers announce his intention to make love to her.

"I will find her; save her from such protestations as you would offer, heartless worldling," he muttered, as he hurried away to commence his preparations for immediate departure.

In the twilight of that day on which Mr. Ferris had held so agitating an interview with his daughter, Walter stood beside her couch; he was shocked at the alteration a few weeks had wrought in her appearance. Caroline saw something of it in his face; for he could not entirely conceal his emotion.

"Dear, dear brother," she whispered, "do not let my parents see what you think of me, as plainly as I do; they already suffer so much. Sit close beside me, Walter, that I may look upon your handsome face, and see the expression of your kind eyes."

Walter clasped the cold, wan hand extended to him in both his own, as he seated himself in deep agitation. He could already see the end: a few more weeks, and the young being before him would have passed away; and who should then whisper consolation to the heart of the sternly-tried father? Mr. Ferris seemed like some wanderer from the land of unrest; he moved to and fro, pausing occasionally, in his troubled walk, beside

his daughter, and scanning her wasted features, as if hoping to find there something to bid him cast aside the fears which agitated his soul. Then, as if conscious that she might be alarmed by this mute questioning, he would offer her fruit, from the stand which stood near furnished with every thing that could alleviate the sufferings of one parched with fever. Caroline quietly tasted all he offered, and thanked him with a smile, that only made him more wretched than before. Mrs. Ferris, pale, quiet, and suffering, sat on the other side of her son, and almost reproached herself for the gleam of joy his presence gave her, while her other darling lay perishing before her. She had learned to "commune with her own heart, and be still;" and this last blow was but one more wave in the sea of affliction which had dashed over her unresisting head. There is something sublime in the resignation of sorrow; and this frail, delicate woman, with firm religious faith, stood as a barrier to self-destruction, between her rebellious husband and the God who had shown himself so terrible an avenger.

"Walter, have you brought your statue?" asked Caroline, during a pause in the painfully-sustained conversation.

"I remembered my promise, dear Cara, and it came with me."

"Can I see it to-night? Have it unpacked; make them bring in a dozen lamps, and dispose them favorably. The recess between yonder windows, with its rose-colored drapery for a back-ground, will be just suited to show its beauty. Do, dear Walter, gratify my whim."

"Certainly, if you desire it, my darling sister. I will superintend the opening of it myself."

The statue was one executed by himself, and years had been spent on it, before he succeeded in embodying the ideal in his own mind, in such a manner as to satisfy his fastidious taste. Many models had been destroyed, before he formed one he considered worthy of being perpetuated in marble. This one we need scarcely say, was that figure of sorrow which had so struck his imagination on the evening of the day which had witnessed his plunge into the Mississippi, to rescue a drowning stranger.

In about half an hour he returned, followed by servants bearing the precious burden, covered with a cloth. Until he had placed it, and arranged the lights to fall as he wished, he would not withdraw the envious veil. Mr. Ferris watched his movements with a sort of listless curiosity, until Walter stepped aside, and left the sculptured image standing before them in all its touching loveliness. The likeness was strikingly correct; for, with such a model, it was not necessary that the sculptor should idealize. Emma, in her young beauty, stood embodied before that guilty man, the living image of the wife he had deceived even in death; of the sister, whose child he had cast forth upon the mercies of a hard and pitiless world. Each one uttered an exclamation.

"It is unrivaled!" said Caroline, clasping her hands in ecstasy. "Oh, brother, you will become world-renowned through your glorious talent!"

"It is the image of the young girl to whom I spoke at the Sistine chapel, night before last," said the mother.

"It is Nemesis, the dread punisher of the guilty!" exclaimed Mr. Ferris, hoarsely. "Boy—boy! where did you meet with the original of that figure, which rises before me, like an avenging deity, at every step I take? Do you know her, or is this wonderful resemblance a mere chance?"

"It is the likeness of the young girl whose life I saved five years since. I have modeled it from memory. Did you say, dear mother, that you have met with one who resembles it? Pray tell me where she is to be found, for I am extremely anxious to see her again."

Before Mrs. Ferris could reply, her husband spoke quickly, almost harshly—

"No, no; seek her not! she can be nothing to you. With my consent, you never shall renew your acquaintance with her."

"I should be sorry to do any thing displeasing to you, sir; but this is a matter which chiefly concerns my own honor and happiness, and these I must consult, even before your wishes," answered Walter, respectfully but firmly.

"What tie can exist between you and this girl, that can be paramount to my claims on you?" he fiercely asked.

"The tie that binds all human hearts in one common destiny—love. Spoken words have passed between us, which bind my honor; and that figure attests how strong is the affection which could labor for years, until the perfect image of my heart's ideal stood before me."

Mr. Ferris was fearfully agitated. He paced the floor hurriedly, until he had sufficiently mastered his emotion to speak with calmness. Approaching Walter, he laid his hand on his shoulder, and said, in a low tone—

"Walter, you are my son in affection, will you then give a final blow to the heart for which so fearful a trial is now in store? Behold my child dying, and you, at such a crisis, ready to rebel against me. The original of that statue can never enter my house, unless she passes over my lifeless body."

Walter was shocked.

"Surely, sir, this is the very madness of prejudice. Miss Montes, in a worldly point of view, is, I admit, an indifferent match; but the young lady herself is all the most fastidious can desire; and she can not have committed any act which will preclude her from entering the abode of my mother. I would not, for the world, do any thing that can increase your present affliction, but I must assert the right which every man possesses, to a free choice in a matter of this kind."

"As you please," replied Mr. Ferris, while a dark frown gathered on his brow. "But you will remember, that my home is that of your mother, and I swear to you that Emma Montes shall never enter it as a guest. It is five years since you met: forget the idle dream, which sprang from that boyish romance, and all will be well."

"No, sir, all would not be well," replied Walter, with that quiet firmness of manner, which had often compelled his stepfather to respect his rights. "I regret that I must incur your displeasure. But my mother, I know, will never forsake her child; beneath his own roof, she can make the acquaintance of her son's wife, and give to her that affectionate consideration you appear determined to withhold. In time, you may become more reasonable; but let us end this colloquy; my mother and sister already appear alarmed,

and it will be time enough to arrange our future position in regard to each other, when I have seen Emma, and ascertained what hope I have for the future."

"You persist, then?"

"I do. Come what will, I seek her, and marry her, if she is true to her vow."

"Well, we shall see, sir, we shall see," and, still violently excited, Mr. Ferris left the room.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. FERRIS eagerly sought his own apartment. Here was an opportunity to offer full atonement. He could promote this union which promised so fairly, and find consolation for his own sorrows, in the consciousness of having acted rightly at the last. Yet, no! How could he bear the presence of the being he had so cruelly wronged? It would be a perpetual reproach to him. He had already placed her beyond want, and she possessed talents which promised to elevate her to an enviable position. Why, then, allow her to cross his path, and blot out the little sunshine he could hope for in the future, by becoming a cause of dissension between his wife and himself? No; it should not be.

He hastily seized a pen, and wrote a few lines to Montes, which were dispatched to the residence of that person by his own confidential servant. Feeling the necessity of some sedative, after the violent emotion of the past hour, he drew forth a cigar-case, and resorted to his usual remedy for excitement. A lamp burned on the table, and he looked around for a taper to ignite his cigar. Finding none at hand, he opened a bundle of old letters, which he had seen that morning for the first time in many years; by accident they had been put up with papers of importance, and he now drew one from the package. After a cursory glance, he was about to tear it, when his eye was arrested by a few words, which seemed as a voice from the grave; and, as if fascinated by some spell, whose power he could not withstand, he read the lines addressed to his first wife, by her discarded sister:

"My dear Emma, I wish I could describe to you my child, my beautiful, my enchanting little one. It is not a mother's partiality which misleads me, for all concur in pronouncing my daughter a miracle of loveliness and grace. Her little form must be a miniature image of the 'statue that enchants the world,' and on her infantile features, is an expression that is indescribably fascinating. There is a heavenly sweetness, a softness of repose, as if an angel's wing had swept over her face, and left a portion of its calm radiance there. This innocent, this angelic expression, will hereafter be her passport to the hearts of others. She will have friends; I feel, I know, that the imprudence of her mother will not permanently affect the fate of my beloved child. It is this conviction which sustains me, amid the evils of my present situation:

"A few more days, my beloved Emma, and you will seek my daughter, as the last request of your heart-broken sister. She is sitting beside me now, playing with a bunch of early flowers; and as I gaze upon her placid brow, and smiling lip, some portion of the happiness nestling in her little heart, is reflected into mine. I can not become a victim to utter despair, while she remains to me.

"Emma, for she bears your name, never weeps aloud: when grieved, tears steal silently over her cheeks, and her lips quiver as if her heart would break, but the usual outcry of children I have never heard from her, since very early infancy. This, to my judgment, shows deep and high-toned sensibility, which, if well controlled, will impart a great charm to her character; if not, it will prove the shipwreck of her earthly hopes.

"I am thus particular, my dear sister, in describing my daughter, because she will soon be with you. My death must soften the heart of the father who once loved me, so far, at least, as to permit you to adopt my orphan child. I am dying—no mortal power can prolong my life beyond a week. When this reaches you, I shall be at peace; and, as you fulfill the duty now intrusted to you, shall you find peace in the last hours of life."

This letter had never reached the person to whom it was addressed. It was sent by Garwood to Mr. Ferris, in the

same enclosure which contained the announcement of Mrs. Walton's death, and that gentleman had not considered it expedient to inform his wife of its reception. He had hastily glanced over it, and thrust it aside, intending to destroy it; for years it had lain unheeded, and now, by a strange coincidence, it fell in his hands at the last moment given him for thought and atonement.

His good and evil angel hovered near him, as he sat there wrapped in a reverie of painful remorse; and as each preponderated, his working features betrayed its promptings. He recalled the past events of his life, and the cold dew stood upon his brow as they slowly defiled before him; shadowy ghosts of wrong, treachery, and suffering, interspersed with a few good acts, like oases in a barren waste. His heart began to soften, when the dark fiend whispered—

"Your drowning boy! your idiot son! your perishing daughter! Why should they have been thus destroyed, if He who rules the destinies of man, be really a God of mercy? Arise! defy him! assert the majesty of man, and let this demon fate do its worst!"

And he arose, resolved to persevere in evil. The bright wings of the spirit of good trailed in the dust, and he cast a mournful glance upon the unrepenting man who rejected his ministrations.

"Henceforth in darkness shalt thou dwell; in darkness shalt thou perish from the earth! oh man, who hast hardened thy heart against the promptings of thy better nature!" and the decree was registered where it could not be expunged.

In the mean time, after calming the fears of his mother and sister, that a rupture would ensue between Mr. Ferris and himself, Walter went forth with the purpose of viewing by moonlight the ruins of the once mighty mistress of the world. At every step he trod, the spirit of England's noble son of song was around him. Even the classic associations of the spot came to him reflected through the medium of Byron's exquisite poem, thus linking together two sources of enjoyment of the highest order.

He paused a moment beside Trajan's column, but only for a moment. Hurry-

ing onward, he passed over the fallen columns of Constantine's Basilica, and stood in front of the mighty ruin, which had once echoed to the groans of the mangled Christians, drowned by the shouts of the thousands who looked upon their fellow-man quivering in the fangs of the wild beast, and called it sport! Now, there was no sound issuing from its walls, save the rustling of the night breeze among the long wreaths of ivy which clung to the crumbling ruins.

In the deep hush of night, with only the moon looking down upon him, Walter stood in solemn contemplation of this wonderful monument of a past age. He believed himself alone, when suddenly, from a distant part of the edifice, a clear, manly voice arose upon the night air, chaunting a hymn from the opera of the Martyrs. A few bars had been sung, when a female voice joined in, so clear, so full, that Walter stood entranced. It swelled above that of her companion, and went echoing among the arches and broken walls; thence soaring to the empyrean, in a gush of melody which might have won listeners even in Paradise.

Breathless with surprise and delight, Walter cautiously moved forward in the direction of the sounds, and soon reached a spot which commanded a view of the performers. He stood within the vast amphitheater, with its ranges of dilapidated seats, partially revealed by the straggling moonbeams which fell through the decaying walls. On one spot they came down in unbroken brightness, on a space of a few yards square; it was that portion of the arena on which the heart of the dying gladiator had poured forth its last drop; where the meek spirit of the Christian had winged its flight from the mangled body to the bosom of Him who had borne even greater tortures for his sake. Within the circle of light, stood a fair vestal, clad in flowing white drapery, her radiant hair bound around with a simple fillet; her hands were clasped, and her eyes raised in an attitude of devotion, as she yielded herself to the associations and the scene.

Her companion wore the ordinary garb of an Italian of respectable station, but his face was screened from view by an immense hat. Walter's heart beat wildly; he drew near in trembling silence, for he

knew that his long sought, his still fondly beloved Emma, stood before him. And how beautiful she was! How pure, how serene that brow, on which the spirit of the martyred vestal seemed enthroned! Yet, should she not be faithful to him! There was so keen a pang conveyed in the thought, that he resolved at once to ascertain the truth. He moved noiselessly forward, and as she uttered the last note, he stepped from the shadow which had hitherto concealed his approach, and pronounced her name.

Emma cast one lightning glance upon him; his arms unclosed to receive her, and before Montes had time for thought, she was clasped to her lover's breast, while he murmured words of love and joy, which sank into her soul, and impressed themselves there forever. She uttered but one sentence:

"Oh Walter, I feared you had forgotten me!" and the apprehension thus expressed, conveyed to his heart an inexpressible thrill of happiness. Such a fear could only have been the offspring of love, and he knew that she had been true to his image, through long years of silence and separation.

Montes rudely interrupted their dream of bliss. He approached Emma, and seizing her arm, with no gentle grasp, said in an angry tone:

"What does this mean? Such conduct is disgraceful! And you, sir; who are you, I should like to know?"

Blushing and tearful, Emma released herself from Walter's embrace, while he replied to Montes:

"You probably do not remember me, Mr. Montes; but I am the Walter Murray who was so fortunate as to save the life of your daughter, in days of lang syne."

"For which service she seems more than sufficiently grateful," said Montes, sneeringly. "I am not inclined to understate the obligation, young gentleman; but I must confess, that such demonstrations on the part of my daughter, are extremely distasteful to me."

"You have long been aware that an attachment exists between Miss Montes and myself. That may plead our excuse for forgetting your presence."

"The excuse is worse than the offence,

young man. I do not recognize the fact of an attachment existing between you, for I have never been consulted as to its propriety; and I here avow my unqualified disapprobation of any such romantic nonsense."

"But, my dear sir, consider—" "No—I shall not consider any thing but my daughter's interests and my own, and they are very distinct from yours. I shall listen to no proposition which permits your offered love to influence her fate."

"Do you allow Emma no voice in what so nearly concerns her own happiness?"

"He must; he shall," exclaimed Emma, impetuously. "Oh, Walter, my heart will break, if—"

Montes fixed his cold, glittering eyes upon her, and slowly said—

"Beware how you utter protestations of love to one man, while you are the wife of another!"

"A wife! merciful heaven! what do you mean?" exclaimed Walter, recoiling from her side.

"'Tis false, false! Oh, Walter, I am yours! I know not what he means, myself. Do not heed him; it is only a device to separate us."

"It is true," said Montes, in an assured tone. "When in her fourteenth year, and therefore capable of judging of the propriety of her own acts, Emma Montes, then known as Emma Garwood, was lawfully married to William Wickem, at Memphis in the United States of America. She subsequently eloped from her husband, but that does not render the tie less binding upon her."

At these words, Emma felt as if life was receding from her frame. In relating to Walter the events of her wandering childhood, this incident had been omitted. It was such a thought of terror to her, that she could not voluntarily speak of the nefarious tie, which was binding neither in law nor morality; but now, what a terrible use was to be made of this concealment.

Walter turned his pale face toward her, so rigid in the light of the moon, so horror-stricken, that she felt paralyzed.

"Emma, is this true?"

With a violent effort, she uttered—

"It is; but—"

"Enough; enough; I wish for no more! Perfidious as lovely, I bid you farewell forever." And, with a bound, he disappeared in the darkness.

One wild shriek echoed through those ruined arches and lofty colonnades, as full of anguish as any that had ever ascended from that blood-stained sod in the days of its palmy glory, and Emma sank fainting upon the iron arm which was outstretched to save her from falling.

Poor girl! she little thought, when she entreated Montes to indulge her with a last view of the coliseum, that so terrible a denouement awaited her there.

He was in an unusually good humor; for her success had been brilliant, and he consented to gratify her, expecting as little as herself, that the person who would be least welcome to himself would be there, to jeopardize the success of all his future plans.

Ruthless in his determination, he quickly resolved upon the course he should pursue; and, without one feeling of remorse, he now gazed on the pallid and nerveless form which lay within his arms.

He had but one thought, but one fear: this suffering might unfit her for an immediate appearance in public, and his selfish and grasping spirit could not brook the thought of further delay in the golden harvest he anticipated.

He carried her to the carriage, which awaited them in one of the deserted streets near by; and they had proceeded some distance before she showed any signs of returning consciousness. She at length sighed deeply, and said, in a vague, dreamy tone—

"Walter, return. I am innocent. You wrong me cruelly."

"Emma, awake; arouse yourself," said Montes, in a commanding voice. "I alone am with you."

With a shudder she withdrew herself from him.

"Oh, cruel, cruel father, what have you done?"

"I have done my duty," he sternly replied. "I would have concealed the fact from you, but now it is too late: you are not at liberty to receive the addresses of young Murray; for William Wickem has followed us to this coun-

try, and brings with him a regularly-attested certificate of your union with him, and he threatens to claim you as his wife."

Emma uttered an exclamation of horror. "It is a base imposition! Mr. Ruggles often assured me that the marriage was illegal, even if the ceremony had been performed by one authorized to do so. Besides, I was insensible when the odious form was gone through with. Oh no; be assured that death will be my choice, before I acknowledge myself as the wife of that infamous man."

"This infamous man, as you call him, is one of the handsomest fellows I have seen for many a day. If you were to see him, you might change your mind. Besides, he has educated himself in the five years you have been separated."

"Is it your purpose to support the claims of the wretch who was base enough to plan such an outrage against a helpless child, such as I then was?"

"Why, what can I do, if he chooses to insist upon his claims?"

"Do! Drive him from your presence, with the scorn his pretensions merit! Choose your course, now. You know I can be firm, where I feel that I am in the right. If you allow this creature to force himself in my presence, I never will sing another note in public."

Emma was surprized, and half frightened at her own daring; but her dilating eye and quivering lip warned Montes that he had gone far enough. He laughed, and said—

"What a little tiger you can be, when you choose, child. If you will forget all that passed in the old ruin to-night, and fulfill the engagement I have made for you to sing next week in Naples, I will promise to protect you from Wickem. A bribe can buy off the claims of such as he, but you must furnish me with means to pay the bribe."

"Oh, willingly, willingly," she earnestly exclaimed. "I will struggle with my own misery; I will sing at the appointed time; depend upon me. Only save me from what I so loathe as the presence of William Wickem."

## CHAPTER XXV

THE new fear thus evoked, caused her parting with Walter to dwell less intensely upon the mind of Emma. She would write to him, and inform him of the simple facts; she would appeal to her friends at Ruggleston, to confirm the truth of her statements. But alas! they no longer regarded her; perhaps they had already passed from the earth, and Walter might wander far from her, carrying with him the belief that she was unworthy of his love. When they reached their door, they found a servant awaiting their return; he was the bearer of a note he had been instructed to deliver to Montes alone. Emma hurriedly passed through the garden to her own room, while Montes entered his apartment, and read the following lines from Mr. Ferris.

Remove the girl of whom we spoke this morning, from Rome, as quickly as possible. Perhaps you are already aware that my step-son is her lover. He is a headstrong youth, and will laugh our opposition to scorn. It is manifestly to your disadvantage to part with your daughter, just as her talents promise so brilliant a reward for the cultivation you have bestowed upon them. Her union with Walter Murray is not to be permitted, if I can prevent it. If you will place such a barrier as *can not* be destroyed between them, I will double the sum we agreed on this morning. See to it, that it is quickly done!

G. F.

"Ha!" muttered Montes, while a smile gleamed upon his lips. "The very fates themselves play into my hands. Here are substantial reasons offered me, for doing what I have a right good-will to accomplish myself. Nothing stands in the way, but the whim of a love-sick girl. Pooh! I shall be able to bend that to my own will, after a little more heart-crushing."

While he meditated, a careless knock was struck against the door, and, without ceremony, the person who thus announced himself, entered. He was a man about twenty-five years of age, with a tall, finely-proportioned figure, clad in rather

gorgeous taste. His face was florid, and his features well formed, but decidedly unintellectual. His eyes were of a clear light-blue, and his full, red lips indicated a nature of the "very earth, earthy." He struck Montes familiarly on the shoulder, and said in a coarse, loud voice—

"Well, old trump, what's the news from my dainty little darling? Have you told her that I am here, and it was love of her sweet, pretty face, that made me try to make a gentleman of myself before I came in pursuit of her?"

Montes calmly surveyed him, and said with a sneer—

"I am afraid, Bill, it was time thrown away, so far as the gentleman is concerned. But I *have* told her."

"And what did she say?" inquired William Wickem, with some appearance of interest.

"Just what you might expect: that she will die, sooner than acknowledge the validity of the tie you wish to establish."

"Pooh! that's all a woman's nonsense. When she sees what a handsome fellow I am; how much I have improved; and how anxious I am to make atonement for all I formerly caused her to suffer, she will forget these heroics, and accommodate herself to her fate."

Montes shook his head.

"I will not conceal from you that we have a difficult game to play; but I will stand your friend throughout, provided you will enter into a written agreement to let me have all that Emma may earn during the next three years, with the exception of a stated sum for expenses, which shall be liberal enough to satisfy even you."

"Ah! you talk like a man of sense, old Mont. Make your daughter listen to reason, and I will sign any thing you please. It is only fair to suffer you to pay yourself for all the trouble you have taken to fit her for her career. You must be provided for in the first place, and then comes my turn. Emma, or Mrs. William Wickem, will then be in the zenith of her beauty and fame, and I will cut in and win."

"All is understood, then; now listen to what I have to propose. It is many years since Emma saw you. In that time you have grown into manhood, and have changed very much. She will never consent

to receive you under your own name: my advice is, to assume the style and character of a young Englishman of fortune, on his travels. Take some romantic cognomen, cut your gambler's slang, and with my management, you may stand a chance to succeed."

"Oh! any thing that will take with the little charmer. What shall I be called? Montreville? No; that's too cursedly namby-pamby. Villars? that smacks of aristocracy. Tyrrel? that will do; a good name, and one not unknown in the annals of history."

"Tyrrel let it be then; and I only hope you may drive an arrow as straight to the heart of your liege lady, as your namesake of old did to that of his king. Once known as Tyrrel, and not frowned on, you may marry her as Wickem with her own consent. She feels the want of society—of sympathy; and you can adapt yourself to her tastes. Talk sentiment—quote poetry; in short, be to her all she fancied young Murray would be."

"Who is this Murray, and what interest has he in Emma?"

"He is a young gentleman who had the advantage of being the first that made love to her, and consequently she fancies herself desperately attached to him."

"Hum!" said Wickem, in a discontented tone. "This should not have been allowed by you. It was contrary —"

"Hush," interrupted Montes, warningly. "Sometimes walls have ears. I thought I heard a rustling beneath the window. Do not allude to —, you know what. I was not to blame; let that suffice. Now let us lay our plans, so as to insure success."

The two worthy companions sat together until near daylight, in earnest conversation; while the poor girl, whose happiness they were plotting to destroy, paced her room in a tempest of suffering, apprehension, and despair, from which she would almost have welcomed death as a release. Walter lost—gone; believing her guilty of the degrading conduct imputed to her; the hope of her lonely and desolate existence shattered at one blow; what consolation remained for her outraged heart?

In all her trials, she had never felt herself so utterly alone as on this night.

There was no link of sympathy between herself and Montes; his hardness had repelled, until even her affectionate heart closed itself against him; and amid the vast multitudes of breathing, sentient beings, who claimed the same humanity, the same God, there was not one to whom she could turn as a friend. A stranger in a strange land, if she had dared, she would have asked the All Father to take her to that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." She bowed her head in prayer, and the stricken soul went up to the throne of the Eternal, in earnest aspirations for assistance and support. Stern are those self-conflicts—those tornadoes of the spirit, which uproot and devastate the garden of the heart, laying waste its most treasured flowers; yet we arise from them strengthened for the struggle the future may have in store for us.

Emma, worn out with emotion, at length threw herself upon her couch, and was soon buried in the sleep of exhaustion. An hour had scarcely passed in this welcome oblivion, when she was aroused by the voice of Montes. It was quite daylight, and he came to announce to her that in two hours they would set out for Naples. The returning would be there at six, and old Katinka had already been summoned to assist in packing up. She heard the announcement with indifference, and with a dreary heaviness at her heart, which effectually shut out every gleam of brighter promise, she prepared to obey him.

Her simple preparations were soon completed, and she sat in listless inactivity, awaiting the summons of Montes to depart. When once on their route, he observed her depression, and made a few efforts to dissipate it. As a last resource, to arouse some appearance of interest, he carelessly said—

"On our arrival at Naples, I expect to introduce you to an agreeable acquaintance. William Tyrrel, is a young Englishman, of vast fortune; he saw you the other night at the Sistine chapel, and admired you so much, that if you understand your own interests as well as you should, it will be by no means difficult to win him."

Emma looked at him steadily a few

moments, and there was something peculiar in the expression of her countenance, which made him feel uncomfortable. She then bent her eyes on the desolate landscape without, and quietly said—

"I am willing to receive any respectable friend of yours as an acquaintance. Beyond that, I can have no interest in Mr. Tyrrel or his possessions. If I am not free to receive the addresses of the one I love, I am not free to accept those of a stranger."

"Oh, as to that, money can accomplish wonders. Tyrrel can buy off the claims of Wickem; and your young friend Murray is entirely dependent on a step-father, who would not promote his union with you in any way."

Emma remained wrapped in deep thought for several moments; she then asked—

"How much will compensate you for the trouble and expense I have been to you?"

"That is a strange question."

"No, not when we understand each other. Your cruel perversion of a most unhappy event in my oppressed childhood, uttered for the purpose of lowering me in the estimation of the only being who really takes an interest in my fate, has severed the faint tie which bound me to you. I have long ceased to deceive myself with the idea that you have any affection for me. The only tie that binds us together, is that of interest. I am now nearly twenty-one years of age. I have entered on my professional career with promise of brilliant success, and, until that period arrives, I will give to you whatever I may gain. Beyond it, I will be my own mistress; I will be liberal toward you, but I will no longer be your slave."

"My dear Emma, this is strange language from you. From this day, I expect you to do exactly as you please; it is your privilege, and it pleases me to confirm it. But, my child, you will need a protector: you will need some one to invest for you the fortune you must soon accumulate. Let me be that protector; besides, who will shield you from the pretensions of Wickem, if your father does not do so?"

"Oh, as to *him*; as you say money can settle with him, there can be no diffi-

culty. I begin to believe that money can do any thing, except buy respectability, happiness, or life. Ah, it is a great agent!"

Montes listened in astonishment. That bitterness, that coldness of manner, was surely a new element in the character of his hitherto passive daughter. He must change his tactics; a belief in his want of affection had goaded her into rebellion. He must enact the tender father, must put some constraint upon his dissipated habits, and she would again return to her late passive state of obedience. A little more craft, and she would soon be utterly in his power. But let us not anticipate.

## CHAPTER XXVI

THEY reached Naples. Emma sang in public, was brilliantly successful; and her beauty and elegance completed the fascination of the music-loving Neapolitans. Flatterers thronged around her; and foremost among them was Montes, and his friend Tyrrel. Emma had received the latter with a slight appearance of embarrassment, and a little hauteur, but they soon disappeared; and, although an observer might have remarked a slight pallor diffuse itself over her complexion as his step was heard approaching her door, and a thrill of indefinable emotion would cause her frame to tremble, all outward feeling was conquered before he stood beside her, and she received him with her usual quiet grace of manner.

He informed Montes that he was progressing famously: that before she became of age, he confidently hoped to win Emma's consent to become his bride, and the dark project they had concocted between them, might be laid aside. Montes watched her keenly, and although he could not understand the state of mind in which she was, he hoped it might be so; for even he shrank from violence toward one, who had uniformly shown such heavenly patience under every trial.

With strange indifference the young prima donna listened to the voice of adulation: even on the stage, in her moments

of most exciting triumph, there was no elation, no apparent interest, beyond sustaining her part; save that her eye wandered over the crowded house, as if seeking something that was never found; and night after night the beautiful cantatrice wept tears of bitter anguish, and disappointment. Emma knew not that Walter was detained beside the couch of his dying sister; that on him devolved the task of consoling and sustaining his parents in this crowning grief—that even his despair, in the belief of her unworthiness, was thrust aside by the overwhelming suffering he witnessed in those that were dear to him.

In the same room in which we last beheld her, lay Caroline Ferris; but now the curtains were drawn aside, the doors were all unclosed, to give greater freedom to her heavy and painful breathing. Worn to a shadow, with the fiery flush of fever on her wasted cheek, and gleaming in her wild-looking eyes, she lay propped by pillows. It was the hush of evening, and the stars began to glimmer from the blue concave above; no sound was heard, save the murmur of falling waters from the fountains in the garden, and the song of a bird, which came as clear and joyous from the green depth of leaves in which her nest was placed, as if no sorrow had ever marred the beauty of the world.

At her earnest request, her parents had retired, and left her alone with Walter. He sat by her, clasping her wasted hands in his own, waiting until she should speak. She knew it was her last night on earth, but she was quite calm. The serenity of heaven seemed to have diffused itself over her spirit, while yet lingering in the valley of the shadow of death. She felt what Schiller has put in words—"Death can not be an evil, for it is universal;" and she knew that He who loveth us as a father loveth his children, would not inflict it, both on the just and the unjust, if it were not a portal by which the soul passes into another tenement, better fitted to its enlarged capacities.

Many moments passed in silence, which began to be oppressive to Walter before it was broken; and then the low, sweet voice which addressed him, was so clear, so calm, that its tones haunted him

through years of his after life. He felt that with her the struggle was past; peace was in her soul—that peace which no worldly memory could henceforth interrupt.

"My brother, I can now bear to speak of painful things without emotion. Tell me the history of my father before he became yours. It is the only wish I have now ungratified."

Walter obeyed. He described his mother's destitution—the early passion of Mr. Ferris for her, as he had heard it alluded to. She listened quietly, but when he ended, she said—

"That is our mother's history, Walter. I knew all that before. Tell me of her who was his first wife; of that beautiful southerner, who so nobly endowed him with her wealth."

Walter knew little concerning her. Caroline seemed thoughtful; she said:

"Brother, if I tell you all that is in my mind, you will perhaps think me delirious; but I am sure my intellect is clear. I could relate to you many incidents in our childish life, to convince you with what precision my mind acts; but I have not time; my strength would fail me, and I must use it to better purpose. There is some fearful secret in the life of my father. He has almost destroyed me, several times during my illness, by his mutterings beside me when he thought I slept. Once I asked him their meaning, and he evaded me in such a manner, I have not dared again to speak to him of it; but it is a fearful weight, Walter. Tell me of the money which came from the first Mrs. Ferris—was there no other heir? Had she a right to leave all to my father?"

"I have heard it said that a child existed, which should at least have shared the estate, but I believe she died in her infancy. Beyond that I know nothing." She half rose, and grasped his hand firmly.

"There was a child then, Walter? The casting off of that child, the disregard of her claims, has been the ban upon our family! *That* crime engulfed my pretty Wilfred in the waves! *that* made an idiot cripple of my darling George! and it consummates the curse, by laying me in my grave in my first youth! Yet—yet—

oh Walter, my father repents not! The parent I love beyond expression, hardens himself in his sin, although God has so often thundered at the door of his heart, and torn from him at each call the very props of his existence."

"Calm yourself, my dear Caroline; you seem to me to excite yourself by a mere fantasy, that has no foundation in reality. There is little reason to believe the child still in existence; and even if she is, you affix a fearful crime to your father, without possessing any tangible proof to sustain the charge. What has given you such wild thoughts, my dear sister?"

"You will think me mad, when I tell you that it is from my dreams; yet I am not now mad, Walter, though I think I might have been so, at some future day, if I had lived; and that thought makes me turn in thankfulness to the good God who takes me to himself before so terrible a calamity happened. For years my life has been a double one. During sleep I am with my Uncle Gilbert, who reiterates to me the wrong perpetrated by my father; and then, by some strange intuition, I look into his mind, and behold there the struggles of his guilty, yet unyielding soul. His inner life is as familiar to me as my own; and oh Walter, it is a fearful one!"

"This is madness," thought Walter, as he gazed on her. "No sane mind could assert such a thing." Caroline rapidly proceeded:

"I know your thoughts, brother; but I will convince you that there is 'method in my madness,' if such it be. Do you remember the picture of Mrs. Ferris, which hangs in one of the unused rooms at Montalto? Recall that face, which we used to think so beautiful in our childhood, and compare it with the lineaments of your statue, which caused my father such inexpressible agitation on the night he first beheld it."

Walter started. The statue still remained where it had first been placed; he arose, hurriedly approached it, and drew aside the curtain which had been suffered to fall over the recess in which it stood. A flood of moonlight from the open window fell over it, revealing distinctly its pure and spiritual beauty; and

a thrill of anguish contracted his heart, when he thought how utterly lost, how fallen from his bright ideal, was the original of so much outward loveliness. Lost—lost forever, was his young dream of love; the hope of years extinguished at one fell blow! He turned from the image with a sick heart.

"It is outwardly like the picture to which you allude, but I am afraid there the resemblance ceases," he said, with bitterness.

"Walter, come near to me; listen to me, my brother. Mistrust has sprung up between you; but it can not last. I know that you love her too well to yield her up on mere suspicion of evil."

Walter shook his head.

"Her own confession condemned her, my sister. From her own lips alone, would such an assertion have been believed by me. It is bitter now, but I shall recover from it. I will free myself from the chains of an unworthy attachment."

Caroline looked distressed.

"My hopes are marred at the moment I thought them secure of fulfillment. The original of that statue is, I feel assured, the niece of Mrs. Ferris, and the same child who was deprived of her rightful inheritance, by an unjust will."

"It may be an accidental resemblance; such things often occur."

"No, no. On the night it was brought hither, I fell into a troubled sleep, and methought my uncle stood beside me; he took my hand, and led me toward the figure: he pointed to its features, and said, 'The original of this is the true heir of all the wealth your father possesses. Walter loves her; she is worthy of him. Use your efforts to accomplish a union between them, and all will be well.'"

"It was a strange dream, but easily accounted for, from the scene which occurred when the statue was exhibited. You pondered on it until you slept, and your dreams took their hue from your last thoughts."

"I see you are incredulous, as to the mysterious link which binds me to my insane uncle; yet that such communion exists, my present state testifies. For years I have not enjoyed a dreamless sleep: his fancies, his sufferings, his wild communications from the realms of

madness, have kept me in a perpetual state of restlessness, which ended in this wasting disease that is destroying me. Brother, tell me the whole story of your love. It seems to me I can not die in peace, until I have done every thing in my power, to perform the commands which were so solemnly laid upon me."

Painful as it was, Walter related concisely the whole history of his first meeting with Emma, their subsequent betrothal, the recent interview in the coliseum, and the startling revelation there confirmed by her. As he finished, Caroline sighed deeply.

"After all, Walter, she may have been more 'sinned against than sinning.'"

"If she had not concealed the fact of her union with another, when relating the incidents of her life to me, I should probably have thought so, too; but that concealment evinces her knowledge of the wrong she had committed. Oh, Cara, if I could believe her pure as she once seemed, I could be happy even if we never again should meet; but to worship a being who appeared to be the incarnation of womanly truth and grace, and to find her so fallen, is bitter beyond expression."

He arose, and walked the floor in great agitation; but, remembering the state of his sister, by a violent effort he controlled his own emotions, and again seated himself beside her. Caroline seemed collecting her strength for a final effort, for she lay many moments in perfect silence. She then said—

"Mistrust my visions as you will, Walter, I must act on them as certainly as if the most positive testimony could be brought forward to sustain them. Emma Montes is certainly the niece of Mrs. Ferris, and as such she must be provided for. I am too young to make a legal will, I know, even if I possessed the right to dispose of any portion of my father's property; but I can get you to write for me a last appeal to his heart, which shall speak to him from the tomb of his departed child, and incline his heart to justice. In that, I shall request him to seek out this young girl, adopt her in my place, if she is worthy of such a position,

and, under any circumstances, to render her, jointly with yourself, the heir to the fortune which would have been inherited by me. Lose no time, brother; here are writing materials on the table; I will dictate to you what I wish said."

Deeply affected, Walter drew toward him the stand, and prepared to obey her. A solemn and affecting appeal was written, and tears were shed over it by the amanuensis, but Caroline remained calm throughout. When he had finished, she requested him to support her until she signed her name, together with these words: "Father meet me in the better land; and, as a first step toward its portals, perform, to the letter, what I have here requested." It was then sealed and directed by herself.

"When I am gone, Walter, after the first agony of bereavement is over, but while his heart is yet tender from affliction, let him receive it. Poor father! my heart is sorrowful for him, even while I see the angel beckoning me away to a brighter home. My mother has more fortitude; she believes in our future reunion; but he looks only on the dark and narrow sepulcher, with its cold tenant mouldering into dust. Blessed are they who believe, my brother, for to such death has lost its sting. Now recall my parents; the few hours I may linger, must be passed amid you all."

The parents immediately obeyed the summons; and few who looked on the stooping form and snow-white hair of the father, would have recognized in him the imperious man who had once thought fate itself should bow before the power of his haughty will, sustained by his vast wealth. Before the dawn of day his last child died in his arms; and, in utter darkness and prostration of soul, he groveled in the dust, before the decree of that God whose existence he had denied, whose power he had scoffed at. Let us draw a veil over the sufferings of the unbeliever, the unrighteous robber of the innocent and helpless. Yet amid all, he repented not. The price had been exacted; he at least would retain what had been so dearly purchased. He knew not the blow in reserve for him.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

It was determined that the body of the dead girl, should be embalmed by a process known to a distinguished Italian chemist, and then removed to her own country. The preparations for departure progressed rapidly, and Walter felt that he must break on the deep, silent grief, which hung as a pall around his step-father, if he would fulfill the injunctions of his departed sister.

Two days before the one appointed for their removal from Rome, he entered the darkened room in which sat Mr. Ferris alone. Walter had purposely chosen an hour when his mother was not with him: his father seemed impatient at the interruption; but as the young man proceeded cautiously to relate the substance of the strange conversation he had held with Caroline on the night of her death, he became so violently agitated that the narrator was alarmed. When Walter paused, however, Mr. Ferris raised his ghastly face from the clasped hands which had concealed it, and said—

“Go on—go on; tell me every word; her wishes shall be as religiously obeyed, as if a voice from the heaven she believed in, had commanded me to act as she desired. It is all that is left me now.”

Walter obeyed, then laid the letter before him, and silently left the room. He felt that no human eye should intrude upon his remorse and sorrow, while reading those lines. Many hours were passed by Mr. Ferris, in utter prostration of spirit; when he recovered sufficient energy to act, he wrote two letters; one addressed to Montes, rescinding his former orders, and demanding from him the custody of Emma, as her future guardian. The other, contained a few lines addressed to Emma herself, imploring her forgiveness for the past, and professing his desire to atone for it as far as lay in his power, by future kindness. This he inclosed in the one to Montes, and ringing for his servant, gave orders to dispatch them to Naples immediately. He then retired, still deeply agitated.

He could not sleep, and yet a death-like weariness oppressed all his bodily energies. He paced his floor for many

hours, until utter exhaustion compelled him to throw himself upon a cushioned chair which stood beside his couch. A vial, containing a preparation of opium, caught his eye; he clutched it with nervous eagerness, and swallowed a large portion of the contents. In a few moments they began to affect him strangely: flashes of vivid light passed over his vision, and gradually melted into the hues of the rainbow; then, those hues assumed the outlines of scenes and figures of supernatural beauty. The murmur of falling water from the fountains in the garden, mingled with the visions which then appeared before him, and to his excited fancy they seemed like strains of heavenly harmony. He lay in that dreamy state, which is neither sleeping nor waking; and one who has never been under the full influence of morphine, can not comprehend the emotions of his mind. The body seemed to sleep, for it was inert and helpless as that of an infant, while the imagination was disenthralled, and went soaring to realms of glory and beatitude, but dimly pictured forth in our moments of most exalted inspiration.

He fancied himself dead, and walking with disembodied spirits, in that world whose existence he had hitherto believed a chimera. There he saw his children rejoicing over him, as one saved just in time. Caroline approached him, radiant in celestial loveliness; she clasped his hand to her lips, and said—

“Your new daughter will replace her you have resigned: but one thing remains, my father; confide in my mother; tell her all your guilt, all your struggles; she will pardon you, for she loves you; she will console you, for you love her, and thus your last days shall be your best days, for they will be free from self-reproach.”

He muttered—

“My child, can God pardon all my evil? for I see now, that there is a spirit of Good.”

“God ever welcometh the repentant sinner. His benevolence is boundless as the universe He has called into being. Oh, my father! believe and live.”

“I will; I do,” and the bright vision vanished.

He slept heavily for many hours, and awoke languid, but calm, and refreshed.

He recalled the strange visions which had appeared before him, and his mind gradually settled into the conviction that there was something supernatural in them. His resolution was taken: he would obey the command thus impressed upon him; this humiliation would be the best test of his repentance. He would lay bare his guilty soul, before the eye of the only human being whose affection, whose entire esteem he valued.

Though Mr. Ferris suffered tortures in the revelation, which the martyr at the stake would scarcely have accepted in exchange for his own, yet he persevered. He, however, glossed over much that would have been bitterly painful to his wife; and Mrs. Ferris never suspected all the depth of his turpitude. She saw that he suffered: he had sinned, and he repented. She wept over his fallen state, and uttered words of consolation which were as balm to his harassed soul. He had borne the weight of a terrible punishment; but it had wrought its legitimate end, in bringing him a penitent to the feet of Him whose laws he had outraged,—should she then refuse to pardon the erring one? Her tears, and her prayers, mingled with his, and she felt more strongly bound to him than before this dreaded revelation had been made.

No time was now to be lost in claiming Emma, and Mrs. Ferris declared an immediate journey to Naples to be indispensable. Their preparations were hastily completed, and in a few days they departed from the eternal city. Walter scarcely knew whether to rejoice or be sorrowful, at the turn affairs had taken had so unexpectedly taken. To see Emma restored to her rights, filled him with joy; but to become an inmate of the same house with her, in the changed state of their relations toward each other, was a thought of dismay. To see her, and not love her, he knew to be an impossibility; to love a being apparently so pure, without being able to yield her entire respect, would fill him with self-contempt for his own weakness; so, after worrying himself with conflicting feelings, he sank into a kind of apathy, and resolved to let things take their own course—to be passive in the hands of fate. He would meet her with that cold self-command which must at once show her

the position they were to occupy toward each other. The struggle—the agony of baffled love, should all be locked in his own heart: she should never know the suffering her want of principle caused him.

Such were his resolves as the carriage rolled toward Naples. He little dreamed that the circumstances of his next meeting with Emma, would be of such a nature as to put to flight every thought of self—every emotion but love triumphant over all other feelings in his soul. Hasten the lagging horses, Walter! lean not back with that dreamy, listless air, which speaks so eloquently of emotion exhausted by intense suffering; the object of your reverence is on the brink of a precipice, from which no arm is outstretched to save her; of which no fond heart has foreseen the approach, in time to avert the danger!

Alone—helpless—in the power of two men who know not mercy; one armed with the authority of a father, whither can she turn for safety? Arouse thyself, Walter—lash the horses into furious motion—arrive in time to arrest her downward progress into a gulf from which there will be no escape.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

MONTES keenly watched Emma when in company with Wickem, and he penetrated that to which the vanity of the other party blinded him. He knew that so far from loving or admiring the *so-disant* Tyrrel, there was an intuitive feeling of repulsion, which tasked her self-control to its utmost limits to conceal; yet why she should practice this concealment he knew not. She had hitherto expressed her opinion of his associates with a degree of frankness which was often extremely annoying to him; but in this solitary instance she appeared guarded. Did she recognize his identity, and in her helplessness resolve to use craft against craft, as her best protection? He could not determine; and while wavering as to the final course he should adopt in reference to her, he was suddenly decided

by the reception of the letters written by Mr. Ferris.

His rage was terrible. To see the harvest he was about to reap, snatched from his grasp, was more than he could bear. He would retain his hold over her destiny at the risk of even life itself. To destroy the letter addressed to Emma herself, was the work of a moment; and, steeled to the purpose before him, he wrote a few hurried lines to Wickem, desiring to see him immediately. Having dispatched them, he sought Emma's apartment.

In reply to his knock, her soft voice bade him enter, and unclosing the door, he stood within the luxurious little temple dedicated to the charming cantatrice. It was a perfect model of taste and elegance combined, and Emma, in a white muslin morning dress, trimmed with exquisite lace, her brown hair hanging in natural curls over her smooth white brow, sat in a fancifully-shaped chair, which was the perfection of comfort. A small table was beside her, covered with books, engravings, and music. She received Montes politely; but there was no smile of welcome upon her lips, no glad sparkle of the eye, such as should greet the approach of a parent to his child. He drew a chair near her, and took up the roll of music she had laid down on his entrance.

"Ah, my pretty one, you study too hard; your cheek loses its bloom, your youth its freshness. I came this evening to propose an excursion for to-morrow."

"Whither?" asked Emma, indifferently.

"Ah, quite a journey: we shall not be able to return till late in the night. You do not sing to-morrow night, so all will be right. It will be a pleasant way to spend your holiday. I propose to visit Castellamare; there is an old castle there which will interest you, and the view from the heights is one of unsurpassed beauty."

Emma's eye brightened; it was an excursion she had earnestly desired to make: for in their journeys to and from Rome, Montes had refused to stop long enough to allow her to visit the old ruin he alluded to.

"I shall be delighted. But who will be of our party?"

"Let me see. There is Miss Bennett, the young English girl you have formed

a friendship with; her cousin, Mr. Western, will drive her in his phaeton; Tyrrel will take you in his; and I will go in the carriage with the provisions, for no picnic is worth speaking of, without due attention to creature comforts."

Emma's face clouded; her lips parted to express her unwillingness to be escorted by Tyrrel, but she caught his eye fixed upon her with an expression of such intense scrutiny, that she changed her intention.

"If Miss Bennett and her cousin will accompany us, I will go with great pleasure," she replied.

"That is my own Emma—my darling girl," he said, approaching her as if he intended to embrace her, but she shrank back, and extended her hand to him. With an affected sigh, Montes took the fair fingers in his, and pressing his lips upon them, left the room.

No sooner had the door closed on him, than Emma arose, took a bottle of perfumed water from a table, and moistening a corner of her handkerchief, carefully wiped from her hand the impression of his lips, while her features bore an expression of disgust, which seemed strange on the face of a daughter who had received such a token of affection from her only parent. Her lips contracted into an expression of bitter disdain, as she murmured—

"How long—how long must this last?"

I can not bear it; my life is a continued falsehood. Surely, surely, he who was once so kind, will not refuse to listen to my last appeal, and even to cross the ocean to save the child he once loved. Two more months, and he may be here to protect me; until then, may heaven give me strength to act my part without faltering. He may make peace between Walter and myself. Oh, I will hope—I am too young to despair."

Miss Bennett accepted the invitation quite gladly; and on the following morning, at an early hour, the party set out in the order proposed by Montes. Tyrrel went first, accompanied by the unwilling Emma, whose pleasure in the proposed excursion was sensibly diminished by such companionship. Then followed the dashing English carriage of Mr. Western, with a fair young girl, duly veiled, beside

him. In the rear came the vehicle containing Montes and the servant, with a large hamper of provisions.

When they reached the outskirts of the city, Montes halted a few moments, applied a whistle to his lips, and blew a shrill blast upon it. The signal was speedily answered, by the appearance of a fat priest, in a black robe fastened by a cord around his waist, and wearing an immense hat on his bald head. His features were heavy and unprepossessing, and his eye cold and cruel. The door was unclosed, and after exchanging a few words with Montes, the priest took a place beside him.

They had not proceeded many miles toward their destination, when one of the wheels of Mr. Western's carriage rolled off, and partially overturned the vehicle. Fortunately, the well-trained horses stood perfectly still, and the young gentleman sprang out and extricated his fair companion from her perilous position, without injury. The carriage occupied by Emma, was too far ahead to inform her of the accident. Montes came up and offered such assistance as he could render; but no alternative seemed to remain to the discomfited pair, but to mount the horses and return to Naples, while the phaeton was left in the charge of Montes' servant. That gentleman, of course, as the purveyor of the party, and the protector of Emma, must go forward; so with many regrets, Mr. Western and his cousin turned their faces toward Naples.

In the mean time, Emma had been forced to listen to the avowal of Mr. Tyrrel's passionate adoration for herself. In vain she informed him; that she felt no preference for him—that her heart was preoccupied by the image of another; he persisted in vowing eternal constancy to her; and swore that no man living should ever claim her hand while he possessed the power to dispute that claim. Shivering with disgust and fear, Emma assured him that her fate should never be influenced by such threats; that she alone should claim the right to judge of his power to contribute to her happiness, and there was no hope that she would ever reverse her present decision.

Tyrrel only answered her by renewed protestations of devotion; and she at last

shrank into a corner of the carriage, and remained utterly silent. She earnestly repented having consented to accompany him, and looked forward to being joined at the end of her journey by her English friends, whose presence would protect her from his insolent persecutions. She mentally resolved that no persuasions should induce her to return to Naples alone in the same carriage with him.

After a drive of three hours, they reached the small town of Castellamare. As there was nothing to interest in the town itself, they drove on to the heights, where donkeys were in readiness for those who wished to ascend. Emma insisted on waiting there, for the rest of the party, and Tyrrel was forced to consent. In about half an hour, Montes appeared alone; his late companion had been left on the road, to await their return. With many expressions of disappointment, he related the accident to the phaeton, and the return of its occupants to Naples.

Emma grew pale as she listened, and she proposed to set out instantly for the same place. Montes coolly replied—

"Since we have come this far, it is stupid to think of returning without a view of the sea from above. I made up the party for your pleasure, you must ascend for mine. We can get back in time to eat the collation I have ordered to be spread in the old ruin, and from there we can return home before ten o'clock. I believe there is a moon."

Emma felt there was no alternative, and, with a painful presentiment of evil, she consented. Her only desire was now to ascend as quickly as possible, and return in time to reach Naples before a late hour of the night. Mounted on donkeys, they slowly wound up the steep ascent, Tyrrel holding her bridle, for, in spite of her objections, he persisted in doing so.

They at length reached the Queen's place of prospect, which commands a beautiful view of the sea, with the islands of Capri and Ischia, bathed in the glowing light of a bright Italian sun. Ten or fifteen miles distant was the city they had so lately left, lying around the beautiful curve of the bay; in the back-ground towered the fiery summit of Vesuvius,

which had so often been the minister of fate to the flowery vales and smiling vineyards lying at its base. The white sails of many different species of water-craft, gleamed in the sunlight; and for a few brief moments, Emma forgot her own fears, in the sense of the grand and beautiful which filled her soul. With that involuntary feeling of devotion, which forms a part of all highly poetic organizations, she raised her heart to the Creator of all this loveliness, and thanked him for the abounding beauty he has scattered with so lavish a hand over our earthly home. Had she obeyed the impulse within, she would have sung a hymn in praise of the Eternal, but she checked her emotions, for the voices of her two companions grated harshly on her ears.

Another party was ascending, and Montes proposed leaving. Emma would gladly have remained, for in her mistrust of her companions, there was a feeling of security in the presence of others, although they were utter strangers to her. Montes would not listen to her wishes, and reminded her of the necessity there was for hurrying away, if they intended to reach Naples that night. As they descended, they passed a party of gay French people, who were chattering and laughing with all their national vivacity; by the time they reached the ruin, the sun was sinking rapidly in the west, and the whole atmosphere was filled with a mellow, golden haze, which imparted a delicious softness to the landscape.

A fine-looking peasant girl had been employed by Montes, to set out their dinner on a terrace overlooking the sea, and they found the rustic table decorated with vine leaves and wild flowers, with that taste for the beautiful which seems inherent in the children of Italy. The girl herself, though not really beautiful, looked picturesque and graceful in her blue skirt and crimson bodice, with a wreath of gay flowers coquettishly twisted in her raven hair.

The pleased surprise with which Emma regarded these preparations, was checked by a glance at Montes. He was earnestly conversing with Tyrrel, and at intervals he cast such looks of anger toward her, that she trembled in spite of her efforts to retain perfect self-control. He, however,

said nothing to her, but seated himself without ceremony, and commenced eating, with a vigor which showed that his appetite was not impaired by his anger.

Tyrrel endeavored, by his officious attentions, to atone for the rudeness of his companion; he pressed her to eat of every thing, and insisted that she should pledge him in the wine he drank, with reckless disregard to the result which might be expected from such libations. Montes followed his example; and the wretched girl found herself dependent for protection, on two men who seemed resolved to render themselves unfit to appear in the presence of a lady.

Montes mocked her entreaties, and ridiculed the fears she expressed of being on the road at a late hour of the night. He delayed as long as possible, and when they entered the carriage to return, the sun was throwing his last purple flush upon the waters of the bay.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

EMMA had steadily persevered in her refusal to taste the wine they pressed on her; and while Tyrrel pretended to be arranging a part of the harness about the head of one of the horses, Montes whispered—

"There is no alternative but to lame the horse. The girl has her wits about her, too completely to be deceived in any other way." As he spoke, he stooped, and thrust a small nail between the hoof and the shoe of the horse nearest to him.

Emma found that Montes had dismissed his own carriage, and he now took the front seat in Tyrrel's, and assumed the reins. They set out at a rapid pace, and the harassed girl hoped that all would be well, but just as her spirits began to revive, to her dismay, she found that one of the horses was becoming lame. They had proceeded but a few miles on their journey, when Montes declared it would be impossible to go on.

Removed from the roadside, stood a lonely, desolate-looking house, surrounded by a high wall, and shaded by trees which

had apparently remained unpruned for years. These were so matted together by vines, that the approach to the dwelling was extremely difficult for a carriage. Montes, however, drove to a broken gate, which opened from a dilapidated wall, and shouted loudly for several moments, before any movement within announced that the place was inhabited. At length, the same priest that Montes had brought with him in the morning, made his appearance, but now no sign of recognition passed between them.

In answer to their inquiries for a horse or mule to replace the lame one, he replied that no such thing could be obtained. Their only alternative was to remain under the shelter of his roof until morning; their accommodations would be humble, but they were perfectly welcome to all the house contained.

Montes thanked him, and accepted his invitation. Emma, almost weeping with fear and vexation, was compelled to alight and enter this desolate abode, under the officious protection of Tyrrel. They were ushered into a large, dilapidated room, which had once been elegantly ornamented. The remains of fresco paintings were yet on the mouldering walls, and where they had fallen away, the gaps had been supplied by indifferent prints of saints and miracles, which formed a strange contrast with the delicate coloring and graceful grouping beside them. A bench, and a broken chair, with a mat thrown in one corner, constituted the whole of the furniture.

On a clumsy shelf, nailed against the wall, a glass lamp, filled with rancid oil, burned dimly, and diffused an odor around which was far from rivaling that of "Araby the blest." Emma had no sooner entered this room, than she felt as if she must return into the open air; after enduring the stifling atmosphere until it became intolerable, she turned to retrace her steps. At the door she encountered Montes, and his countenance wore an expression of fierce determination and ferocious anger, which chilled her to the soul. He rudely seized her arm, and turned her back, saying in a savage tone—

"Where now, young lady? Are your whims and fancies to be the torment of my life forever?"

"What can you mean?" asked Emma, endeavoring to release herself, "such language to me is surely uncalled for. In what respect have I offended you?"

"You can not be ignorant of what has offended me to-day, and this affectation of innocence is only a new provocation. Did I not tell you, weeks ago, what your answer should be, if my friend Tyrrel addressed you?"

"And I replied to you, at the same time, that neither Mr. Tyrrel, nor his pretended possessions could be of the least consequence to me," said Emma, with scorn she could not repress, although she trembled so violently she could scarcely stand.

"What do you mean by *pretended* possessions?" asked Montes, furiously. The priest at that moment entered, and reassured by his presence, Emma answered—

"Since this reverend father is here to protect me from your violence, I will speak the truth to you. From the first hour of his introduction to me, I have known this Tyrrel to be the son of the infamous man who endeavored to consummate his cruelty to my childhood by a sham marriage between that son and myself. You have lent yourself to a base imposition, on one you were bound by every feeling of humanity to defend; and I now claim the protection of this gentleman, until I can return to Naples. I begin to believe that this whole excursion has been planned with some object fatal to my happiness; for such a series of accidents could scarcely have occurred by chance."

As she spoke, Montes grew quite calm, he even smiled as he replied—

"I give you great credit for penetration; only your foresight comes a little too late to be of service to you: All was planned, and with such skill as to baffle defeat. Since you have set me the example of candor, I will be equally plain with you. This gentleman," dragging Tyrrel forward, "is William Wickem; and according to the laws of several of the states in your native country, your lawful husband, as you were pronounced his wife in the presence of competent witnesses. But since you have some scruples of conscience as to the legality of the marriage,

I have taken the trouble to get this worthy priest to perform the ceremony anew; and I swear to you, before another hour has passed, it shall be done. When we return to Naples, if you are still dissatisfied, the service can a third time be performed by a Protestant clergyman."

The blood receded from the heart of the poor girl, and for a moment she felt as if death was about to end all her sorrows; but the necessity of self-command in such extremity seemed to infuse new energy into her soul. She turned toward the priest, and grasped his arm—

"You are a minister of God; you will not, you dare not, commit such wickedness as this will be! You will not aid in forcing me into a marriage which is detestable to me?"

"My daughter, you are already married, I understand. I only give additional sanctity to the tie which has long existed, by performing its rites according to the church to which your husband belongs. Your father commands you to receive this man as your spouse, and I do no wrong in binding you to him by ties which may not be unloosed, save by death."

Emma stood some moments with her face buried in her hands. She looked up, pale as marble, but with a resolute expression—

"If I tell you this man is *not* my father, what then?" she asked. "Would you still feel bound to obey his iniquitous commands?"

Montes uttered an exclamation, and a glance of rapid intelligence passed between him and Wickem. He strode forward, and confronting Emma, said—

"What do you mean by such an assertion? Have you not acknowledged me as your father for more than five years?"

"I have; and, until within the last two months, I have believed you to be such. As a parent, I have endeavored to respect and love you; but"—She paused, and seemed irresolute.

"Go on—pray, go on, and let me know when you made the strange discovery you allude to."

"I will go on," replied Emma, decisively. "It is now too late to recoil from a revelation which has been too long deferred already; and when this minister of Christ hears the story, he may be moved

to compassion for me. Do you remember the last night we visited the coliseum? the cruel scene which occurred there? I returned home in a state of mind bordering on derangement. I walked the floor of my room for hours; the moon came through the window clear and bright, and with a weariness of soul, which must be allied to death, I leaned my head against the casement, hoping the air would lessen the oppression on my brain. In my restlessness, I stooped suddenly forward, and the miniature of my mother, which I always wore, fell from the folds of my dress, and struck against the marble facing of the window. The collision caused the back to fly open. I had never before suspected that there was a concealed spring in the case; I turned it toward me, expecting to see the hair of my parents; but in its place, was a miniature of a fair, blue-eyed man, utterly unlike you, and beneath it, was enameled in letters of gold, the name of my father, and the date of his birth."

While she spoke, Montes had rapidly made up his mind, as to the course he should pursue.

"Admitting the truth of all this, what does it prove? I should scarcely have sought you out, have borne with the expense of your instruction in your art, if I had not possessed such claims on you as can not be evaded."

"I have reflected long on our relations toward each other;" replied Emma, "and it is my firm conviction that there was a league between yourself and the elder Wickem. Your rescue of me was contrived. By some accident, you became possessed of my father's effects after his death; and my chances of success in a musical career, suggested to you this nefarious fraud. At the same time, an understanding existed between you and that man's father, that he was to educate himself into some thing resembling a gentleman, and if he then failed to win my consent to be his wife, I was to be forced into a marriage with him."

"By Jupiter! you are a little witch! But tell me one thing. Why has this discovery been so long withheld?"

"So soon as I made it, arose and crossed the garden toward your room, to inform you of it. I knew you were still awake, for the lights flashed from your open

windows. As I passed beneath them, I discovered that you were not alone; a few words caught my attention, which riveted me to the spot: a voice which had once been a terror to me, was in eager conversation with you. I looked in, and beheld William Wickem; he was changed, but I knew him at a glance. I paused; the instinct of self-preservation told me to listen to your conversation. I did so, and learned enough to make me aware of the necessity of concealment, until I could claim some protection sufficiently powerful to defy you. I wrote to my former guardian; I informed him of every thing, and entreated him to come to my rescue. *That* letter will reach its destination; and I warn you that the evils you may commit against me, will be punished. Mr. Ruggles will surely come; and sooner than live as the wife of William Wickem I would destroy myself."

"I defy the consequences," replied Montes. "I have gone too far to retract now. Know, that all you surmise is true. I was your father's most intimate friend, and was familiar with his whole history. After his death, his effects came into my possession. Many years afterward, while traveling in northern Mississippi, I casually encountered Wickem. He was prowling in the neighborhood of Ruggleston, watching an opportunity to carry you off. I spent a night with him in the bayou near the plantation, and he related your history to me, together with his suspicions that you were the heir to wealth. On the next evening, I walked with him to the outskirts of the lawn. You were on the gallery with Clarice Elmore, singing. I listened; I recognized your wonderful talent, and my determination was at once made. In one of your walks I saw you, and knew you for the child of my former friend, by your likeness to your mother's picture. All that followed, was contrived by me; I bought you of Wickem, with the understanding that no other person should interfere with his son's claim to your hand, when it was deemed advisable to demand it. And now, do you suppose I would have made all these admissions, if I did not feel perfectly secure in my power over you? We do not return to Naples, unless you willingly accompany William Wickem as his wife. We leave at day-

break for France, thence to Russia; and if your spirit is not tamed, by the time we reach the capital of the Autocrat, I will give up that a woman can baffle me."

"If such is your determination, I can only put my trust in that God who has hitherto so remarkably protected me. I will never acknowledge myself the wife of yonder miscreant; and, as long as strength is left me, I will resist the unhallowed attempt to unite us. Oh, priest! sworn servant of God, how dare you profane your holy calling thus?"

"I have been told that you are a runaway wife; and, as such, your husband has a right to reclaim you," he coldly replied. "He also has conscientious scruples in regard to the validity of the former marriage, and, as a true son of holy mother Church, I feel bound to relieve them, by performing the ceremony anew."

"Conscientious scruples!" repeated Emma, turning from him in despair. "If you possess one spark of truth or honor yourself, you will know that the man who could enter into so base a league, as the one which has now been confessed in your presence, can not be actuated by them. They have offered to reward you; I will treble their offer, if you will stand my friend."

Montes laughed brutally, as he drew a pair of pistols from his pocket.

"See! he dare not. But enough of heroics. This priest has been paid to do our bidding; and if he flinches now, I will make short work with him. Come, Wickem, do not stand there like a felon; but come forward, take your bride by the hand, and let the ceremony proceed. It is no matter whether she consents or not. Come, I say."

Thus called on, Wickem advanced, and endeavored to seize Emma's hand. She evaded him by springing aside; and, before either of the party suspected her purpose, she had bounded across the floor, rushed out of the house, and was flying toward the open gate.

For a second, the three men stood in consternation. The priest was too fat and unwieldy to pursue her with any hope of success; Montes and Wickem, to screw even their courage to the point to commit such an outrage, had drank too

much to be able to run very swiftly, although neither could be considered as decidedly intoxicated.

"The horse! the horse!" exclaimed Montes. "Mount, and pursue her, Wickem, while I go on foot, and keep her in sight."

Wickem rushed to the corner of the yard in which the horses had been placed, and Montes followed the track of the fugitive girl. A wide and desolate plain, with few traces of vegetation spread around, and the white dress of Emma, fluttering in the moonlight, was an unerring guide. Winged by terror, so rapid was her flight, that her pursuer soon paused, quite out of breath. Presently the rapid tread of a horse was heard, and William Wickem passed, like a whirlwind upon her steps. Emma also heard that thundering sound, and she knew that her only hope was defeated. She stopped to take breath beside a small clump of underwood. On, on, came that terrible sound; and she had almost resigned hope, when a dark object was seen upon the road, approaching at a rapid pace. It was a carriage; it must contain human beings, who would not refuse to protect her in her fearful need. Endued with new life, she again sprang forward, and as she ran, she uttered wild shrieks for help. Just as she fell exhausted, with the hoofs of the pursuing horse almost upon her, and the curses of the rider ringing in her ears, the carriage was stopped; a figure sprang out; and, as Wickem stooped over her, to seize her prostrate form, a violent blow sent him reeling aside, and Walter Murray raised her from the earth.

"Emma! Emma!" he exclaimed. "Merciful heaven! is it you I have been so fortunate as to rescue thus? How came you here? Where is your father?"

Emma could not speak; she only clung to him convulsively. Wickem recovered from the stunning effects of the blow he had received, and turning fiercely to him, said—

"Unhand that woman, sir! She is my wife! I demand her of you."

"Emma, is this true? Tell me; am I at liberty to defend you from him?"

"Yes; yes; take me with you. I will explain when we are away from

this terrible place. He is not my husband! Oh, Walter, trust me! save me; or my death shall lie on your head! for, living, I will not return with that man."

While this conversation was going on, two more actors appeared upon the scene. Mr. Ferris joined his son, and Montes reached the spot at the same moment. Their recognition was simultaneous. Mr. Ferris sternly said—

"Villain, what does this mean? Did you not receive my letter?"

"I did; but, before you arrived, I thought it would be well to secure possession of the girl, by forcing her to be reunited to her husband. I should thus have had a hold over you both. I am baffled, and I give up. Only this: I retort the villain to your teeth; and, if the last compact is not fulfilled, I tell all. Come, Will, let us leave. We will see Mr. Ferris to-morrow."

Wickem seemed ready to resist; but Montes whispered a few words in his ear, and the two turned away, and retraced their steps to the old house.

Emma was placed in the carriage, where she was received by Mrs. Ferris with the tenderness of a mother. When she regained sufficient calmness, she related the circumstances which placed her in so strange a position, and also the nature of the claim Wickem pretended to have on her hand. There was an earnestness and simplicity in her language, which carried with it a conviction of her truth, and Walter listened in breathless silence; a flood of happiness gushed over his heart, and when she had concluded, he took her hand in his, and softly said—

"Forgive me, Emma. I scarcely deserved that the great blessing of rescuing you from peril, should be granted to me; I was too precipitate."

"No, Walter, you were right. He who stood in the relation of parent to me, asserted my unworthiness; and how could you disbelieve such evidence? I have since lived, in the hope that we should again meet, that you would learn my innocence, and love me still."

"I adore you," whispered Walter. "I have never ceased to love you better than my life."

They reached Naples in safety, a little

after midnight. On the following morning, Mrs. Ferris informed Emma of her claims as next heir to the estate of her husband. She was never made acquainted with her uncle's agency in the early events of her life; but was left to suppose, that Garwood had been tempted to part with her, by the sum of money offered by the rope-dancer. Her claims, to the exclusion of his own children, Mr. Ferris had not courage to make known to his wife; and she, like Emma, supposed that the child of Mrs. Walton inherited in default of other heirs.

On the following morning, Montes had a long private interview with Mr. Ferris, and departed with his claims satisfied. On the same day, the manager lost his prima donna, and Walter Murray gained a bride. In the hush of a beautiful evening, he and Emma stood before a clergyman of their own faith, in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Ferris, and were united. The marriage was thus precipitate, because Walter declared he should never consider himself safe from the machinations of Wickem, until he possessed an undisputed right to protect her.

A week later they embarked for New York.

## CONCLUSION.

ONE more scene, and the drama closes. It is midsummer. The lofty windows of a large room at Montalto are thrown open to admit the evening air, disclosing, at the same time, a view of unrivaled beauty, in which the winding river, flashing in the evening sunshine, and the blue peaks of distant mountains, contrast with the gently-undulating park, shaded by groups of stately forest trees.

The room is fitted up as a library, though there are evidences that it is also the common sitting-room of the family. A lady's work-table is placed near the window which commands the most beautiful portion of the view without; and in a recess stands a harp. A door communicating with a smaller room is unclosed, revealing the interior of a sculptor's studio, filled with unfinished casts, and the implements pertaining to his art. The larger apartment also bears evidences that the talent of Walter has not been suffered to lie dormant. The figure of sorrow occupies a niche opposite the library table, in such a position as to enable him to raise his eyes from his book, and rest them upon the image of his beautiful wife. A second group had been added; but it was ordinarily veiled, as the subject was a melancholy one. It represented a worn and wasted figure, with that expression of holy calm which settles upon the features soon after death. An angel bent toward him, and clasped his hand within hers, as if about to bear him away to the heaven to which she belonged. Those who had seen Hunter and Caroline Ferris, recognized the resemblance at once. It was Walter's memo-

rial of his sister's words to her father, which were fulfilled in a startling manner, "Tell him who has yearned for my death, that his own angel comes side by side with me, to kneel before a God of mercy."

On the day he arrived at home, Mr. Ferris learned that Gilbert Hunter had died within a few seconds of his own daughter. This strange confirmation of what he had shrunk from believing, agitated the unhappy man violently. He visited all the haunts peculiarly associated with his lost children, and then retired to the room which had been occupied by Caroline, and forbade any one to disturb him. Mrs. Ferris thought it best to leave him to the silent indulgence of his grief for a few hours; but on entering the apartment, on the following morning, she found him cold and motionless, lying upon the couch which had once sustained the form of his darling child. The physicians, who were hastily summoned, declared that he had perished of paralysis of the heart.

Two years have since passed away; two years filled with the innocent and dear delights of home to the youthful pair, and bearing with them consolation to the noble mother, whose cup of sorrow had so often overflowed; that warm heart is still strong to suffer; firm in its faith in that future which is "eternal in the heavens."

Again the voice of childish mirth rings through the cheerful abode of happiness and peace. A younger Caroline is running across the library floor, with uncertain steps, and the fair mother uncloses her arms, to clasp her to her breast, as

she falls exhausted by the unwonted effort. Emma, radiant in health, beauty, and happiness, caresses her darling child, and then throws her in the arms of her husband, as voices are heard approaching the house. With the glad exclamation, "They are come!" she bounds from the room, and is soon the center of a gay group which has just landed from a steamer.

First comes Mrs. Ferris, in black, but wearing a placid smile, which expresses her gratitude to that Providence which has spared so much to be thankful for. In the happiness of those who are dear to her, she now, as ever, finds her own.

Next, is a gray-haired man, who claims a father's greeting from the young wife.

He is still florid and healthy; and, as Walter appears, carrying the infant in his arms, he seizes her, and nearly smothers her with kisses, while he tries to make her call him grand-pa Ruggles.

Clarice, stately and elegant as ever, though now the mother of two noble boys, stands beside her handsome husband; and Mary Herbert, a newly-married bride, completes the group. It was their second reunion that season; the early part of the summer had been passed at Montalto, and Mrs. Ferris had been prevailed on to join them in a trip to Saratoga, for the benefit of her health; from which place they have just returned.

And now, while gladness is with them, let us draw the curtain.

THE END.

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