

P E A C E :

OR

THE STOLEN WILL!

An American Novel.

BY

MARY W. JANVRIN.

'Tis to *create*, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now.
What am *I*? Nothing: but not so art *thou*,
Soul of my thought!

BYRON.

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Plain

TO
A MEMORY AND A NAME
—The Sister—
MISSED ON EARTH,
WHENCE THE ANGELS BECKONED HER FROM MY SIDE AS WE CLIMBED
GIRLHOOD'S SUNNY UPLAND SLOPES TOGETHER,
BUT SAFELY HOUSED IN HEAVEN,
IN WHOSE SERENER CLIME I HOPE TO WALK BESIDE HER YET AGAIN,
I DEDICATE THIS OFFSPRING,
BORN OF THOUGHT AND IMAGINATION,
CHRISTENED "PEACE."

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PEACE: OR THE STOLEN WILL.

CHAPTER I.

O, open the door! some pity show!
 Keen blows the northern wind:
 The glen is white with the drifted snow,
 And the path is hard to find.

SCOTT.

THE tall, old-fashioned clock in the corner of the long, low, nicely swept kitchen had long ago told the hour of nine, — the evening wore late to primitive country dwellers, whose motto was the time-honored — “early to bed and early to rise,” — the logs of the hickory fire had burned low, and lay smouldering on the iron fire-dogs, — the wind whisked down the wide-mouthed chimney and flared the candle on the little round table, whirled tiny clouds of white ashes all over the red brick hearth, or, now and then sent a sudden tongue of red flame from out the dying fire-brands, lighting up the old kitchen, the dressers with their rows of polished pewter ware, the little looking-glass with quaintly carven frame wreathed with evergreen and scarlet wax-berries, the old-fashioned furniture, ears of interwoven “traced corn,” and strings of bright red bell-peppers suspended from the beamed ceiling, and then, dying into darkness, grim shadows quivered over all.

The gray kitten had purred herself to sleep in the warmest corner of the hearth; Bruno, the great watch-dog, a veteran Newfoundlander, lay with his head between his shaggy fore-paws: the old clock still ticked on with its steady monotone, while the evening wore later; but yet Aunt Patience Wedgewood sat knitting, knitting, beside the little round table, for she had sat up that night far beyond her usual time to "toe off" the last of a pair of yarn socks for "Brother Reuben," who dozed in his arm-chair on the opposite side of the hearth.

There was a driving storm without, just such a keen, wintry storm as visits open country places; heaping drifts all over the meadows and fields; drifts, white and phantom-like in the dimmed moonlight, huddled closely together like ghosts lain down to rest from their midnight revels; muffling the low stone walls and straggling fences along the road-sides with fleecy blankets; hanging bridal veils over the dusky pines and feathery hemlocks, and then sifting down among the under brush, leaving a white tribute on twig, spray, and gray mossy rock below; whirling away over long reaches of pasture, meadow-land, and brown stubble field; driving into every nook and cranny of old country houses,—whitening their low, brown roofs,—flecking the weather-beaten clapboards with patches of down,—choking up the wide-mouthed, moss-grown chimneys; then, back to earth again, drifting up the paths to barns and granaries, covering sheds and out-houses with a roofing of purest "cararra," blocking up the low, old-fashioned farm-house doors, leaving a snowy finger on every window-sill, heaping drifts all around the old well-curb, and laying one long, downy ridge on the curving well-sweep. Just such a storm was it which went whirling through Meadow Brook that December night, and came moaning at the windows of the farm-house at "the Ridge."

"A knock at the door! Bless me! who can it be, this stormy

night? and so late, too! Wake up, Reuben! wake up!"—and Patience started from her low, rush-bottomed rocking-chair, laid down the just finished stocking, shook the sleeper's arm, as the knock was faintly repeated; then, stepping to a window which commanded a view of the outer door, peered out from behind the chintz curtain.

"Mercy! if it isn't *a woman!* Do open that door, quick, brother!"—and, as he went into the little entry and drew the wooden bar from its fastenings, Patience followed him closely, with the candle in her hand.

Reuben Wedgewood opened the door; and a female form, muffled in a shawl and hood, white with snow, staggered faintly forward and sank upon the threshold, with a feeble moan.

"Bless us! who *can* she be? Poor creetur! Bring her in, Reuben,—right here to the fire!"—and Patience hastened to re-light her candle, which a sudden gust from the open door had extinguished.

Lifting their strange visitor carefully, Reuben bore her into the kitchen, and laid her on the old high-backed settle in the chimney-place, while Patience distended her thin, withered cheeks, with blowing at a coal she applied with the tongs to the wick of the candle. For a few moments her efforts were unsuccessful.

"Dear me! why don't it light?" she exclaimed. "But, there! no wonder,—I'm so flustered! Reuben, *do* take off her hood, and rub her hands. There's some camphor in the cupboard. She's in a dead faint,—or frozen, may be,—poor creetur! There, it's lit at last!"—and she placed the blazing candle on the table, then turned toward the woman.

But in those few moments, while Reuben Wedgewood stood bending over the stranger lying unconscious on the settle, one or two gleams of flame shooting up from the embers on the

hearth, and playing over the pallid features of the face turned toward the fire-place, lighted them up with wonderful fidelity. Beautiful features were they, too, though sharpened and deadly pale. The forehead low and broad; pale, blue-veined, and almost transparent eye-lids, fringed with curling lashes; a sweet mouth, exquisitely curved, though the lips were slightly contracted with an expression of suffering; such was the face, framed in masses of golden hair, wet with the melted snow fast dripping from her hood, upon which the farmer gazed. But not only did the flickering fire-light reveal to Reuben Wedgewood a young and beautiful woman, lying unconscious before him; in that face he saw the features of one who had once been dear to him as his own life,—features which, meet them when, or where, or under what phase he might, he could never forget, for they were graven on his heart.

And then it was almost fearful to behold the agitation of that strong man. He leaned against the chimney-jamb for support, and grasped tremblingly at the back of a chair; and when Patience turned for a moment from the unconscious woman, she saw, by the tremor of his frame, and the beads of sweat on his seamed forehead, that some powerful emotion shook his soul.

"Why, brother Reuben, what *is* the matter?" she asked. "I declare, you're white as a sheet! I do believe you're goin' to faint away, too! What is it, Reuben?" and she grasped his arm.

"Nothing, Patience; nothing, only a touch of the palpitation, that's all!"—and he pressed his hand convulsively over his heart. "It is gone, now; let us bring *her* to!" he added, huskily.

Patience gave him a quick, sharp gaze; then, apparently satisfied, bringing camphor and hartshorn from the closet, set about the restoration. "La, what little, delicate hands!" she ex-

claimed, chafing them between her own, rough and calloused with household toil. "Covered with fine rings, too! Most likely, Reuben, she's some rich lady,—lost her way, maybe. Poor creetur! she oughtn't to be out such a bitter night. Why, she's almost gone! I can't bring her to a grain! Here, Reuben, jest carry her into the bed-room, while I get blankets and hot water. I'm most afeard she's dyin',—she looks so kinder white like!"

Patience took the candle and preceded Reuben across the floor to the bed-room, which adjoined the kitchen as is usual in old-fashioned farm-houses, where, upon a broad hearth, smouldered the embers of a wood fire, kindled early in the evening.

"How lucky I made a fire here to-night! it is nice and warm; and here is a hot brick for her feet! There, lay her down, brother; she's comin' to a little, I b'lieve. Guess it's nothin' more'n a faint, after all!"

It was a plump, downy, inviting bed, with spotless white pillows, and a blue and white woven woollen counterpane, over which the linen sheet with its broad hem was turned evenly,—whereon Reuben Wedgewood placed his slight burden, tenderly as he would have lain down a child; and then he returned to the kitchen and sat down on the end of the settle, where her hood still lay—burying his face in his hands.

Patience, meantime, wrought with gentle woman-hands in the bed-room; drew off the woman's snow-damped garments, after she had partially restored her from the swoon,—carefully wrapped blankets about her, placed warm draughts at her feet, smoothed out and bound up the long masses of wavy, golden hair,—and then, her good offices finished, went out into the kitchen, and drew her chair close to Reuben's side.

CHAPTER II.

Can this be
The young, the loved, the happy Rosalie!
And might not pardon be
Also for her?

L. E. L.

THERE was a singular expression on the spinster's face, as she sat silent for a few moments; then, leaning forward and laying her hand on his, said, "Brother Reuben!"

"Patience," and he raised his head, whispering hoarsely, glancing toward the bed-room door, "Patience, don't you *know her?*"

The hand clasped tighter over his.

"Reuben, you don't mean that the poor creetur in yonder room is — is" — but her lips could not frame into utterance a name which for five years had been unspoken under that roof.

"Yes, sister," — and the farmer glanced half-furtively around the old kitchen, and spoke in a thick whisper, "*it is her — Mary!*"

Patience started up. A flush crimsoned her withered cheek; an angry sparkle burned in her eye.

"You are right, Reuben!" she said, at length. "When I turned to look at her, as I come out of the bed-room, it come over me like a flash. *It is her!* And she has come back here, a cast-away, — a poor, shameless creetur! I'd a *died* first, Reuben! *Yes*, laid down and froze to death in the snow-storm, before I'd a come back to the very house where I'd made so much misery! I s'pose she knows her poor mother died of

(12)

grief; and she'd got neither house nor home to go to when her fine gentleman got tired of her, and so had the face to come here. Reuben, it's *shameful!*"

Patience's whole frame fairly quivered with indignation; but her auditor sat silent, his face buried in his hands.

"Reuben Wedgewood," — and a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder, — "if you've got a particle of spirit, do be a man, and don't sit there mopin' like a weak boy! Why don't you say something!" — and Patience turned, walked the floor excitedly, and in her indignation quite snuffed out the candle with the old iron snuffers — "Yes, do be a man," she said, flinging down the coal with which she had re-lighted it, "and *say something!*"

Reuben glanced up. His face was very pale, and his teeth hard set.

"For God's sake, Patience, what do you want? I wouldn't turn a dog from my door, such a night as this, — much less a woman! and *that woman* — No, I *can't* do it!" he added, after a choking pause. "You wouldn't have me send her away?"

"No," replied Patience, setting down the candle-stick hard on the table; "but I *did* hope you'd got over what happened five years ago! Of course, I'd do for Mary Halpine jest what I would for any poor suffering human creetur who come to our ruff for shelter. I thank the Lord, he didn't make me a heathen! We'll keep her through this cold storm; but when it's over, go she must, — for, Reuben, I can't look back and see how she treated you, and then harbor her. But I'll jest ask her why she didn't *stay* with her fine gentleman; what she come among honest folks for! Oh, brother, it works me up terribly, when I think it all over! and to see how you sit and mope there in the chimney-corner!"

The farmer looked at his sister in surprise. Patience Wedgewood, usually the kindest, most forgiving of women, — his sister

Patience, whose whole life had been but a tissue of trials received, and gentle submissions rendered, — the “Aunt Patience” of Meadow Brook, whose *name* had passed into a proverb as symbolical of her *nature*, — was it indeed *she*, standing there on the hearth, manifesting such bitter, unwomanly feelings?

But he understood it all. The best impulses of a true, tender, woman heart, were stifled momentarily, in her jealous, watchful love for the only being she had left on earth to cherish, — her brother.

And yet it was not wholly as the guardian of her brother's wrongs, that Patience Wedgewood stood, that winter night, beside the kitchen fire, nursing hard thoughts toward the poor girl lying pale and ill in the adjoining room. There was another reason, — one that influences woman under every circumstance like this, though few there be who care to acknowledge it; for who does not know how hard it is for her to forget and forgive *frailty in her sister-woman*?

She will forget, or tolerate — and in thus tolerating, *encourage* error in *men*. It is known, world-wide, how fair white hands are extended to welcome them into society; how she leans upon the arms, and hangs upon the eloquent words, of those from whom she should shrink with a blush; and how then, straight-way, if the Magdalen — who, but for the fascinating tempter, to whose accents *she* has just listened, had stood to-day as fair and pure as she — crosses her path, *then*, with a gesture of virtuous scorn, she spurns her.

Unwelcome truth! But, sister-woman, everywhere, is it not so?

Votary of fashion, — frivolous, vain worldling! — do you not look down from your gilded height, and smile scornfully at humbled, abject, though perhaps *penitent* beings below? Say, giddy, kind-hearted, but thoughtless girl, too happy in your own

light loves and joys, to heed the agony of broken hearts, sinking into dust under their weight of shame, what word have *you* for such? Cold, purse-proud, immaculate, frigid lady, who kneels in carpeted churches on a velvet hassock, and prays audibly from a jewelled prayer-book, — whose stainless purity was never sullied by contact with such as sinned through excess of love, — when by chance the unfortunate falters across your pathway, do *you* not draw aside your spotless robes, lest the hem of your garments, even, should have been brushed in passing? And “last, not least,” you who profess to be good, thoughtful, *Christian* women, in your easy (because *approved*) rounds of daily life, — at your pleasant firesides, where dwell the dear ones of your home circles, — at the Throne of Grace, even, — *anywhere*, everywhere, do you find the least corner reserved for such of whom He you call your Master hath said, “Go, and sin no more?”

Aye, it is even so!

“Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!”

And, as Patience Wedgewood stood there, revolving many contending thoughts in her mind, she gradually became conscious that it would be one of the hardest struggles of her life to forgive Mary Halpine.

Could she? No! surely not of her own heart. But her Father was opening, in His own way, a path for that forgiveness; a new channel, wherein the womanly tenderness of her heart might flow afresh, and another love brighten and soften her life.

Five minutes passed, and Patience still stood beside her brother; and there was no sound in the old kitchen but the purr of the kitten on the hearth, and the voice of the clock in the dis-

tant corner—a tick, tick, now light and uncertain, now strong and sharp, now muffled and deep, like the throbbing of Reuben's heart. Memories that he thought laid to sleep forever were torn from their grave that night. It had been no light love he had borne that fair-haired girl in yonder room; it had been no easy struggle to subdue it when it came back, a cold, rushing "Alpine torrent," upon his own heart. Why, that night, had he to live it all over again,—and with the added misery of beholding her desolation?

A faint moan issued from the bed-room. Patience looked at Reuben, who raised his head. Their eyes met; hers with a new, softer light struggling in their still darkened depths,—his, tender as a woman's, with the sadness of an anguished heart breaking up through them.

"Go to her, Patience," he said briefly, as another moan broke the silence; and, at that cry of suffering, all the woman resumed its sway over her soul. She obeyed, leaving Reuben alone with the faint fire-light and his own thoughts.

As the door shut, another low cry, full of mental and physical suffering, came from the bed whereon the sufferer lay. Patience went and stood close beside the pillows. It was a face of startling girlish beauty she gazed upon now,—the counterpart of one which, five years before, had often brightened the old farmhouse. The cheeks, no longer marble pale, were crimson with fever; the lips red as the petals of the damask rose in June-time; and masses of rippling hair, escaping from the neat lace frilled cap under which Patience had bound it, flashed like threads of spun gold in the candle-light; but the white forehead was corrugated with deep lines; about the small, convulsed mouth lay an expression of pain, and dusky circles rimmed the eyes whose lids were closed—their long lashes sweeping her cheeks below.

For a few moments she lay very still, then slowly unclosed her eyes. Sad, almost despairing, was the gaze which sought briefly the faded, weather-beaten face bending over her; then she shrank from that scrutinizing glance, which seemed to read her soul. Closing the lids faintly, one or two tears were crushed beneath.

"Patience Wedgewood, do you *know* me?" she said, at length, in a whisper, pulling up the sheet over her as if to screen herself from the glance of those searching eyes.

"Mary Halpine, I do!" was the reply, in a tone which was not, certainly, intended for a cold one, yet had but the slightest quiver of compassion in it; for the good and evil angels were fighting a hard battle in Patience's heart.

The poor woman shrank away into the farthest side of the bed, and turned her face to the wall. Did she *deserve* pity? she asked herself,—or forgiveness, either? Why, in the hour of her great need, had she come to *that* house? Why, instead, had she not lain down in the bitter cold of the winter night, and perished? sunk on the soft bosom of the yielding snow, and, dreaming dreams of her innocent earlier days, so died? Surely, there was One who would not have looked upon her with cold, freezing, unpitying eyes,—One who *never* casts forth the weary wanderer!

Such, and many other thoughts, which racked her soul even more than did physical suffering her feeble frame, passed through the poor girl's brain like lightning flashes; and the weary conflict brought faintness and exhaustion.

Patience saw it all. In the aggravated sufferings of the poor being before her, she forgot hard thoughts and hoarded resentment, and the best impulses of her nature found sway. She rapidly bathed the pallid temples; administered invigorating cordials; called back the life which had almost wandered from

those white lips; and then, replenishing the fire, and drawing the full chintz curtains about the windows, went out into the kitchen, and, laying her hand upon her brother's arm, said, pointing to the bed-room:

"Poor thing! Reuben, you must harness up and go after the doctor. But first bring old Nurse Dean over. Wrap up well, brother; for it's a bitter cold night. Poor Mary Halpine! Reuben, I was wicked in keeping such bitterness in my heart against her. God forgive me!"

The farmer started up from his seat. Were there tears in Patience's eyes? They stood in his own, as he turned away, and drew on his thick boots and overcoat. The hand which took down the old tin lantern from a nail over the fire-place, trembled; and the voice was husky which said, "Come, Bruno," to the huge mastiff, who rose from his slumbers, rubbed his shaggy head against his master's hand, and then followed him out into the cold winter night.

CHAPTER III.

Reader, do you know how we may live and suffer while the business of life goes regularly on, giving no token of the tears that are silently shed?

ANN S. STEPHENS.

It was a quiet life they lived there — bachelor brother and maiden sister — in the old farm-house at the Ridge. Year in and out, the months came and went, and time touched them very lightly. But for the few wrinkles that crept upon a face which, somehow, these many latter years, had seemed old and faded, and the gradual silvering of Patience's hair, — the sprinkle of gray which had also fallen on Reuben's head, and the crow's-feet that came at the corners of his deep-set, gray eyes, — but for these tokens, the good dwellers of Meadow Brook would scarce have thought that the brother and sister were getting to be old, so quietly, and unmarked by ~~any~~ stirring outward event, had their lives passed.

Time lapses very lightly to the dwellers in quiet country places. Nature, whose communion is like a mother's, helps to keep the heart young. Each shifting season brings its own lesson. As, in the spring-time, the earth is bared to the hand of the sower, so, in human hearts, Love, Hope, and Faith, sow liberal seed. Summer, fervid and sultry, with fair bending skies, is oftenest rich in promise of a full fruition of loves and joys, though sometimes, alas! it brings the blight of the withering drought, — when every green thing fails us, — the water-courses are dried up, and there is neither hope nor consolation. In autumn, standing amid ripened sheaves, we say, pridefully, "Lo,

this is the harvest of our own planting!" and sit down to enjoy the fruit of our labor; and then, even as the year wanes to its death, and the snows weave a shroud over earth's bosom, and nature lapses into its long winter sleep, so weary, white-haired old age lies quietly down to his rest.

But for both there comes a resurrection! As, in the rushing spring-floods, winter's icy fetters are loosened, snow wreaths are dissolved, and buds and flowers spring up in their stead,—so, in the tides of that Death-river, through which the old man's feet must wade, the frosts of hoary hairs are melted, and youth's amber locks are restored! He plants his foot firmly on the thither shore, where another spring-time reigns with amaranthine bloom; and his heart keeps young, and fresh, and vernal, forever—in the sweet May-clime of Heaven!

In the pleasant country make our home! From the heats, turmoils, and cares of crowded cities; from the eager jostle, and cankering heartburnings of the great world-strife, they who dwell among blooming flowers, green fields, running-brooks, and all of Nature's beautiful things, are delivered. Bless God for the cool, the still, and pleasant country!

And so, where the years glide quietly, had they passed, to Reuben and Patience Wedgewood.

Every spring the violets opened their blue eyes to peep timidly from the shelter of mossy rocks, on green knolls, or the southern slopes of grassy meadows; the fox-glove, white anemone, and pink and white trailing arbutus, blossomed in quiet forest-paths; the yellow king's-cup stood all along the country roadsides, and graceful brake-leaves and sweet-fern grew near old, mossy stone walls; lilacs put forth their purple sprays, and flowers budded in Aunt Patience's garden;—then, the June days grew warm and long, and the sunshine slept goldenly on the wide country meadows; the summer heats fell, ripening the

herdsglass and fragrant clover; at sunset, banks of gold and crimson piled high the western horizon, and the two tall poplars, before the farm-house at the Ridge, flickered their long, leafy arms to and fro like blazing firebrands;—beautiful September, when summer lingers to dally in the lap of autumn, came and went, followed by mild, rich fruited October, with woods of gold and fire, harvest moon, and "harvest home,"—and then old winter brought his tributes of snows and sleets and icy airs without, while good cheer and comfort and blazing hearths held sway within.

And thus the years had come and gone, till Aunt Patience had turned fifty, and Reuben Wedgewood had passed his fortieth year.—And yet it seemed but a day, since the girl of eighteen stood beside her mother's death-bed with a hallowed promise on her lips! a promise that she would fill a mother's place to the frail, ten-year-old-child,—“poor lame Katy,”—who clung weeping, to that dying parent. Over thirty years since then, and yet it seemed but a day! Lame Katy had slept beside her mother, in the grave-yard, these twenty-five years,—but, to Patience, she was still the pale, slender girl, whom she had carried in her arms, and soothed to sleep on her bosom. O, Patience, when, with sobs you laid her from your breast, where her head should be pillowed no more, did you think the years could come and go so rapidly?

But had time passed as happily, as fleetly, to the brother and sister? What shadows could have fallen athwart Reuben's pathway? Did not the “Ridge Farm” extend over many well-tilled acres? Was he not “forehanded” in the world—prospering both in his basket and his store?—And the kind-hearted, even-tempered maiden sister; the economical, thrifty, neat house-keeper; the pattern of good neighbors, and the universal “aunt” of Meadow Brook—had she ever known troubles in her pleasant home?

Ah! yes, yes! Was there ever life without them?

There were people in Meadow Brook who could remember, how, many years ago, when Patience Wedgewood was young and handsome, with glossy black hair, and cheeks red as wild roses, she had been the pride and toast of all the county. At ball, husking, or quilting, there had been no girl lighter of foot, with brighter eye or merrier laugh, than she. They remembered, too, how she had a lover in those days, — a favored one from the many who paid her court, — who rode very often from his fine farm, at the "Cross-Roads," over to the Ridge, and fastening his great roan colt at old Mr. Wedgewood's gate, went in, ostensibly to talk of "the crops," with the farmer, but in reality to gaze at Patience's red cheeks, and exchange a little chit-chat with her in a sly manner, — which usually ended in asking her company to the singing school or some merry-making at "the village; — how attentive he was, until Patience's mother, dying, had bequeathed little lame Katy to her care, bidding her never leave her; — and then, when Patience told him, that, when she married, she must bring Katy with her — for she could not break her promise to her dead mother — he demurred; — and afterward, when old Mr. Wedgewood died suddenly, and upon settlement of affairs the farm was found to be involved, this base lover — James Conway — neglected her, and finally broke his vows, and went away and married a rich girl who brought him a fine dowry, accompanied also, by a passionate temper and an unruly tongue, which embittered his days; — they remembered all this, and how, from that time, Patience grew old, and faded fast, and seldom went out, but devoted herself to her sister and brother; — how, a few years later, little lame Katy died; and, at twenty-five, a sad, reserved woman, looking full ten years older than she really was, — she turned to her boy-brother, and vowed, henceforth, to devote her life to

him; refusing the offers of many others who would gladly have won her, saying, calmly: "I have got my duty to do here. I shall never marry!"

Yes, there were many who remembered those days, and acknowledged her worth; though some, young and thoughtless, called her "old-maid," little appreciating the noble self-sacrifice which made her such. But she, whose life had been so rich in quiet worth and deeds of humble beauty, could well afford to wear that name. She, who sacrificed her dreams of wedded bliss that she might fulfil her vow to a dying mother — who was like a mother to the lame girl, carrying the little frail form in her arms, watching over her day and night until she died upon her bosom — she, the "old-maid," for whom our world would be better if there were more such, could well afford to wear a name which was, to her, an honor, and a crown of glory.

Good Old Aunt Patience! So sure as every throb of thy kind heart was numbered, — every trial and struggle noted by One, who sits above and seeth and knoweth all, thou hast, ere this, met thy reward!

And Reuben Wedgewood, too! In his younger days, when there was no "smarter," "likelier" man in all the county; or later, when the incumbrances on the farm were cleared off, and he had grown "well to do," as farmers say, in this world's wealth, — why had he not brought a wife to share his home, and relieve his sister from a portion of her cares? Ah! — this had been no secret in Meadow Brook, either. Let us see!

In his early youth, Reuben had been shy and bashful, — fonder of the fireside, and Patience's society, than of rustic merry-makings; and then, on coming of age, he had devoted himself assiduously to paying up the mortgage on the farm, assisted by his single-hearted sister, who spun, and wove, and went to market with the products of her dairy; saving up all her earnings for

this one object; — and so his youth and early manhood passed, and when the shady side of thirty saw him unmarried, Reuben was set down as a confirmed bachelor.

But after a few years, the people of Meadow Brook were surprised to hear that he was shortly to bring a mistress to the Ridge — and no other than little Mary Halpine, scarce turned eighteen, the prettiest girl in the whole village! Pretty, but poor; for her mother was the widow of a broken trader, and rented one of Reuben's tenements, a little, brown cottage at the village, where she and Mary eked out a support by their needles. And so, at thirty-five, the farmer met the village-beauty — and lost his heart!

With fair golden hair, violet eyes, and faultless features; a slight, graceful form, and a refinement of manner he had never seen in the country maidens round about — she seemed to the bashful bachelor, far above him, and for months he worshipped at a distance. But, at length, fortune aided him; for Mrs. Halpine, rejoicing that her daughter had attracted the attention of so estimable, upright, and “forehanded” a man as Mr. Wedgewood, openly encouraged him; nor was it long before the fair Mary grew less shy, and received him with favor, — and by and by, one sweet summer evening returning from the Ridge, whither she had been invited by Aunt Patience, with a score of village girls, to spend the afternoon — walking slowly down the quiet country road with Reuben at her side — he asked her to become his wife! — and, blushing confusedly, she whispered assent! In autumn she would go to the Ridge, as his wife.

But when October, with its golden days and harvest-home, had come and gone; when gray November, with frowning skies without but blazing wood-fires within, had just unfolded her tablets; when Patience's hard, horny, but willing hands, had burnished and brightened anew the old farm-house, arranged

everything from garret to cellar, opened linen presses whose contents had been accumulating for years, draped anew the high-posted bed in the spare chamber, and spread a bright rag-carpet of her own weaving, on the floor of the “west room,” — filled the buttery with stores of good things, polished the pewter on the dressers till it shone like silver, set out the old-fashioned, delicate pink china, scoured and sanded the kitchen floor, and wound fresh wreaths of winter-green brightened with scarlet wax-berries, about the tall eight-day clock in the corner — when, in short, the house was all swept and garnished for the reception of the fair girl-bride, the faithful sister — her tasks over — sat down on the settle in the chimney-place to rest, and said, with a half-sigh: “Well, brother Reuben will be happier, I hope!” Then, when the stalwart farmer, bronzed with his year's harvest toil, came from his fields and granaries, and, looking around on the ready house, said: “I will bring a fair flower here, to brighten it,” — when the wedding-day was set, and all things were in readiness, — then came a terrible, stunning blow!

Mary, sweet Mary Halpine, was lost to him forever! Not dead — he could have borne *that*! — could have looked upon her young face under the coffin-lid, and lain her away in the grave, though his heart had well nigh broken! But it was bitterer, far, than death, the way in which she was lost to him!

And then the whole story was told. *She had left him for another!*

During the last month of the summer that was past, a handsome young stranger had boarded at the principal tavern of Meadow Brook. Day after day had he been seen wandering through the woods, with sketch-book or fishing-rod in hand; for whole hours he fished from the banks of some bright, clear trout-stream winding among the meadows and woodlands; or pencilled some exquisite bit of scenery, where the dense foliage cast deep,

Rembrant shadows, or a white, foaming cascade leaped down a rocky precipice,—but not alone the charms those forest-wilds held out to the angler and the artist, lured him there—for there, too, had he tempted sweet Mary Halpine to meet him! Their acquaintance, which commenced at a village pic-nic a few weeks before, had progressed by means of visits to the cottage whither he had gone, ostensibly to employ the mother in her capacity of seamstress; but the prudent Mrs. Halpine read his admiration for the daughter, and lost no time in making it understood that Mary was a promised wife.

But what cared the stranger that he went no more to the cottage, so long as Mary could be induced to meet him in the shady forest-paths, walk with him for hours, sit beside him on the banks of the brook while he sketched, or listened to his words of delicate flattery, as he wove oak-leaves and scarlet cardinal flowers into wreaths for her sunny hair? Augustus Revere knew only too well the heart of woman to despair of, winning that fair girl who, with flushing cheek and brightened eye, met him there. Such fresh, dewy hearts he had won before, and broken, too,—for, though young in years, at heart he was an old, hackneyed man of the world.

And alas! for the credulous girl! We need not tell how his beauty, elegance and grace, with the gallant, chivalrous devotion of his manner, won her heart away. It was the old story over again; a story that will always be repeated so long as women are trusting, and men are deceivers; and Mary Halpine was no wiser or better than others who, from listening learned to believe—from believing, loved—from loving, fell! Fascinated with tales of a love, so like that of which she had read in old romances, where gallant knights wooed fair ladies in the quiet “green wood shade;” contrasting this elegant dark-eyed lover, and his ardent, passionate protestations—clothed in the

choicest diction,—with the sturdy, broad-shouldered, toil-hardened Reuben, and his honest, no doubt heart-felt, but common-place love-sayings, it was little wonder that the young girl, blinded by a passion which grew rapidly and swayed her whole being, forgot the manly devotion of a true heart, forgot honor and plighted vows—and broke her faith!

Yet not without a struggle had she yielded. We will do Mary Halpine the justice to say that, when Augustus Revere first whipspered his protestations, she recoiled. Ah! had she fled then! But, hesitatingly, she lingered—and, again, listened!

What poor, fluttering, charmed bird, gazing at the serpent, but falls, at length, into its coiling embrace? What woman, forgetting duty and honor, listens to the tale of forbidden worship, and escapes unharmed?

“Go away, and leave me! I dare not, must not listen! I am the promised wife of another!” she said, covering her crimsoned face with her small white hands.

“Yes, promised to a miserable clod of a farmer! A piece of dull earth, whose heart is set upon his fat oxen and his crops! No, Mary, by heaven! he shall not have such an exquisite piece of nature’s porcelain as you! The bright, gay world has need of such—let me take you there!—It is no sin to break an engagement like yours; there is neither *heart* nor *soul* in it.—By and by he will get him a wife from among these rough country girls; one better fitted for milking his cows, and the toils of his farm-house, than a delicate blossom like you. Do not fear for your mother’s consent; she will be proud of you when you come back my wife. Mary, darling—tell me you will be mine!” So he pleaded.

“Oh, no, no! It is wicked! I mustn’t stay here! Let me go!” she cried.

“Then you will condemn me to a life-time of misery? Mary,

you are cruel!"—and the wily man softened his voice; "but I cannot go away and forget you. Though I resign you, I can never banish your image from my heart; and must this be our *last* interview? Oh, no, in pity, Mary, grant me *another*. Tomorrow I leave this quiet country village; but I shall come back once, again, to bid you good-bye forever. You will not refuse me *that*?—promise me!"

And Mary promised. But what need to add more? Only will we say, that, while the weeks went by, and the preparations for the marriage were speeding, Mary Halpine went about like one in a dream—but with a terrible remorse at her heart; lacking courage, and, alas! all too unwilling to confess her fault. And when the golden Indian summer had faded, then her lover came, secretly and quietly; and, in the hush of a night just one week preceding that appointed for the wedding, she bent for a moment above her sleeping mother's pillow—then stole out into the shivering woods to meet her fate.

Was it wonder that when they told him, Reuben Wedgewood crushed under his heel the plain gold wedding-ring he had purchased for Mary's slender finger!—burned a lock of sunny hair!—his brow grew dark and stern! and henceforth her name was never spoken in the old farm-house?

CHAPTER IV.

Thou art fickle as the sea; thou art wandering as the wind;
And the restless, ever-mounting flame, is not more hard to bind.
If the tears I shed were tongues, yet all too few would be
To tell of all the treachery that thou hast shown to me.

BRYANT.

It was an elegant apartment of the Astor House which with the romancist's privilege, we will take the liberty of visiting. Every appointment of its furnishing was luxurious. The carpet was of the choicest texture, velvet soft; voluminous curtains of brocatelle draped the windows; pier-glasses multiplied the Parian and bronze mantel ornaments, candelabras, Bohemian and Etruscan vases, marble brackets, gilt framed pictures, and other adornments of the room. An elegant inlaid table was covered with richly bound books and portfolios of drawings, and an open piano strewn with sheet music; low, crimson velvet covered lounges and tabourets stood about the walls; a Psyche and Hebe filled niches between two bay windows; a coal fire glowed in the grate,—for the evening was a cold, wet, stormy one,—and cast a cheerful, ruddy glare over the room.

Before the grate, in a large crimson velvet covered reception chair, his feet carelessly thrust into a pair of embroidered slippers, clad in an elegant dressing-gown and Turkish smoking-cap, with the slender, white fingers of one hand supporting the stem of his quaint German meerschaum, and the other buried in the long curls of his hair, while his elbow rested on a table drawn up close beside him, on which stood an elegant cut-glass decanter

and two slender wine-glasses in a silver tray, sat the master of this sumptuous room — Augustus Revere.

Let us survey him as he sits indolently reclining there, his head thrown back against the chair, and the radiance of the lighted candelabra flooding his face. Now he has lain aside his pipe, tosses his tasselled smoking-cap to the table, and again settles back in the luxurious depths of his chair, apparently in a dreamy reverie; while the howling winter winds without, and the icy sleet beating against the windows, enhanced the enjoyment of light and warmth within.

His form is slight, but of tall, well-knit, and elegant proportions. His hand is white and delicate as a lady's; and on one of the slender fingers thrust among his brown curls, a diamond ring gleams in a splendid setting. His face is strikingly handsome, so far as a regular cast of features goes to constitute beauty. A high forehead; aquiline nose, with thin, proud nostrils; small, well-cut mouth, with full red lips, almost feminine in their expression, save for rigid curves about them, betokening a strength of will not easily attained by woman; and a firm rounded chin, shaded by a dark, glossy, and delicately curling moustache.

It is a handsome, manly face, certainly, thrown in full relief against the dark background of the deep crimson chair, and one upon which you would be likely to turn to look a second time; and then you would observe what you did not at first, — how there are deep lines outward from the eyes to the white temples, and a fulness to the lips, betokening not only inflexibility of will, but a love for sensuous pleasures; and the somewhat scornful curve of the short upper lip, seems almost a sneer. If he smiled, — as he did often during his reverie, — you would think it a wondrous fascinating smile; but there was a glittering chill in it, — the polished, cold brilliancy of ice. His eyes were

blue; not moist, warm, tender blue eyes, whose glance has a soul in it, but the dull, hard gleam of untempered steel. And, as he sat there, with the fire-light illumining his countenance, the thoughts revolving in his mind left no trace on his features, nor were mirrored in his unspeaking eyes.

There are those who can turn the key on heart and brain. In those inner laboratories they forge out thoughts, concoct schemes, and link together the purposes which guide their outward lives among men. In the crucible of the brain they melt and fuse all the subtle elements of their nature together. Pride, Passion, Love, Hate, Hope, and Fear, by turns are cast into the bubbling cauldron, each to work its own part in transmuting all passing events into their philosopher's stone — *Success!*

So was it with Augustus Revere. The brain working in that graceful head was clear, acute, and subtle; the heart beating under that polished, elegant exterior, hard and unyielding when it conflicted with his Will; those blue eyes, which could counterfeit the softest, tenderest emotions when woman's heart was to be won, could also grow stern, and freezing, and pitiless; those fingers idly thrust into his rich brown curls, had clasped *other* fingers scarce whiter or slenderer, — leading fair, trusting creatures into paths whose end was moral death; then idly flung them off, to wander their downward way alone, while he went back to *society*, to be petted and courted anew. For this man was, what the reader has doubtless, ere this, surmised, — one of that numerous class who infest society, sit at rich men's tables, converse with their wives and daughters, bow deferentially to Fifth Avenue dwellers, kiss their white-gloved fingers to Broadway belles, encircle their slender waists in the waltz at festivals, drive fast horses, and give champagne suppers to a host of "good fellows" in upper-tendom; ostensibly meeting his expenses by remittances from an old East Indian nabob uncle, whose heir

prospective he stood; ostensibly this, but in reality a *roue*, gambler, and adventurer.

At twenty-five, Augustus Revere was old. His career had begun early. At nineteen, expelled from college,—where his father, an honest, hard-working farmer, committing the common error of wishing to make his only son “a gentleman,” had placed him with an unlimited command of money at his disposal,—he betook himself to a wider sphere of action; and, ere his twenty-third year, had broken his father’s heart, gotten the remnant of his patrimony into his own hands, and finally, lost all the freshness of truth and honor in the labyrinthine mazes of wickedness in a great city.

With a naturally superior mind, talents of a high order, elegant person and gentlemanly address,—the keenest of perceptive faculties, aided by an indomitable will and a sort of natural patrician pride, that well accorded with his haughty personal beauty,—he took good care that, while his occupation remained unsuspected, he gradually worked his way upward into the higher circles of society. This was accomplished, partially by fastening himself on dissolute scions of aristocratic families, whom he met at gambling-saloons and aided from his own purse—for he was a most skilful player; for the rest, his artfully concocted tale of the nabob East Indian uncle, secured him the coveted *entree* into circles where his consummate tact, elegant person, and fascinating address detained him, a welcome guest.

On the stormy night in question, Augustus Revere evidently enjoyed the warmth and cheerful seclusion of his elegant parlor; for he indolently lifted his head from the softly-cushioned chair-back, listened a moment to the howling storm, and then sunk into his old attitude, with a self-satisfied, complacent smile upon his lips.

It was a wild night, and the fiercest of storms was abroad.

Down the streets and alleys of the great city the wind rushed like an angry, howling air-demon. Round every square and corner, into every court and passage, it went moaning and sobbing,—seeking shelter, yet finding none—the homeless wind!

But few were abroad, and those impelled by necessity; for powerful indeed must be the motive which tempts men from warm, cheerful firesides to encounter driving sleet and biting winter winds. The darkness had set in early, making the evening seem long; and when the French clock on the mantel of Augustus Revere’s parlor struck eight, he started from his reverie, drew forth his gold repeater to compare it with the clock; and rose with a yawn, exclaiming, “Hang it! how deuced slow the time goes! What can a fellow do to amuse himself?”

Turning to the table, he poured a glass of wine, held it up a moment between his eyes and the light, watching the beaded foam on the ruby wave,—quaffed it off; then thrust his feet firmly into his slippers, and, crossing the floor, seated himself at the piano and lightly dashed off a popular opera air which he hummed the while.

Suddenly he broke off in the middle, wheeled round on the music stool, and going to a window drew aside the heavy curtains with one white hand, and looked out into the night.

“Confound it! how dark! Black as Erebus! and such a wet night, too! Can’t put a foot out doors; nor will any of the club venture up here, I dare say. Were it not for the storm, I’d draw on a pair of new kids, order a carriage, and call on Jule; but the most devoted lover couldn’t find a shadow of excuse for stirring out such a night. So, I’ve nothing left but to take another smoke and go to bed!”—and he went back to his easy chair, replenished the bowl of his meerschaum, and sank into his old indolent attitude.

Hardly had the smoke-wreaths begun to encircle his head, ere

a tap came at his door. The waiter put his head in, with "Mr. Golding, sir."

"Ah, Hugh, my boy,—you're as welcome as good old Rhenish!" exclaimed Revere, starting up and welcoming the new comer with a cordial shake of the hand. "Fact is, I was getting deuced lonesome,—just going to bed, for the want of somebody to talk to; but I'm good for a brace of hours yet, old fellow! Here, sit down!"—and he wheeled another luxuriant easy-chair toward the grate. "Take a smoke? Prime Havanas, these,—best brand!" handing a silver cigar-case from the mantel. "Have a drink, too? Pure old Moselle!"—and he poured a foaming glass.

"Ah, thank you, Gus," drawled the new comer, sinking into the chair, after he had divested himself of a broadcloth circular from which the frozen snow melted in drops upon the thick carpet. "Devilish cold night this, 'pon my word! Takes the breath quite out of a fellow. Shouldn't have come out to-night, but a little business affair pressed me rather hard. Thought I'd come down and see what *you'd* do towards helping a fellow out of a tight place. The boys are all down on me; not a red cent can be squeezed from their pockets. What's to be done in such a case, Gus?"—and, while comfortably settled in the depths of the arm-chair, his feet on the polished grate-fender, and sipping his wine leisurely as he awaited his companion's reply, we will take the liberty of surveying Hugh Golding's *personale*.

He was probably the junior of Revere by two or three years, but more than his peer in elegance of form and feature; a slender, but well-knit frame, purely cut classical features, a pale, transparent complexion, whose clearness dissipation had little impaired, relieved by hair and eyes of jetty blackness, going to make up his attractive physique. In character, he was the counterpart of his companion, with the exception that his refined

vices were the legitimate fruit of a youth of aristocratic idleness, rather than the cool, scheming plots of a hardened sinner. The only son of a rich merchant of Gotham of unimpeachable integrity and standing in the highest circles, Golding's youth had passed in a dream of luxurious ease; nor did he ever find himself in the least straitened for the means to sustain his idle, spendthrift life, until, during a severe mercantile crisis, his father went down in the crash,—and, from being the prospective heir of millions, he awoke to beggary. The stricken merchant, unmanned, buried his despair in the grave whither a paralytic stroke hurried him; and the son, scorning honest labor, conflicting as it did with his ideas of *respectability*, fell in with a set of "fast" young men—foremost among whom was the wily Revere, who resolved to take advantage of Golding's aristocratic connections to push his own way into society—and thus he found a new way of coining money: by dice and cards. For five years their intimacy had remained unbroken; and certainly during that period the pupil had equalled, if not excelled, his master. Few imagined how, under Golding's smooth, careless, gentleman-like exterior, lay strong passions, deep resolves, and a species of craftiness, which, for the lack of occasion, had never been developed; yet, that he possessed these attributes, let the sequel of his career show.

As he sat there, carelessly sipping the sparkling wine and awaiting Revere's reply, you would not have thought a care or loss had ever disturbed his brain.

"Come, Gus," he said, putting down the glass and idly slipping a splendid seal ring over the joint of his slender little finger, "what say you? Can you accommodate me with five thousand or so? for I lost deucedly last night, to that French Count."

"Five thousand dollars! What the d—ickens do you

mean?" echoed Revere, in astonishment. "Why, my dear fellow, you must be *non compos* — a little touched here!" — tapping his forehead with his fore-finger. "I hav'nt five *hundred* at my disposal now! Couldn't raise it, either; for I've been confoundedly unlucky of late, and here I am at present, with my board bills accumulating, putting off "mine host" till something in the shape of a flat turns up at Delmonte's. Fact is, I doubt whether I can raise the needful for the bridal fixings, expenses of the journey, etc., when the wedding comes off. Deuced agreeable *that*, I say; don't you? But, ah! I forgot that you're not posted yet, Hugh!"

"*Wedding!*" echoed Golding, surprised in his turn, his cheek paling; "Augustus Revere, you don't mean to tell me that — that —" his voice failed him.

Revere smiled. "Yes, I *do* mean to say, that last night, at Dr. Hartwell's house, was a fortunate one for me. I flatter myself that I am the accepted suitor of the handsomest, wealthiest heiress of the Crescent City. In other words, your cousin, Julie Courtney, is my promised wife. Wish me joy of our future kinship, Hugh!" — and he held forth his hand. "I see you are somewhat surprised at this hasty and prosperous termination of my wooing; but nothing like striking when the iron's hot, my dear fellow!"

Hugh Golding sprang up from his chair, and dashed aside the proffered hand. He strode the floor rapidly. His face was white as marble; a lurid glow burned in his midnight eyes; he bit his lips till bloody foam flecked his gleaming teeth; and his clenched fingers worked convulsively, burying their nails in his soft palms. There was a blending of anger, pride, and despair, chasing in rapid waves over his features. Pygmalion's statue, suddenly warmed into glowing, passionate life, was scarce a more wonderful transformation than this; only that darker emotions

swept their tumultuous throes over Golding's face, which, turned from the fire-light, was partially concealed from his companion's gaze. But Revere saw something of his agitation.

"What is the matter, Hugh? You go on like a rejected lover! What, not *congratulate* me? A shabby trick, 'pon my word!"

There was a conflict, wild, terrible, but brief, in Golding's heart; but when he turned his face to the light, there was no trace left save a slight paleness. Forcing a quick, nervous laugh, he came back and sat down; and, leaning toward Revere, shook his hand.

"I was foolish; but it was such a surprise! Upon my word, I did not know that you and Jule had got on so! When does it come off?"

"I accompany her home in the latter part of February, to meet my future father-in-law; and she will return as 'Mrs. Revere.' Sorry that I can't accommodate you regarding the money; but you see how it is. I must husband my resources, else I shall not *husband* Jule in a hurry, I fear. Ha, ha! no punning intended, my boy! After all, it *is* something to place freedom beyond your reach, and put your head into the yoke in good earnest! But brides like Julie Courtney are not to be won every day. Splendid girl, isn't she, Golding? I owe you an eternal debt of gratitude for the introduction."

"My cousin's *wealth* is not her only dowry. To win such a *heart* as hers is better than refined gold!" replied the young man, with a dash of haughty enthusiasm. "All *are* not so favored. I wish you joy!" he added, in a hard, bitter tone, choking something rising in his throat. "But about the *business*" — he went on in a changed voice. "The money *must* be raised. I could put the Count off, I suppose, for a month or

two, with my note and a good endorser. Let me have your name."

"Five thousand! It's too monstrous! If it were a possible thing, Hugh; but—"

"A *possible* thing!" echoed Golding, sarcastically. "What can a few paltry thousands be to a gentleman of *your* expectations? A mere drop in the bucket! Our 'East Indian uncle's heir' is getting parsimonious, I'm afraid."

Revere caught the glance of keen, scrutinizing black eyes, bent upon him. Was he *suspected*? He coughed, shifted his position, and looked down in embarrassment.

"Besides, there is a wealthy heiress in prospective, whom *I* helped you to, Augustus Revere. If *I prove* the villain whom your words seem to imply, think you my generous cousin Jule would begrudge so small a moiety from the yield of her cotton-fields as a purse of gold to her lord and master, wherewith to redeem his *bond*? But this is all folly! I want your *name*, simply. Will you give it me?"

Revere still hung back. Evidently his faith in his companion's words was small; or he feared lest the knowledge that he was connected with any such business transaction with the well-known gambler, Count Le Vert, would reach the ears of his *affiancée*. The latter predominated.

"If I were sure this would not come to Miss Courtney's knowledge. I must guard well my character in *her* eyes," he pleaded.

"Your *character*!" sneered Golding, with a withering glance of contempt. "Pshaw! *you* talk of *honor*! Why, Gus Revere, you know that, in one hour from now, I could place an insurmountable barrier between your marriage with my cousin. Deny that, if you can! You do well to guard your 'character' now, at this late hour! We shall have you turning parson

directly, on our hands! But it will never do! The fair Julie has too immaculate notions, to marry a man who has kept his mis—"

Revere started up. A flush crimsoned his cheek, and for a moment a shade of feeling quivered in his voice.

"Hugh Golding, keep back that word! You, of all men, know how I wronged that girl; but you *shall not* taunt me with it, or apply such a name to her! I am a villain; I was fully sensible of that six months ago. I was a double villain *before* then, when I took the child and gave him into *your* keeping. I *am* in your power! Go to Dr. Hartwell's house, inquire for Miss Julie Courtney, and tell her what a saintly young gentleman she has promised to marry!"

"Shall I take you at your word?" queried Golding, coolly, starting up resolutely. "Just as you say about the matter. Good night!"—and he laid his hand on the door-knob.

His audacious movement restored caution to Revere, who, in a momentary fit of affected abandonment to remorse, had overacted his part.

"Sit down, for God's sake, Hugh, and let us compromise this affair!"

"There is but *one* way of settling it,—the way in which I have pointed out,—your endorsement of the note! Are you a fool, not to see what your best move is?"

Revere replied by bringing a writing-case from a cabinet, and placing it before his companion.

"Write the note," he said. "Should it become impossible for you to meet it, I will befriend you, and with money of my own earning, too. The day that sees me return to New York a married man, sees me a *reformed* one. I *will* leave dice and cards, and engage in some honorable, lucrative mercantile employment; which example I recommend you to follow, Hugh."

Golding's lip curled. Balancing his pen lightly between his thumb and finger, he looked Revere sharply in the eye, and said:

"I hold myself exceedingly grateful for your advice. I may accept it—and I may not. But, Gus, you haven't fathomed me yet. I spoke of an obstacle to your marriage; there *is* one, such as you never *dreamed* of,—the knowledge of which *I alone* possess. And I might go to Julie to-night, and impart to her what would cause her to spurn you! but I will not. Let the marriage go on. *Will*, perhaps *Justice*, must be subservient to my Necessity. *This* saves you, but it seals *her* fate!" he muttered in a lower tone as he hastily dashed off the note and pushed it across the table.

"This wonderful secret of which you affirm yourself sole possessor, is necessarily a mystery to me," said Revere coldly, writing his name on the back of the note.

"It will be well if it *always* remains so; and indeed it depends wholly upon yourself," returned Golding, depositing the note in his pocket-book and taking his cloak and hat from the chair. "It is late; I must go. I pledge you secrecy; and wish you happiness in this glass of wine. Good night!—Yes, Julie Courtney, *your fate is sealed*," he murmured, almost sadly, as he gained the keen, cold outer air. "Poor Julie! and yet how I have loved you!"

CHAPTER V.

The snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white.

LOWELL.

His scorn is lying on my heart like snow;
My eyes are weary, and I fain would sleep;
The quietest sleep is underneath the ground.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

MORNING broke over Meadow Brook. The storm had passed. The air was clear as crystal, the sky darkly blue as steel; and broken fleecy cloud-rifts, "like white lambs gone astray," wandered hither and thither over the azure field of heaven. The earth, like a fair bride, was attired in spotless white; snow-clad hills, standing side by side, awaited the coming of the groom from the chambers of the East, while stately pines and firs—those priests among trees, with gown and cassock always on—with outstretched arms, seemed waiting to murmur the benediction.

On meadow, pasture-land, and in the hollows, drifts, pure white and unflecked by a shadow even, lay unbroken; the river in the valley wound like the trail of a dark serpent through the landscape; low stone walls and fences went straggling hither and thither, their course unmarked, save where some topmost rail or stone projected; sign-boards at cross-roads stood knee-deep in snow, their muffled arms stretched forth, as though, in imploring shelter, they had frozen stiff in their sentinel stations;

and the forests drooped under their feathery tributes. And then, as the sun came from the orient begirt in robes of gold and fire, mounting higher, and the morning deepened, then commenced country sights and sounds.

First, a faint thread of smoke which had coiled close to some chimney-top, shivering in the dim, cold air of the gray dawn, rose slowly upward, grew fainter and thinner, till lost in the blue; then from every chimney in Meadow Brook graceful wreathing columns floated away in rapidly whirling lines. "Chanticleer's muffled crow" came from barn-yards and sheds, echoing out in choruses, until one shrill, defiant scream rose high above all others; the bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle deepened; stately watch-dogs uttered their deep-mouthed bark; frisky terriers leaped about in the soft snow with quick, sharp cries; or some venturesome, frolicking kitten, first peeping timidly from a half-opened farm-house door, cautiously ventured out, leaving quaintest, cunningest little tracks in the yielding white carpet, until she was glad to return to the blazing hearth-stone whence she ventured, and, drying her velvet paws, snuggled down in the warmest corner.

Then the stout farmer, with furred cap and thick mittens, came out and burrowed his way to the long barn, whence, after "foddering" his cattle, he returned, shovelling a wide path to the house-door. Little girls were content with peeping from windows, — melting the frost from the panes with their warm breath, or scratching it away with their fat fingers, demolishing all Jack Frost's cunningly pencilled devices, — tree, shrub, flower, castle, tower and turret, — while their chubby brothers jumped about and halloed, blinding one another with handfuls of loose snow. Then perhaps Ned caught Dick by the collar, and rolled him over into a deep drift, from whence said Dick soon emerged shaking himself like a young cub, — though, what

with the cold, and his anger which would certainly have provoked a passion of tears but for his prideful wish to "be a man," his round cheeks glowed very red. And so it continued, until a comely-faced woman, with ample checked apron, appeared in the door-way with a summons to breakfast.

But, after smoking corn cakes and steaming coffee are despatched, behold them forth again! Huge sleds, drawn by yokes of patient oxen, are piloted out into the highway; the farmer wading knee-deep in the drifts alongside, and flourishing his goad over "Buck," or "Star," or "Bright," while his boys pile upon the sleds, and the great oxen plough their way steadily forward to "break out the roads." In a few hours more, the highway partially trodden, sleigh-bells chime on the air, — at first faintly, then faster and nearer, — as some dashing young farmer whirls furiously past in a gayly painted cutter behind his fastest nag. Old, steady, jog-trotting horses, harnessed into sleighs roomy as a bed-room, and suggestive of Noah's ark, are led close to farm-house doors, whence issue a squadron of children, all eager for a sleigh-ride; Charlie or Frank insisting "to drive," while little Bessie, tucked away into the middle of the back seat, with a nice quilted hood and grandmother's shawl on, puts forth her mittened hands, beseeching to "hold the reins." And so away they go, not fast or furious, though; for old Dobbin is the staidest of animals, and wouldn't overturn his precious load for worlds (*of oats*) — not he! And later, when the sun stands high and warm, shining dazzlingly all over the brilliant white landscape, great sleds laden with wood for the market come, creaking, creaking, along the hardened highway; and more teams dash by, the bells jingling merrily. And so at length the whole country is awakened to fullest life and activity.

But, all this time, how was it at the farm-house on the Ridge?

Ah, no rejoicing there! and but little token of life where there was ordinarily a stir at earliest daybreak! True, the white smoke was curling up from the broad stacked chimney at the first streak of daylight; for the fire on the kitchen hearth had not died out all the night. But there was no nice, widely-shovelled path from the door; the patient kine in their stalls had not been fed; Dr. Harris's yellow sleigh was under the shed, and his horse stood with drooping head under the ample buffalo robe. The old doctor himself was in the farm-house, where Nurse Dean went from bed-room to kitchen, and kitchen to bed-room, with soft footsteps and hushed whispers; while Reuben sat crouched down in the corner of the wide chimney-place, with his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands, taking no heed of the flight of time or any movement about him. There had he sat all the long night; there he sat, as the dim winter's dawn broke—in utter silence.

All night, too, had Patience, forgetting her hoarded resentment, busied herself with tearful eyes and willing hands, to aid the sufferer who lay at Death's door before her.

When morning dawned, a little feeble cry sounded from the bed-room—the tiny wail of a being just ushered into a world of care, and sin, and suffering—and a new life was under the old farm-house roof. But it was a life which must cost another,—a soul for which the mother's must be rendered; for, ere the sun had fairly entered on his upward career, the doctor, coming forth from the bed-room, walked across the kitchen floor, put his hand on Reuben's shoulder, and said, in a kindly whisper:

"Rouse up, Reuben. She has revived a little, and asks for you. Go to her; for she can't last long!"

Mute and pale, with compressed lips, Reuben rose and went in. Mrs. Dean came forth as he entered, and left him alone with Patience and the dying girl. His sister sat beside the

hearth, holding the new-born infant in her arms. Looking then upon her face, one would scarcely have known it for the hard, cold face of the previous night; for a tender compassion had softened and beautified every feature, and beamed from her clear, dark eyes. Reuben's eyes were bright and dry. He could not have shed a tear for his life; his head throbbed with a dull, heavy pain; his step was sluggish, as he went slowly toward the bed.

It was a very wan face upon the pillow; so white, that it might have seemed a statue's but for the faint quiver of the thin nostrils, and the almost transparent eyelids. The long waxen fingers worked convulsively together over the coverlet. At length she half closed her eyes, and murmured feebly: "Reuben, Reuben!—*wont* he come?" she added despairingly.

The strong man bent over her, and lifted one pale, cold, clammy hand.

"Mary!"

It was all he said, but it was enough. It dissolved the icy chill freezing his own heart. A few scalding tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks, and dropped upon her hand.

"Reuben," and the girl opened her violet eyes, where the death-shadows were fast gathering, and cast a beseeching glance upon him, clasping her other hand over his—"Reuben, *forgive, forgive!* Only say it!"

"Mary Halpine, you wronged me deeply,—you touched my heart in a tender spot; but in an hour like this it is not for one mortal to withhold forgiveness from another. I forgive you, as I hope to be forgiven by Him in whose sight we are all sinners." And he bent his lips to the cold hands clasped about his.

"God will bless you for this when I am gone. You have been kinder to me than he for whom I threw away your strong true heart was. Oh, Reuben, I was very, very wicked!"—she sobbed faintly.

Patience stepped to the bedside, with the babe in her arms. Her voice quivered as she said: "There, there, Mary; don't talk of *that*! It's all over now, and can't be helped. Don't say another word — there, don't!

The poor girl lay very still; but a grateful smile trembled about her lips, while Patience sank down on a low chair hugging the baby to her bosom, and Reuben still held the hands that were getting colder. No sound broke the silence except their breathings, and the ticking of the old clock outside in the kitchen. The room was filled with a dim twilight, for the candles had burned low, and the drawn curtains excluded the daylight; yet the gloom could not hide the fast-increasing pallor of the dying girl's face, — the strange shadows deepening over it; the fluttering, convulsive throes of the white throat, the tossings of the golden head to and fro on the pillows, and the rapid working of her fingers tightening over Reuben's hand. Suddenly she withdrew their clasp; stretched forth her hands appealingly; and, unclosing her eyes lit up by a gleam of unearthly brilliancy, turned their wandering gaze about the room until they fell on Patience.

"My baby — bring me my baby!" she moaned.

Patience rose and laid it on the pillow close by the mother's face. Mary clasped it convulsively, and drew its little cheek close to her own with a caressing movement.

"Poor darling! poor baby!" she murmured, the tears rushing into her eyes. "I wish you could die, too, and be laid to sleep on your mother's bosom. Nobody wants you, my poor baby — nobody wants the child of shame!" and with her dying strength, kissing it again and again, she hugged it to her bosom. Then, exhausted, she let it fall from her arms.

Patience gently replaced the babe on the pillow, then turned away to wipe her eyes with the corner of her checked apron.

Reuben bent over the dying girl, and whispered, huskily, "Mary, fear not! — your child shall never want a father!"

"Nor a *mother*, either, while Patience Wedgewood lives!" said the weeping woman, coming forward and taking up the thir cold hand from the coverlet, and pressing it between her own. "Mary Halpine, these five years, since you went off and left Reuben so wretched like, I have been nursing up wrath against you; but the Lord in His own way, has softened my heart at last. It'll be a lesson to me. We're all poor sinful creeters; and 'tisn't for either of us to set ourselves up above another and say, 'I'm better than you!' It wasn't right of you to treat Reuben in the way you did, — but the Lord permitted it, and what He ordains is always for the best. Poor short-sighted creeters, we're too apt to question His will. But it's all past and gone now; and no doubt you repented long ago; so don't you want that poor innocent baby to die for fear nobody'd be raised up to take care of her, for I tell you she shall never go from under this ruff if you'll give her to us."

A grateful smile hovered over the dying girl's face, and her lip quivered as she turned to look upon the babe beside her.

Reuben stooped down and whispered, "Yes, Mary, give us your child. It shall be to us as our own. — But will nobody come to claim her? Is *he* living?"

"Yes," faintly murmured the poor girl, striving to crush her tears; he *is* living — but he wont want *her*. It is months since we parted. If he spurned the mother, he will not seek the child. She is yours." Then, after lying still and exhausted a few moments, she whispered brokenly: "I have been very wicked, but God has been good to me. He sent me here; I know it now; I do not fear now to leave my baby; you will take better care of her than I could. If she lives to grow up,

tell her about her mother. Patience, you may have her *now*," — and she essayed to place her in her arms.

Patience bent down, kissed her cold forehead, then lifted her legacy to her bosom. The dying mother smiled, and whispered, "Peace, peace — I feel it now. Call my baby so, Patience. She has brought *peace* between us, has she not?" — and she threw a quick, eager glance from her face to Reuben's, — "Name my baby Peace."

"Yes, Mary," replied the farmer, in a husky voice.

After a few moments, he asked, "Mary, are you *his wife*?"

A low moan broke from her pale lips. "I *thought* so — God is my witness, I *thought* so. All those years I was very happy, till the time came when I knew! — I knew!" — But the blush which crept over her white face, till it died in the masses of golden hair on her forehead, told what she could not utter. She lay with closed eyes, and great tears coursing silently down her cheeks; — and Reuben's teeth were hard set, and his breathing was thick and gasping as he stood by the bedside.

Then she raised her hands to a little gold chain on her neck. But her fingers failed her. Patience laid the babe down, and stooped to unclasp a locket from the chain. It yielded to the pressure of her fingers; she touched a spring, and placed the opened locket in Mary's hand. There were two faces painted on the ivory; one, that of the dying girl on the pillow, every lineament beaming with health and beauty; the other, the handsome, manly-looking, but treacherous semblance of him who had lured her to her ruin.

Mary Halpine looked at it long and earnestly, pressed it passionately to her lips, then placed it in Reuben's hand: "Keep it for my baby. Some day show her the faces of her mother and — her father!" Then, wholly exhausted, she sunk back.

At length the last moment came; and when, hovering on the verge of the Silent Land, the dying lamp of Memory flashed fitfully, she uttered rapidly and incoherently, words it thrilled her listeners to hear.

Nervously working her fingers over the coverlet, fixing her large blue eyes on vacancy as if she saw a form and face they could not see, she said thrillingly, in a beseeching voice:

"Augustus, Augustus, don't ask me! I am to be Reuben's wife. Don't you know they are getting ready for me at the Ridge? There, hark! *the bells!*" — gazing wildly up into Reuben's face. "Wedding bells? No, they are tolling for my darling's funeral! Did he *die*? They said he was lost — drowned in the deep waters!" — and she clutched strongly at his hands. "Do you believe my darling died? No; they did not bury him under the willows, — I couldn't find him there! I only found a longer grave — all covered with snow. They said it was my mother's! — that I killed her! But they lied; they cheated me! Mary always loved her mother too well to let her die! Now let us go home. I want to go to the old cottage-home and find her. Why don't you *help* me go and find my mother? You cruel, cruel man, — you keep me here! I *will* go!" — and she started upright in bed and strove to break from Reuben's hold. Then she fell back with a gasping moan. The death-shadows were deepening.

"But I *can't* go! The snow is deep! — *so deep!* I sink! it drifts all over me! 'Twill freeze my baby! There, hush, hush! poor baby! It sha'n't touch you — the cold, cruel snow! Mother will keep you warm!" — and she hugged it tightly to her bosom.

Suddenly the last change came. The grasp of her arms relaxed; the babe fell back on the pillows, to be gathered to a mother's breast no more. The spasmodic strength of the dying

departed; Death no longer lingered, but with one wave of his heavy sable wings settled down over her.

"It is dark and cold," she gasped, chokingly. "O, the snow! it covers — it stifles me! Take me away! Augustus — Reuben — lift me — lift me higher! there, it is warm now, and clear! I can find my way!" — and the golden head which the strong man had drawn to his shoulder fell heavily against his breast, — the pale eyelids drooped, — the breath went fluttering from her white lips, — and it was over!

Mary Halpine had gone — gone to "find the way!" Gone to His bosom who would not cast her out — to sheltering arms that would nevermore be unloosened — where, thenceforth, there was neither unkindness, nor sorrow, nor weeping, nor any more sin!

Two days after, the drifted snows were broken, and the frozen sods upturned in the grave-yard on Wood Hill; and there was a funeral at the farm-house at the Ridge.

Reuben and Patience went first behind the bier whereon lay a slender coffin draped with a black pall; and a little train of neighbors, foremost among whom was Doctor Harris, wound slowly to the spot where they laid Mary Halpine down to rest. They lowered the coffin, and then the sexton filled in the frozen clods and levelled the snow all over the grave with his spade. But there was *another* grave made that day in Reuben Wedgewood's heart, where he had buried memories no hand could henceforth stir.

And then the procession wound back to the farm-house and dispersed, — a few kind, motherly women lingering to hold the little orphan, and talk over the sad story of the buried mother; and, as Patience sat with them by the fire, Reuben lay upon his bed in his own room, with shut eyes, striving to shut Memory also from his heart.

But there was neither memory nor regret in the pulseless heart of cold, dead Mary Halpine, in her grave beneath the snows on Wood Hill! Truly, for her:

"The quietest sleep was underneath the ground."

CHAPTER VI.

Her childhood put away,
She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love to-day.
O, lovely lady! — let her vow! such lips become such vows!
And fairer goeth bridal-wreath than crown with vernal brows!

MRS. BROWNING.

"My wedding morning!" — and Julie Courtney drew aside the folds of gossamer embroidery from her window and threw up the sash, admitting a flood of delicious fragrance from the gardens surrounding Magnolia Grove House. "Fair, clear, unclouded, — may it be an omen of the new life I am about to enter!" — and she sank into a low toilet-chair near the window, leaned her forehead on the sill, and gazed long at a small, miniature exquisitely painted on ivory — the counterpart of that seen in an humble New England farm-house on Mary Halpine's death-night — the pictured face of Augustus Revere! The dark-eyed Southern girl pressed rapid kisses upon it. There were no eyes to scan her then.

"Best beloved," she murmured, her lips warming with a bright, tender smile, "may ours be the happiest of lives! one heart, one home, — a union indeed! And may this beautiful day prove an augury!" — and again she swept her eye over the landscape.

A clear March sun climbed the eastern heavens, flinging long, lance-like rays through the catalpa trees and magnolias with their dark glossy green leaves and the hundred flowering shrubs in that luxuriant garden, — mirrored himself in the blue waters of Lake Pontchartrain, as a lover sees his image reflected

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in his mistress's azure eye, — and sent one or two stray lines of golden light through the foliage that draped the casement, to quiver among the young girl's black burnished hair.

Pure, fair, and sweet, as that clear sky bending above her, had Julie Courtney's life always been. Would, indeed, that no clouds should fleck its brightness to the end! And now, on the dawn of a new era in her existence, no wonder that she claimed the sunshine, music, and fragrance of the hour, as a happy omen. Brides, standing tremblingly on the thresholds of new lives, — with orange-blossoms wreathing sweet young brows, hands joined in other fervid claspings, and timid feet entering the new path they must henceforth tread, — it is meet that such should look only for sunny skies, and a pleasant journeying. And who, were theirs the guerdon to read the Future's scroll, foreseeing tempest-clouds darkening the way these hopeful, loving beings must walk, would unfold their fate? Surely not we! Dream on then, sweet bride! Dream on, proud, beautiful Julia Courtney, with the warm blood of the South-land flushing thy crimson cheek! and though it may be yours to say in that future:

My life has been like summer skies
When they are fair to view;
But there never yet were star or skies
Clouds might not wander through!

yet, from deeper shadows than passing clouds, Heaven preserve thee!

Julie's reverie was broken by a slight tap at the door, and immediately a tall black slave appeared bearing his mistress's breakfast.

"Mornin', missis," he said, a broad smile displaying a surface of brilliant ivory, as he placed the silver tray on the table. "Pears like as if young Massa Revere in a mighty hurry for

the weddin'. He keep walkin' back and forth on the piazzzy. Wants to hurry old Time, I reckon, Missis!"—and, with another grin and a profound bow, touching his woolly foretop, he dexterously glided from the room before his mistress could either frown or smile upon him for his officious remark.

The young girl approached the table where stood the tray laden with an urn of fragrant Mocha, a cup and plate of exquisite Sevres china, a couple of tempting French rolls, golden butter stamped into grapes lying on a broad, glossy palmetto leaf, and a silver basket of fruit imbedded in rich foliage and flowers; but little passed her lips that morning. She hastily drank a cup of the aromatic coffee; then, rising, rang the bell. Black Jupiter appeared in a twinkling, and removed the tray; and presently Minnie, the waiting-maid,—a smart, bright-eyed, coquettish young mulattress,—entered.

"From Massa Revere," she said, presenting an elegant bridal bouquet in a chastely wrought silver holder.

"Oh, beautiful, beautiful!" exclaimed Julie, burying her flushed face in the flowers. "What superb japonicas, and cape jasmynes, and fragrant orange-flowers! Just Augustus's taste!" And unwinding a slip of delicate-scented note-paper from the stem of a magnificent pink and white geranium blossom, she read four words which sent the blood in a more tumultuous tide through her veins—"For Julie, my wife!"

"There, eight o'clock! It is time to dress! Minnie, put these precious flowers on the mantel and array your mistress!" she cried, as the musical tongue of an inlaid French clock chimed the hour.

With a ready "Yes, Missis," the slave-girl placed the bouquet in a vase of purest Bohemian glass on the marble mantel, then turned to her young mistress, who, sitting in a chair before the oval silver-framed toilet mirror, was threading her delicate

fingers through the rippling waves of her long, unbraided hair.

"The wide Grecian braids, Minn! You know they become me most; and wind them round the back of my head for the veil to fall over."

"Yes, Missis," meekly answered Minnie, gathering up the long waves sweeping Julie's white morning wrapper, and weaving strand after strand into a broad, satin-smooth band, with practised fingers.

"You see, Minnie," went on Julie, "Papa wanted me to send for Monsieur Coiffure; but I do dislike the French style of hair-dressing. Yours suits me best. I shall miss you when I am married and gone! I declare, Minn, I think you are a bit selfish, to prefer stopping at home with Jupe to going along with your mistress!"—and a very becoming pout sat prettily on Julie's full red lips.

The invariable "Yes, Missis," with a smile disclosing two polished rows of ivory, fell from the mulattress's lips. "But please, Missis, when Massa Revere ask you to marry him, you didn't say 'No.' And when Jupe come sneakin' round, 'specially when there's Rosa, and Della, and Carline, all glad to get him away any day, 'pears like 'twas mighty hard to 'fuse!" and she coquetishly tossed her pretty head. "You see, Missy Julie, if 'twant for Jupe teasin' round so, I'd be mighty glad to go 'long with ye to them countries over the sea; but—but—"

"La, yes; I see! Don't stammer so, child!" returned the girl, with a smile; for on her wedding day she could well afford to banter her faithful waiting-maid. "I see how it is. Poor puss! She *shall* stop at home—so she shall—and keep naughty Jupe from making love to Rosa or Della, or any of the artful jades! I'll be generous, and forgive you, Minn! There, finish my hair quickly! It is the last time for many months I

shall call upon you. Some hired servant must take your place for a season. Aren't you ashamed, though, Minn, to let your mistress go on her bridal tour without you?"

The slave-girl kept on her task till the silken waves of black hair grew rapidly into wide heavy braids that she wound like a coronet about her mistress's little graceful head; but there were tears in the dark diamond eyes, and at last, just as the last jewelled hair-pin was adjusted, she raised her dark hand to dash away the blinding drops, and sobbed out:

"Oh, Missis, please don't think me ongrateful! please don't! 'Deed, I'll go 'long with you to the world's end, though to be sure I'd *rather* stay on the old plantation — and ——"

"Of course you'd *rather* stop at home and marry that black Jupe, you silly puss! And I'd like to know what you're standing there crying for!" cried Julie sharply, though a smile lurked in the corners of her red mouth. "Who's going to prevent it, I'd like to know! Don't you suppose that, on her wedding day, your mistress can afford to be magnanimous, and give you the privilege of accepting your ebony lover, and of having a grand wedding and being married by the minister, instead of jumping over the broomstick? Of course she can: so now, stop crying, I say!" and she stamped her little foot with pretty impatience, "marry Jupe to-morrow, if you like — the sooner the better, for the other girls are artful jades and may get him away, you know and when I come back from Europe, you shall go to New York with me and take your old place, while Jupe shall be my coachman. How does *that* suit, — hey, Minn?"

"Oh thank ye, thank ye, Missy Julie!" exclaimed the slave girl, with a long-drawn sigh of relief, and eyes sparkling like diamonds. "'Pears like it's jest as I told Jupe this mornin' — you're allers the kindest, best missis in old Louisianny!"

"Well, well — you've been a good girl, Minnie," said Julie,

patting the head of her faithful maid. "I ought to make you some amends, so I'll take you North and set you *free*. How should you like it, child? Suppose I should give you and Jupe free papers — and pay you wages? You know at the North we cannot keep servants like we do at home."

"Missis," and the slave girl stopped, and looked full in her mistress's face — "Missis, I've hearn tell o' them sneakin' abolitioners goin' about like roarin' lions, stealin' slaves from their masters and mistresses. Please, I'd rather not have anything to say to 'em, nohow. I'd foller ye to the world's end, Miss Julie, ye'r faithful servant, and the same with Jupe, I'm sure — but 'pears like it's too hard, Missis, to be hired out like poor white folks, when I've been born and bred in yer own family, Missis, and been a baby with ye. 'Deed, please, I hope you *won't* do it, Missis Julie!"

Something like a tear sparkled in the dark eyes which were apparently intent on surveying the bridal dress lying over the arm of a low sofa.

"Minnie, I shall not forget this," said Julie. "You shall come with me as you like — you shall never leave me. But now hasten! dress me quickly — for papa hates tardiness; besides, those must be the guests' carriages I hear in the court."

The slave girl obeyed. The queenly form of her mistress was soon arrayed in the rich satin robe covered with delicate Mechlin lace; the dainty feet were encased in snowy satin slippers; pearls clasped upon her rounded arms and white throat; and the heavily embroidered veil was fastened to the broad jetty braids by sprays of twining myrtle and orange blossoms. Then she stepped back a few paces, to contemplate admiringly the effect of her skilful handiwork. Just then came a slight tap at the door — and Revere, faultlessly attired, entered; while the train of bridesmaids and groomsman awaited them in the gallery

without. Julie sprang forward — a vivid crimson breaking over her cheek.

"Is my Julie ready?" and all a lover's devotion was infused into Revere's tone and glance. "We will go below."

"My gloves and kerchief, Minnie!" and she drew on the dainty white kids, and took the gossamer fabric so daintily embroidered that it seemed like a silken cobweb traced with the shadows of leaves and flowers.

"And the flowers? Surely my gift is not forgotten!" exclaimed Revere, presenting it gracefully.

With a smile the girl accepted the bouquet, placed her hand in his arm, but stopped suddenly with a little cry.

"What is it, love?"

"Only a thorn which cruelly pierced my finger. See! quite through my glove," and she held up one taper finger discolored by a little ruby drop. "Here, Minn, pluck it off—it is on this superb white rose. There should be no 'thorns amid the roses,' for me *to-day*, Augustus," and her eyes sought his with a bright confiding glance. "There, let us go now!" and again she laid her hand in his arm.

Why did Augustus Revere start and grow pale — and a sting, sharper than thorn, or dagger point, pierce his heart? Ah, there came between his vision and the dark, rich beauty of the southern girl on his arm, a sad white face framed in masses of golden hair, and haunting, reproachful eyes that almost drove him mad! Perhaps, in that hour, arose vain regrets: but it was too late. The haunting gaze of those eyes would follow him evermore — and so he went forth to utter love-vows to another.

Along the wide upper gallery — down the broad stair-case against whose carven balustrades silken robes rustled — traversing the long lower hall where were ranged the house servants in their holiday attire — the train passed, entering the large drawing-

room where the affable, dignified, white-haired old General Courtney, came forward to receive his daughter.

Then came the marriage service, followed by the thronging of guests, kisses and congratulations; the bridal cake and wine; the retiring of the bride to array herself in travelling robes; the clatter of horses hoofs and roll of carriage wheels in the courtyard; adieus to guests, relatives, and lastly to the old man on whose bosom Julie bowed her head and shed passionate tears; the kind farewell to the congregated servants; then the bride was handed from the verandah steps to the carriage, and the wedding *cortege* whirled away, leaving General Courtney leaning against a vine-wreathed pillar looking after them with dimmed eyes — half-a-dozen mulatto girls, foremost among whom was Minnie, standing in a group, discussing the wedding, the beauty of "young missis," and the elegance of the pearl set. "Massa Revere," had bestowed as a bridal present — dozens of heads, gray, grizzly and black, peeping from behind the pillars, and a score of little fat, shining picaninnies tumbling about in the courtyard.

Then when the last guest had departed, the great house seemed lonely; General Courtney shut himself up in his library; the long drawing-room was closed, with its scent of flowers and perfumes; Minnie, lonesome and dispirited, uttered a "Go along, Jupe!" which was almost contemptuous when he ventured to speak of their own wedding, and went up to her mistress's deserted room; Rosa and Della, whose department was in the laundry, lounged about the doors, chatting with the spruce, tall waiters — while, in the kitchen, old Dinah bustled about, "setting things to rights," one moment administering a sound cuff to the "nigger" who dared intrude on her domains, the next, soothing the effects of the blow with a generous slice of the wedding cake on which she had especially laid herself out — and then, when old Joe the coachman came back at night from the

steamboat landing whither he had taken the wedded pair in the family carriage, and, after carefully stabling the fat bays, came in and took his accustomed corner by the kitchen fire, they sat late at night, Dinah nodding her gray head with its gay turban, declaring that "young missis' weddin' beat any in ole Louisiana this many a year," while the field negroes danced to the banjo in the court-yard, and the young moon hung high like a silver shield, and the whole landscape—snowy magnolia tree and cotton field, sparkling lake and flowering earth—lay fair and still below.

And that night, too, while the fair moon climbed the skies, on the deck of a noble Southern steamer, the fair bride sat and wove her dreams of happiness; while Augustus Revere was silent at her side. What thoughts, in that hour, were busy at *his* heart-strings?

And in the quiet evening, too, in a far away New England farm-house, where the moonlight fell softly in through the small window-panes upon an old fashioned wooden cradle where an infant lay in its slumbers, Patience Wedgewood, pausing in her knitting, bent fondly over the babe and said to the man who sat beside the kitchen fire, "Blessed baby! Reuben, she will fill poor lame Katy's place in our hearts!" Then, snapping her needle afresh at the commencement of another "round," she sighed, "Dear, dear! I've been thinking about poor Mary Halpine to-night. I wonder where that wicked Revere is? Seems to me, the Lord'll never let such wickedness as this go unpunished!"

CHAPTER VII.

I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

TWELVE years passed away evenly and quietly at the Ridge. Save for the silver that settled on the gray locks peeping out from Patience's cap, and the wrinkles that seamed Reuben's dark brow, the recurrence of seed-time and harvest, and the transformation of little Peace—the child of their adoption—from a wee babe to a beautiful girl of twelve summers, there was little change at the farm-house.

In the pleasant summer-time the white roses and sweet briar bloomed as of old about the casement; the morning-glories trailed along the stone wall and garden fence; the garden was gay with stately holly-hocks, pink and white sweet peas, beds of sweet-Williams and scarlet verbena; tall, regal prince's-feather waved patronizingly over modest heart's-ease and mignonette blossoming below; ladies'-slipper coquettishly bloomed in saucy proximity to old-man's-beard; and love-in-a-snarl and old maid's pinks, somehow, were always found in the immediate vicinity of plain, grave-looking bachelors'-buttons,—who, by the way, invariably disdainfully refused to return the nodding and courtesying advances of the antique sisterhood.

Aunt Patience's garden was the pride of the Ridge; nor was it devoted to the ornamental alone. There were nice beds of summer-savory and spearmint, tufts of wormwood, saffron and camomile, sage, rue, and balm; not an herb in the long cate-

gory which country dames hold good "in sickness," or for "seasoning," was wanting there.

When winter came round, there was snow and sleet and cold without; drifts covered the garden-beds; the paths were blocked up; long icicles were pendent from the old brown eaves where the swallows built their nests in the spring ago; the windows were painted with frost-pictures. But though neither flowers nor greenery nor warmth held sway outside the old farm-house those long northern winters, joy and comfort, and one fair flower, brightened the hearth-stone within.

It was beautiful to see how little Peace had shrined herself in those hearts of erst so lonely. Day by day, as her little form developed into more perfect childish grace, and her golden curls lengthened on her white dimpled shoulders, she came to fill that void in their affections made years before, when poor lame Katy died; and even as she had become necessary to the happiness of the brother and sister, so throughout all Meadow Brook was she beloved and caressed.

Peace was much as her mother had been. Perhaps the child's features were not so regularly beautiful; but there was more of character in their stronger outline. Her eyes were not so soft and dreamy, but they had a rare sparkle of spirit and intelligence. Her long golden hair, and lithe, tall, slender form, was the counterpart of one now mouldering under the green sods of Wood Hill.

Possessing robust health, and an exuberant affectionate gaiety of manner which had never been tamed by sorrow or restraint, the girl was the light of the farm-house. There were the wildest of romps with old Bruno and innumerable pet kittens; depredatory excursions for turkeys' eggs in the long barn; and when Uncle Reuben led the old white horse to the wooden watering-trough, Peace dearly loved to stroke his face, and, fol-

lowing him back to the stall, hold him long wisps of hay to eat from her hand. Then there were such glorious rides on the hay-carts! such climbing of cherry trees! such gatherings of golden russets and cherry-cheeked Baldwins! and rambles in the autumn woods, to gather walnuts, listen to the woodpeckers' drumming call in the trees, or watch the cunning little squirrels peeping so shyly down upon her through the high branches, chattering playfully, and then, with a whisk of their bushy tails, darting away!

But the girl loved best to sit on Reuben's knee in the long winter evenings and wind her white arms about his neck with a kiss on his brown furrowed cheek; or listen to the nursery tales Aunt Patience recounted,—how little "Red Riding Hood" went forth on her mission of mercy to the poor old grandmother, and fell a victim to the ravening wolf,—how fated "Cock Robin" met an untimely end,—and the poor "Babes in the Woods" lay down from their wanderings and were covered with leaves by the dear little birds; or, bringing her books and slate, to read and cipher, while Uncle Reuben played school-master, and Patience, pausing in her spinning or knitting, listened in rapt admiration to the ready scholar.

But another member had been added to the family at the Ridge. Chip Weed—how shall I describe him? A tall, thin, long-armed, freckled, "tow-headed," quaint, half-witted boy, of some seven or eight years, who, when little Peace had numbered six summers, presented himself one fine morning in June at the open door of the farm-house, and, in the queerest shrill, squeaking, treble voice, and with a comical assumption of gravity on his sharp quizzical features, asked Reuben Wedgewood if he wanted "to hire!"

The farmer looked up from the breakfast table as that little shadow fell aslant the doorway, and that thin treble voice cut the

air, and beheld a head surmounted by an old torn hat peering wistfully in upon them.

A smile broke over his dark, sun-burned features, as the question was repeated; Patience lowered her fork which was conveying a choice bit of ham to her mouth; while little Peace looked wonderingly from behind her bright pewter mug at the *outré* figure which, clad in a curious mixture of man's and boy's apparel, — a long, swallow-tailed coat, minus half "the appendages," trousers of homespun stuff, and a ragged felt hat, — stood gazing alternately at the group about the breakfast table and the smoking viands upon it.

"What a funny thing! Is it a boy, or little old man?" she whispered.

But Patience did not reply; for she evidently was quite as much mystified as the child concerning their strange visitor, who, in answer to a "Come in" from Reuben, lifted his bare feet over the threshold, removed his hat, and with a queer bow and a sort of uncouth grace, thrust his little lean body into a chair close by.

"Well, sir, and so you want to let yourself, you say?" asked Reuben, striving to repress a laugh. But the boy did not answer, apparently not hearing the query, but sat staring at Peace with his little, dim, squinting, blue eyes.

"Come, come; speak up, sir," Where'd you come from?"

The nondescript started from his blank staring reverie. A cunning leer deepened about his mouth and twinkled in his little eyes.

"He, he!" he laughed, pointing with one long bird's-claw finger down the white, dusty highway, nodding his head the while; "He, he, he! Run away from over there, sir; been livin' there. Couldn't keep me any longer; *nobody stays*. I wouldn't, either! Made me work like a nigger — pick taters,

pull weeds, — *starve everybody* over there; guess they wont ever catch *me* again!" and with a gesture of determination, poking the crown of his hat vigorously, he settled back in his chair.

"A pauper, run away from Elton poor-house most likely," said Patience to her brother.

"So I reckon," was the reply. "They do work 'em like slaves over there, children and all, I've heard say, almost starving 'em into the bargain. Poor thing! give him some breakfast; he looks as though he hadn't eaten for a week."

Patience heaped a plate from the bountifully supplied table and placed a chair. "Come, sit up, and help yourself, Tom, Dick, Harry — what's your name?" asked Mr. Wedgewood, rising from the table.

"Chip — Chip Weed. — I likes it best the way Bill Green writes it on his slate at school, with a tail to it — *E-s-q.* — that's for 'Squire, you know, same as 'Squire Hardy spells his'n," — and the boy cast another cunning leer from his little, dim, blue eyes, as he seated himself at the table and began cramming his mouth with food.

"The Lord!" exclaimed Patience with uplifted hands; "he's a half-wit!" while Reuben smiled, and little Peace slid down from her high chair, and going up close where he sat, at the north window, whispered, gleefully, "Ain't he funny, Uncle Reuben? do see him eat; ain't he most starved?"

"I should think so, pet," was the reply, lifting her into his lap; then Mr. Wedgewood smilingly watched the boy who voraciously devoured his food, casting between mouthfuls earnest, almost wondering glances, at the little girl.

"Well, brother, *did you ever?*" exclaimed Patience, who had stood with hands folded over her wide checked apron during the progress of the meal, till the boy at length rose from the table,

leaving his plate clean and polished, so literally had he obeyed the injunction to 'help himself.' — "Did you ever, Reuben?"

A compassionate smile was her answer. "Well, Mr. Chip Weed, *Esq.*, if you've satisfied the 'inner man,' we'll proceed to business now," he said facetiously.

Chip, meantime, had taken his old seat by the door and lifted his torn hat from the floor, and now sat thumbing its well worn brim, staring straight at the little girl peeping shyly yet curiously from her hiding place on Reuben's shoulder. Taking no notice of the farmer's words, but removing his eyes for a moment to Patience's face, he squeaked out shrilly, pointing to Peace, "Is she *an angel*, ma'am?"

"Yes, *I think so*," replied Reuben fondly, while Peace laughed outright, then hid her face; but the spinster looked gravely through her glasses, and said, "No, that is our little girl—Peace. But what made you ask such a question, Chip?"

"Oh, becoss I seed a picter of one once, in old granny White's big Bible, over *there*," pointing his finger down the highway; "and she looks jest like it—so kind o' white and soft, like cotton-wool; but if she ain't an angel, she's putty nigh one, *I vum!*" and he gave the old hat an emphatic poke. "If you're a little gal, you're an uncommon nice one, *any how!*" And he nodded patronizingly towards Peace, and again uttered that shrill, chuckling laugh, unlike anything human the dwellers of the farm-house had ever heard before.

"Well, well, let us talk about *business!*" said Reuben. "What can you do to make yourself useful?"

"Hey?" said the boy, in his highest key, as if not comprehending the query.

"What can you *do?*" repeated Mr. Wedgewood.

"*Work?*—hey?"—and Chip brightened up, chattering volubly and shrilly—"Why, I cuts wood, fetches water, feeds the pigs,

drives the cows, and does lots of everything. Done heaps, over there. 'Twas 'Chip, come here!' and 'Run, you lazy dog!' and 'Scoot, you nigger!'"—every sentence uttered with a grimace and vigorous indentation of the felt hat-crown.—"And so, at last, I ups and runs away;—couldn't stand so much, ye see!"

"Oh, uncle, how he bends that old hat up! See what funny fingers! just like the old speckled hen's feet—so long and crooked!" broke in Peace.

"Then you would like to come and live here, and do chores, Chip? Hey, pet," pinching her cheeks, "would you *let* him?"

"O yes, *do!* he's *so* funny!" exclaimed the delighted child; "he's *so* funny! and I guess he's clever, and wont strike old Cherry, and 'hurrup' her along, as Johnny Sanders does, when she stops just to bite a mouthful of grass. Are you *real good* to cows?" she asked, sliding down from Reuben's arms and going up to the boy.

"Wall, yes—I *guess so*," replied Chip, gazing with admiring reverence at the little girl's pink cheeks and long curls; "you see, if cows only know *what's what*, and don't hook, or run off, and bother me—"

"Oh, but *Cherry* is the best mooly cow you ever saw!" broke in Peace. "She'll let me touch her face, or horns, with my hand; and when Aunty milks, she stands just as still as a mice—and don't kick a mite!"

"Well, pet, that'll do for now; I guess we'll keep him. Chip, you can stay, I reckon."

Patience now came forward. "For gracious' sake, what *are* you doing, brother Reuben? What *are* we to do with a *natural* under our ruff? Why, he'll be more plague 'n profit!"

"Jest what they said over there, ma'am!" briskly ejaculated

the boy, looking up into her face with such a comical expression of cunning and good-humor that the spinster was almost won over, spite of herself. "That's jest what *they* said every day!" and he nodded between each word.

"No, no, sister, let us keep him. I've taken quite a fancy to the lad. He seems willing and handy, and you need somebody to do the chores."

"But for mercy's sake, get somebody that'll be of some airthly *use*; don't, Reuben, bring a half-wit into the house, — and such a looking object, too!" and she pursed up her lips, and began clearing up the breakfast things in silence.

"O, I'll risk *that*, Patience! To be sure, he don't look remarkably handsome; but when we get him out of his rags and into a good, strong, clean suit, he'll look like another boy. Besides —"

"Ma'am," broke in the boy, eyeing Patience with a grin, "'Handsome *is* that handsome *does*,' so old granny White says;" and he uttered his short, shrill laugh. "Don't look very nice *now*, but can slick up, you know. This ain't my Sunday-hat — got a new straw one over there — left it, though," — and he twisted the ragged brim quite out of an apology for shape.

Patience laughed now — how could she help it? and Reuben continued —

"Besides, as I was going to say, he amuses Peace; so I guess we'd better conclude to keep him, sister. He's been neglected and ill-treated — that's evident enough. You'll find him useful about the house, I'll warrant. Let him stay, and I'll ride over to Elton town-farm to-morrow, and if he belongs there get him bound out to me. They're overrun with paupers, and'll be glad to get one off their hands, I reckon. But come, my lad," taking up his hat, "come out doors; I want to see how

smart you are!" and with a kiss on Peace's cheek and a cheerful "good-morning, sister," he went out, followed by the boy.

So it happened that the poor, quaint, half-witted, friendless orphan boy, Chip Weed, was "bound out" to Reuben Wedgewood, and thenceforth became a fixture at the Ridge.

CHAPTER VIII.

How she moved

In her young beauty round him, with a tone
Which to his old ear seemed that voice beloved, —
The low, sweet accents of his long-lost one.

WHITTIER.

IN six years Chip had become right-hand man at the Ridge. Grown taller, less awkward, but still quaint and original in his sayings and doings, — always chattering volubly in his piping voice in doors and out, to Aunt Patience, Peace, Mr. Wedgewood, the hired help, and the neighbors, he had become well-known as a harmless, droll, “queer genius,” — such an eccentricity as almost every country neighborhood possesses within its limits. At the Ridge farm he was thoroughly domesticated; and if ever master’s interests were those of the servant, then were Reuben’s the boy’s, — for he performed every duty with an alacrity that showed “his will was to do it.”

To be sure, Chip had his troubles and trials. Never was there happiness unalloyed, career ever victorious. Napoleon had his Waterloo, Cæsar his Rubicon, Persia her Marathon, Sparta her Thermopylæ, — and Chip his defeats. Neither by fire or sword, famine or pestilence, were these repulses effected; still they came.

To use his own phrase, he was “pestered to death” half the time. Sometimes those villanous thieves, the crows, hovered over the corn-fields and laid long ranks of tender blades in ruins; and then Chip stormed, and vowed vengeance, and made up hideous “scare-crows,” and hung pieces of shining tin across

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the fields; Peace, meantime, suggesting slyly, that for frightening purposes no other image was needed than the figure of the tall uncouth boy himself, which proposal, though listened to without a dissenting voice on his part, somehow was never adopted; sometimes the old wether, encountering him in the “sheep pasture,” waged a war which generally ended in the rodt of the assaulted party and a retreat over fence or stone wall; then, often, the “black cow” — quite a different quadruped so far as tractability was involved, — from Peace’s favorite “Cherry,” — had a perverse talent of testing the comparative merits of ‘horns *versus* fences,’ or, in other words, proved “breachy,” on which occasions Chip’s long limbs were put in requisition to scour the pastures and bring the truant home; and yet the lad lost his temper in no instance on record save one, when, after a longer trip than usual, he returned with the refractory animal “hobbled” — and upon “putting up the bars” of the yard where he had fastened her, he was heard to give utterance to something very like a profane expletive, with an accompanying wish that “the plaguy critter was dead, and in heaven!”

“Why, Chip,” exclaimed Peace who stood in the shed door, “You’re *real wicked!* You *swore*, and I’ll tell Uncle Reuben. Besides, cows don’t go to heaven when they die, *they* hav’nt got souls.”

“Well, darn it — *that* ain’t swearing, anyhow,” replied the boy in triumph. “I don’t care! The plaguy critter pesters me most to death. And I don’t believe I swore, either; I only said strong talk to her. You see, Miss Peace, t’aint quite so easy hunting up runaway cows; and when I *do* catch her, I allers talks up smart to her, and calkalates she’ll *remember* it next time.”

“But *does* she, Chip?” asked Peace with a laugh.

“Lord, no!” he replied, sitting down on the old chopping-block in the yard, and poking his bare feet among the chips.

"She's jest the *wust* beast in town. T'dont do an atom o' good; jaw her all you can. She's got the poorest remembrance I ever seed. Now you jest whip a dog, and he'll behave like a gentleman; but old Smut, the uglier *you* be, *she* follers suit. She ups and runs away agin. 'Tain't no use, anyway!"

Then there were other troubles. Often the old gobbler took the inflammatory idea into his head, that the sanguinary hue of Chip's red flannel shirt was ominous of evil to the queen of his harem who went forth with stately steps at the head of her brood, and then followed sundry shrill cries and flapping of wings, and "fell swoops" on the boy's devoted head; but from such encounters he usually came off victorious.

But not to out-of-door-dom was Chip's orbit confined. Within the domestic sphere he rendered himself useful. Indeed, it was quite wonderful how many pails of water were needed from the old well; how the piles of hickory and maple for firing were kept constantly replenished in the wood-shed; and what a constant call for "Chip!" "Chip!" fell from Patience's lips. Nor, while the lad was rendering himself so useful to others, had he neglected himself. In his way, he was getting to be something of a scholar; for the winter months found him at the district school, where, besides proving an invaluable treasure for the boys in the shape of a good-humored target for all their tricks and practical jokes, he had managed to read through the "Second Book," spell promptly and shrilly above half-a-dozen bigger boys; and scrawl a few uncouth hieroglyphics, designated as 'writing,' in his copy book which was his pride as it was the especial delight of the whole school. And on long winter evenings, when Peace brought forth her books and sat at the round table by the kitchen fire, Chip came also with his spelling book, or slate on which he did sums in Simple Addition, or dashed off rapidly and with immense capital letters, his name, with the af-

fixed abbreviation to which he still clung with affectionate tenacity — "Chip Weed, *Esq.*"

In the household, he also manifested a decided talent for what is now denominated the "Partingtonian" style of conversation; only that, in those days, our popular myth, the dear old Dame, with her "doings and sayings," had not flourished, consequently her fame could not have reached the precincts of Meadow Brook. Never a high-sounding, euphonious word was uttered in his presence, but, by some inserted, perverted, or newly-coined syllable, Chip endeavored to improve on the original. In his insatiate desire to exercise his talent for cookery, this propensity most prevailed. Did Patience concoct pies or puddings, he knew all the required "ingrediences;" did she mix sour milk biscuit, he ran for the saleratus to "resolve;" did she brew ginger beer, he gave his opinion of the exact quantity of "emptyings" requisite for the beverage to "efferment;" and so his ludicrous blunders furnished ample scope for the risibilities of the household.

Peace was "an angel" still in the boy's estimation; a being of a superior order, to be worshipped afar off; and it was quite touching oft-times to witness the simple, but beautiful proofs of his devotion. Did a snow-storm whirl over the bold hills that environed Meadow Brook, next day when the ways were trodden, Chip brought out his sled with strong white ash "stouters," and folding a soft buffalo skin for a cushion seated Peace thereon like a little queen clad in her royal red cloak and hood bordered with swans' down, then drew her carefully and swiftly to the old red school-house on the hill; did the mill-pond freeze over hard and glassy, he gave her such nice slides; in spring he culled her bouquets of wild-flowers fantastically arranged, picked checkerberries where they grew large and red at the bottom of Sweet Fern Hill, and brought the hang-bird's long, purse-like

nest, with such cunning little mottled eggs in them; in summer he culled fruit and berries from the pastures, waded through brooks to get the shining silver leaf and splendid crimson cardinal flowers from opposite banks, and when he went with Reuben in the large ox-team to the distant sea-shore to bring loads of long, wet, brown sea-weed for farm "dressing," gathered shells and sand rattles, and culled the little oval berries from the matted weeds to string into bracelets for her dimpled arms; and in autumn he roved the woods for nuts, entrapped some unwary red squirrel, or tamed the wild rabbit for her pet. So, in a hundred ways, did the quaint half-witted boy show his devotion to the beautiful child.

But Peace was getting to be a tall girl now. Twelve summers had deepened the gold of her hair to a pale burnished brown, and added a darker hue to her violet eyes. She was no longer the child, content with spending hours at romps with old Bruno; sliding over the ice, holding Chip's hand; sitting on Reuben's knee, or, hanging about Patience's neck listening to nursery tales. Not that she was less affectionate than of old; on the contrary she grew more tender and thoughtful for her dear protectors; and Patience had a sort of pride in watching her quiet, graceful movements, and the farmer would stop in reading his paper to stroke her curly head, or ask a kiss from the "little woman" who had brought him his glasses and slippers, and pushed his arm-chair up to the fire-place. And now, often of evenings, she sat over her books, and the school-master "dropped in" to show her a little about some hard lesson—for Peace was the pride of the district school; while Patience paused in her knitting to peer through her glasses at the books whose lore Peace acquired so rapidly, wondering that "one small head could carry all *she* knew."

Ah, the district school! what memories rise before us now of

those days when we, too, turned our childish feet thither! of the old school-house, its wooden desks whittled by the boys' jack-knives; the tall desk where "the master" sat behind a pile of copy books with a pen over his ear; the blackboard and maps on the white-washed walls; the names carved on the window-casings; the water-pail on the bench in the corner; the windows, where on long summer afternoons the flies buzzed and bumped their heads, and the dust-mottled bars of sunlight lengthened in over the slant benches; the sandy play-ground before the door, where the little girls hunted "for pins" at recess, or played "Puss, puss in the corner;" the shady nook under the elm in the corner of the yard, where the elder ones brought out their books to study, loath for the rap which called them in.

And the scholars, too! There were half-a-dozen tall boys—taller than the master, even—who came after 'planting,' and 'haying,' and in the winter-time, doing sums in Cube and Square Root in Adams's Arithmetic, and, that finished, diving into the mysteries of Surveying, and Day's Algebra; filling the blackboards with equations where 'X' equalling the unknown power, and 'plus' and 'minus' mingled together in (to us) most inextricable confusion; a class of great girls, who sat on the "back seat," and wore their hair "done up," and "rosettes," and wrote compositions and studied Chemistry, rattling off with glib tongues formidable phrases about 'oxygen' and 'nitrogen' and 'carbonic acid gas,' and flirted with the above mentioned tall boys, or "the master," even, if he were some young, handsome college student, at noons, by the wayside, at evening sleigh-rides or singing-schools.

Then occurred the Annual "Exhibition," when we trimmed the old school-house with plaited oak leaves and winter-green; and "the Committee," with a host of visitors, parents, friends and neighbors, honored us with their presence while the stereo-

typed performances went on — recitations, dialogues, and declamations — in one of which latter exercises, one little bright, smart lame fellow “brought down the house” by purposely rendering a hackneyed quotation:

“You’d scarce expect me, *on one leg*,
To speak in public on the stage,” etc.

Such long morning walks by grassy shady road sides, conning our lessons as we sauntered along! such satchels, heavily laden with apples and doughnuts for dinner! such “noonings” in the deserted school-house, or under the great oak in the forest behind, where the waters of the “Boiling Spring” bubbled up clear and sweet from the bank beneath, and the shining minnows darted through the brook, and the foliage-shadows quivered! Oh those dear old scenes, those dear old days, they can never come to us again — for, alas, we can “never be twice a child!”

But back from our digression.

While little Peace sat at her studies, her golden curls sweeping the open book pages, Reuben Wedgewood, apparently poring over the advertisements or the ‘weekly market’ in his paper, or dozing in his arm-chair with half-shut eyes, was thinking of days in the long gone past when that fair girl’s mother had been all the world to him. Since the time when the child has been added to the farm-house, there has been a great change in him. He did not go about, moody, or sad, as formerly; but a quiet he had not known in the days succeeding his great trial had come to him. But he spoke little of the dead. His strong, true, but delicate heart did not permit him to drag forth his sorrow from its hiding-place and handle it over; but he went often, and kept long vigils beside a grave on Wood Hill, by night, when the dark pines and firs shivered in the sobbing winds, or the summer moonlight, sifting through their branches, shadowed the sod.

Had this man been born under more fostering circumstances, and with the advantages of an education and culture, he might have been what Nature certainly intended him for, what God gave him those fine feelings and impulses of a tender heart for — *a poet*; as it was, he was but a plain, home-spun farmer.

First a shy, bashful youth, — then, in his early manhood, devoting his energies to the all-absorbing sacred task of redeeming the homestead of his fathers, — so years had passed; and when, later, he began to think of another life, sweetened by dearer domestic ties, then came that blow which almost seared his heart.

And now, with the frosts of over fifty winters in his hair, what was he? A prematurely old, weary man, who quietly and patiently went about his daily toils, — whose life was only brightened by one sunbeam, little Peace, — whose saddest, yet happiest moments, were passed beside a grave.

Is Uncle Reuben alone with his “dead Past?”

Walks not among us to day many another, whose heart is a tomb, where the dead are kept in an inner cell over whose shut door is written “Precious?” a broken vase, where “the scent of the roses will cling round it still?” an unstrung lute, whose riven cords can never be gathered up save by pale fingers reaching downward from the Invisible Land? — a moaning sea, upon whose lone shore waves break with one sad burthen — “*It might have been?*”

CHAPTER IX.

"The good die first;
But they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket."

At last there came a sad day at the Ridge. Aunt Patience had a fall upon the ice in the previous winter, of which she never recovered; and, when the next autumn came, she grew much worse. Herbs, potions, and mixtures were of no avail, and so another winter dragged hopelessly by; and when early spring came round with soft airs, wasted by a slow, lingering fever she lay pale, helpless, and very weak upon her bed; and as the warmer days came, they brought no strength for the sufferer, but she grew paler and weaker instead; and one afternoon, when the doctor had been with her longer than usual, and gone away with a grave shake of his gray head, and Reuben came out from his sister's bedroom with tears in his eyes, Patience asked in a faint voice for Peace.

"I want to talk with you, dear," she said slowly, taking the girl's little soft, warm hand between her own withered chilly ones. "I've been telling Reuben how hard it'll be to leave *him*; but, my poor girl, who'll look after *you* when old Aunt Patience is gone? But there! don't cry, dear!" — for Peace, to whom the probability of death had never before presented itself, had buried her face in the pillow, sobbing as though her heart would break, — "don't take on so, darlin'! — we've all got to go sooner or later; and if we're only ready, it don't matter much when. I hope the Lord'll have mercy on me! I've tried to do His will as well as a poor human creeter can; I've done my

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best to be faithful to Reuben and you, Peace; but we're all poor short-sighted creeters, and the best of us come short. *Don't* take on so, dear! You must be brave, and cheer up Reuben when I'm — gone;" and she spoke huskily. "Reuben, come in!" — for the faithful brother, unwilling to leave her, hovered near the bedroom door, — "come here, and try to comfort this poor, dear child!"

Reuben obeyed; took Peace in his arms, and sat down by the bedside. The pale woman lay quiet for a little time. At length, when Peace was calmer, she spoke.

"Peace, I've got something to say to you, and p'raps I'd best now. Go, dear, and bring me my bead bag from the upper drawer: you'll find the key in a wine-glass in the cupboard. Reuben, fix the pillows a little." And she sat up in bed, very pale.

The work-bag was brought, and her fingers trembled in loosening the strings.

"Child, it's all yours: I've been savin' it up for you," she said, as she took out a roll of bank-bills, and a little bag of coin fell out on the coverlet. "I thought all along, while I've been savin' this —"

"O, Aunt Patience! I don't want *anything*, if you've got to die and leave me!" sobbed the child, hiding her face on Reuben's shoulder.

The sick woman sighed, and fondly passed her shrivelled hand over the weeper's curls.

"Don't, don't, darlin'!" she said faintly. "I must talk with you now. Everybody's got to die. The longest life is but a span, the Bible says; and it's true. It don't seem but a little while since I was young as you: I warn't but five year older, when my mother died. Sixty years don't seem so very long, after all; but yet I've lived longer than a good many do — sixty-

two years! But Peace, what I wanted to tell you is this: After I'm gone, it'll be lonesome for you; and if Reuben gets somebody to take care o' things, — a housekeeper, to fill my place," — and here the old lady's voice broke down, — "if it should happen so, by and by maybe, he'll be willin' to part with you a little while; and then you can go away to school."

"But I don't want to go to school! I *wont* leave Uncle Reuben!" and Peace sobbed afresh. "I never'll go away and leave him!"

"Hush, darlin'! You needn't go away unless Reuben's willing, and you want to; but you wont always be a little girl, and, when you grow up, I want you to know more'n poor old Aunt Patience ever did. People thought more o' work than books when I was young; but I want you to have a good eddication. Sometime, maybe, you'll get tired o' stayin' at home; and then, if you have book larnin', you can go away and keep school, or do something else. Young folks likes to be independent, and airn something for themselves, even if there's no need on't; and so, thinks I long ago, even though we shall always treat you as our own child, and some day the property'll go to you, yet p'raps you'd see it in the same light. So you see that's what I saved up this for. Farmin' folks don't often have ready money by 'em; but when we got the place paid up for, — Reuben and I — I kept on spinnin' and weavin' 'cause I got in the way on't, and laid by my airnin's, for I'd no use for 'em myself. Poor little lame Katy! she was dead; and I don't know as I should a had heart to work, or anythin', but, somehow, it seemed to me then that the Lord would fill her place. And He did: He sent you; and then I felt as if I'd got somebody to live and work for. And I believe it was the best way, too. The Lord puts everybody on the airth to be busy. — some one thing, and some another; some to get married, and have happy families grow up

about 'em, and some to live lonely, desolate lives," — and in that moment the pale old lady thought of the desolation of her own loveless years, — "but, after all, His way is best. Maybe, if I'd had a house and home and chil'len of my own, I should a forgot my duty to you, brother, and to poor lame Katy. I've tried hard to be a good sister to you, and p'raps I haven't wholly failed — have I, Reuben? The best fall short sometimes. I know you'll miss me; and you wont forget me!" she added with glistening eyes. "But there! I wont dwell on that. I want to talk about Peace. By and by she'll get beyond the district school; and then she'd better go over to Northfield to the Seminary. That's what I saved this for. Here, Reuben, take it, and lay it away for that. There's jest three hundred dollars, — all airned with my own hands, at the wheel and the loom, and in the dairy; and it must eddicate Peace. I hope you'll be a good child to Reuben, dear! You'll be all he has to comfort him; you always was a comfort; and then you're the picture of your mother! — poor Mary!" — but here she suddenly checked herself.

Those two words, "Your mother," and the connection in which Aunt Patience had spoken them, thrilled Peace's heart, fired the train of imagination, and a new thought flashed like lightning on her brain. The story of her birth, so far as the fact that her mother, dying, had bequeathed her to her kind protectors' care, had never been withheld from her; for Patience and Reuben had wisely decided not to bring her up in entire ignorance of it; but there were passages in Mary Halpine's life which had never been imparted to her child. Yet many a time had she wondered why, when looking upon the miniature and asking if her mother were indeed beautiful as the face pictured there, Uncle Reuben's eyes suddenly filled with tears, or, when she spoke of her father, Aunt Patience maintained silence or skilfully evaded

direct replies. But now, in those spoken words from the sick woman's lips, and glancing up suddenly to see a quick, sharp pang shiver Reuben's frame, that lightning flash of intelligence irradiated the obscurity. She crept close to his side, wound her arms about his neck, and whispered, "My mother! Did she do anything? What was she to you, Uncle Reuben?"

The man's arms tightened about the girl, and he bowed his head on her sunny curls. In a choking voice, he whispered, "Not much, Peace; only I loved her more than you can think, and she promised — she promised" — but he could not go on.

With the quick instinct of dawning womanhood, Peace understood it all. "And did she do wrong? did she *forget* you?" she asked.

"She left me for another. It was one week, only, before she was to have been my wife. He who made her forget her promises was your father."

"Uncle Reuben, I know now why you never have spoken to me of *him*! Was he a good man, or was he wicked? Tell me! I *will* know!" and Peace grasped his hands beseechingly.

"Peace," said Reuben, slowly, "because he was your father, I have never spoken ill of him; but I am afraid he was an evil man. But let us not talk of it now, my child."

"But I *must*! dear, good uncle, let me, please! You don't know how I've thought about it, and wanted to ask you, but never dared. But tell me all now. Was he wicked and cruel to my mother? And why did she come here to die?"

With flushed cheek Peace threw back the curls from her tear-stained face, and stood before him, awaiting an answer. Reuben drew her head caressingly to his breast.

"My child, I never meant you should know this. It was not your mother's fault, I suppose, if she loved another better than me. Had she *asked* me, I would have freed her; but the stroke

was sudden, and hard to bear. And then, when she came back to die alone —"

"But where was my father *then*? You do not tell me! Was he *dead*? He *didn't* let her come back to die *all alone*, uncle?" and Peace burst into tears, and sank into Reuben's arms.

"Peace, he was not dead. He sent your mother away from him. He was very wicked."

"And *now*?" The girl stood upright, her young face very pale. "He is dead *now*?"

"I do not know; we never heard so," replied Reuben.

"Oh, I wish you had said he was dead!" sobbed Peace, passionately. "I do! I do! I'd rather you'd said *that*! I always *thought that*! I didn't know my father had forgotten me all my life — thirteen years! Uncle Reuben, wont he come some day here? Do you think he *meant* my beautiful mother to come here and die? *Wont* he come after me?"

"No, no, my child," replied Reuben Wedgewood, for he knew what that pure, innocent child could not know, — how the gay, dissolute man of the world never seeks again the flowers his foot has crushed in his pathway, — "I fear not, Peace. Perhaps he did not know whither Mary came. I don't think he did. She had wandered far before she sought us."

"Then, if he will not come to me, I must go to *him*!"

There was the wildest excitement in the young girl's manner. Her lips and cheeks blazed with crimson; her eyes looked darkly brilliant; her feet had gained the door.

Reuben stretched forth his arms. "Peace, Peace, where are you going? Where would you find this man? For thirteen years you have been our child, and he has never come to claim you. If living, he will never come; if dead, he cannot. Come back! Do you want to leave us? Will you go away and leave Patience now?"

Peace burst into tears — a wild, passionate fit of weeping. She went back and kissed Reuben; then crept upon the bed and laid her flushed cheek softly against the pale, withered one on the pillow.

"Forgive me, please, Aunt Patience. I wouldn't go away from you for worlds and worlds. But it does seem so hard to think that my own father may be somewhere, — perhaps not very far off, — and he will not come to see his child! Oh, if he *would* come, I know he would love me, and let me make him good! I would ask him all, all about my beautiful mother. Aunt, how old was my mother when she died?"

"Twenty-three," whispered Patience.

"Ten years older than I. It was not so very old, was it, aunty?"

"No! young enough! — too young to die so! But it was God's will, darlin'! There! don't talk any more now: you will get sick. P'raps you'd better go out: I guess I could sleep a little."

Peace laid her arm over Aunt Patience's neck a moment, kissed her, then rose.

"I did not mean to worry you, aunty; I am sorry." Then, drawing the curtain closer over the west window, smoothing the pillows and nicely adjusting the coverlet, she stood a moment at the bedside.

"That's a dear! There! let me kiss you once. Now go out with Reuben into the kitchen. Leave the door ajar: I'll speak when I wake up. You've got the money, Reuben?"

"Yes, Patience."

"Well, put it by for Peace. Go now, brother: I shall go to sleep."

Mr. Wedgewood and Peace went out from the darkened room together, — the one to sit on the threshold of the open door in

the soft falling twilight, endeavoring to nerve his saddened heart for the trial he knew was fast approaching — the separation from his faithful sister; and the other, in her little chamber, to look with tearful eyes on the little golden locket whence smiled into her own her mother's eyes, — and, alas that their gaze had been the reflex of a treacherous heart — her father's!

And so two hours went by; — the sun went down behind the western hills, clouds of gold, crimson and amber skirting his path; the skies darkened with thick twilight shadows; then the new moon hung her silver crescent aloft over the forests, and one bright star came out to keep watch above the graves on Wood Hill whither Reuben's eye turned oft in the gloaming. And then was heard Chip's cheerful chirrup and whistle as he came late from the pasture with the cows; and old Hannah Ward, Reuben's cousin and nearest relative who had been hired at the farm-house during Patience's illness, came up from the milking with foaming pails and went through the long kitchen with heavy steps, then carried the milk pans down into the cellar dairy; Chip lounged about the yard, now sitting a few moments perched on the topmost rail of the barnyard fence, or stroking the head of the black cow, with whom, latterly, he had been on the best terms, inasmuch as she seemed to have forgotten her breachy propensities, and who now stood quietly chewing her cud and rubbing her neck against the bars; by and by a whip-poor-will struck up his plaintive lonely cry in the grove behind the house, then the hoarse croaking of frogs came up from the marshes; a toad hopped out from among the rose-bushes by the door and sat down, blinking its eyes with a lazy and very much-at-home air, close to Reuben's foot on the flat door-step; then the old gray cat crept along with a purr, quite unmindful of Bruno who lay with shaggy head between his forepaws across the threshold; the scent of sweet peas, southern wood, and mint, came from the

garden; and a low, deep, drowsy murmur, like the voice of the distant sea, mingled with the sighing breath of the tall poplars above the roof, swaying Reuben's thoughts to a dreamy repose.

And later, when the night had fairly settled down, the moon stood larger and higher above the trees, and the star over Wood Hill was not alone in its tender vigil; when no sound was heard within the farm-house but the steady tick, tick, of the old clock, and the tramp, tramp, of Hannah Ward's thick shoes as she went to and fro about her work — then Reuben arose and went in, meeting little Peace just coming from the bedroom.

"How long Aunt Patience sleeps!" she said, following him in again, and looping aside the curtain from the window.

A slant ray of moonlight fell on one hand which lay, white and listless, down the bedside. Reuben lifted it: it was cold as ice! — Then another and brighter ray fell athwart her face — a face, so white, so rigid in its repose, that the brother knew, ere he bent his lips to the sleeper's icy breathless ones, that One had been there before him — chilling that wrinkled forehead, sealing those aged eyes, sharpening every pale feature with his stern finger — even Azrael, the angel of Death!

Yes, Patience Wedgewood was dead! Silently and sweetly, as an infant lapses into slumber, had she yielded her breath; and though every other feature wore the rigid impress of the death-seal, yet about her lips — even while that lonely saddened man stood mute beside her — seemed to grow a soft, tender, youthful smile — that faint, undefinable, but beautiful smile which is often seen hovering on the faces of the dead! And then Reuben knew that the angel who led forth her spirit from its earth-worn tenement, in passing the gates of the Celestial City, had held to her lips the cup of Eternal Youth.

Thank God, there are no wrinkled brows, gray hairs, dimmed eyes, palsied feet, broken vows, desolate hearts, *in heaven!*

CHAPTER X.

Childe Harold was he hight: — but whence his name
And lineage long, it suits me not to say.

BYRON.

"JASPER, two gentlemen down in the parlor to see you; met 'em coming up the walk," said Philip Reade, entering his room at "Talbot Hall" one fine summer afternoon where his chum sat with his feet on the table and chair tipped back against the wall, deep in the mysteries of Sophocles' Greek Grammar.

The student addressed — a handsome, manly looking lad of some sixteen years — tossed down his book, sprang to his feet, flung his dressing-gown upon the bed and drew on a neat fitting sack of blue cassimere, took a hasty survey of his person in the glass — smoothing down his Byronic collar and running his fingers through the thick brown curls clustering over his damp white forehead, then left the room.

"Wonder who the dickens they are?" he murmured, skipping down the staircase.

Upon entering the boarding-house parlor, he saw the profile face of a handsome middle-aged stranger standing at a distant window apparently surveying the grounds without; and a tall, dark-eyed man, rising from a seat near the door, advanced with a cheerful "How are you, Jasper?" and outstretched hands.

The boy's face brightened with pleasure and recognition. "Aha, Mr. Golding, my guardian! what good fortune brings you here? When did you leave New York, sir?"

Then while he wrung the proffered hand, his eye glanced to the stranger who had started suddenly at the first sound of the youth's voice, and, as by some impulse he could not restrain, taken a sudden step toward him, then stopped short.

"Ah, that's right, Revere! Come here! This is the boy of whom you've heard me speak so often. A fine lad, isn't he, Jasper?" and turning to the youth, a strange cynical smile passed unobserved over Hugh Golding's features. "Jasper, I have told this gentleman so much concerning you that his interest is almost fatherly. There, give your hand to him. Mr. Revere, my adopted son, Jasper Golding!"

The hand that met the youth's trembled, and a visible flush went over Mr. Revere's cheek; but he uttered a few common place words of greeting, then retired to the window again; though from time to time Jasper caught the earnest glance of his eyes; glances which somehow seemed strangely familiar to him. For a moment he tried to remember where he had met them before. Confused thoughts whirled through his brain, but he could not disentangle them; and starting from his reverie, he repeated his question to his guardian.

"When did you leave New York, sir?"

"Three days ago, my friend and I. Business detained us in Boston; and I proposed running down to your quiet classical town and giving you a surprise. But I didn't expect to find such a tall manly fellow. When I placed you here on going abroad, you were a mere boy; let's see—three years ago! They've changed you wonderfully: three more will make a man of you, if you keep on growing at this rate. Revere," turning suddenly to the man at the window with a look of intelligence.

"You've got a son about this young gentleman's age! Resembles him somewhat, don't he?"

Mr. Revere's face paled, and an almost imploring look gleamed from his eyes. Then he answered in a firm low voice, "Yes Golding, my son is like him—very like him!"

Golding turned back carelessly and continued his conversation with Jasper, who said in reply to Mr. Revere's remark, "Here, they take me to be older than sixteen,"—and indeed, with his tall, well-knitted form, open manly face, expansive forehead where intellect had placed its seal, and frank manliness of deportment, the youth seemed full two years older.

"Well, and what's your next move, Jasper? About through here, aren't you? I think your last letter came to me in Paris; said your course was finished this year?"

"Yes sir, this term closes it. I can remain another year and enter College Sophomore, or leave now with the Senior Class. I think I'd *rather* go with the class, though: a dozen of the boys will enter Freshys. Hadn't I better go up to Harvard when the term's up; that's in six weeks more; and get admitted? I'm ambitious to get on, sir!"

"Yes, certainly! if you think you'll pass examination, go by all means; for you must be tired of this moping country town. Devilish dull—ain't it? You'll see *life* at Cambridge,—plenty of city amusements close by, to drive away the blues. Hang it! I don't believe in this monastic seclusion. You're old enough now to begin to see the world, my boy! Isn't that *your* opinion, Revere?" carelessly appealing to his companion.

"Certainly; you know I *always* coincide with you," replied Revere with a short nervous laugh. "Let the lad see life, by all means. College life, in the tempting vicinity of a city, is a good school for youth."

Jasper looked at the speaker, doubting whether the latter words were uttered in good faith or with a covert sneer; but he read nothing on his impassive face.

"Let me see your term bills," said Golding. "I have received none for the last year."

"They were not forwarded. I will get them in a moment," and leaving the parlor, Jasper lightly ran up to his room.

"Good!" he cried to his chum. "Mr. Golding—that's my guardian, down stairs—has consented. I shall go to Cambridge with the rest of the boys. Wants to see my term bills. Where the deuce *are* the credentials? Botheration! a fellow never can find anything when he's in a hurry!" and he rummaged in the depths of a trunk. "Ah, I have 'em!" and taking them from the leaves of a portfolio, he sprang to his feet.

"Here, stop a moment, Jasp! Put in a word, will you, about going home with me this vacation? We'll have such capital times! Louis Howland—he's my cousin, and a Soph. at Harvard—lives in New York—he's coming to spend a month with brother Fred. Cousin Orah, too, she's a splendid girl, I tell you, Jasp! full of fun and spirit—she'll be out of boarding-school then—and always spends her summer vacations at our farm. Such gunning, riding, fishing, picnics! Don't forget it, Jasper! But look here! which of those gentlemen *is* your guardian? The shorter one, I take it—he's your uncle, perhaps? you look like him—I noticed that, when he came up the walk. You've got his hair and eyes!"

"No, Phil.," replied Jasper pausing with his hand on the door knob. "You're mistaken. I hav'n't a relative in the world that I know of. This gentleman was a stranger to me until to-day, when he accompanied by guardian here. Mr. Golding is the other one—black eyes and hair—foreign looking—just returned from Europe. He adopted me in my infancy, taking me from the deck of a burning steamer where my parents were both lost. But to tell the truth it struck me at first, that, somewhere, I'd seen this Mr. Revere."

"Mr. Revere?" echoed Philip Reade. "From New York city?"

"Yes."

"I've seen him there then,—when I was at Uncle Howland's. He's of the firm of 'Revere, Stone and Co., Importers,'—one of the wealthiest merchants of New York. I knew his face was familiar—still, I think you look like him. Perhaps you've seen him in New York, too?"

"No, I never was there," replied Jasper. "Mr. Golding's business takes him to other cities a great deal, and I was brought up at a select boys' school in Connecticut before I came here, always boarding in the tutor's family. Mr. Golding came to see me there every year—till I was placed here, and he went to Europe. It must have been a fancy, that I'd seen Mr. Revere before to-day. But I must go down."

Meantime, a little episode had passed between the two gentlemen in the parlor.

"Good God, Golding!" exclaimed Augustus Revere rapidly and passionately, pacing the floor excitedly as the youth's footsteps died along the hall,— "How could you be so cool? I have had a hard battle of it. I shall betray myself!"

"And risk all!" sneered Golding keenly watching him. "Will you undo the work of sixteen years? Don't be a fool, Revere! I foresaw that something of this kind would occur when you insisted upon accompanying me here.— And yet, why should I try to prevent it? After all, what is it to me, if a man chooses to ruin himself? I have served your interests faithfully for sixteen years—you can set me aside now, if you choose."

"Served my interests?—Aye, so you have! but at my expense, too," muttered Mr. Revere bitterly, turning away and pacing the floor in agitation. "A disinterested friend, forsooth!"

"Yes, you can acknowledge the boy! No doubt *Mrs. Revere* would be glad to welcome him home. It will be a pleasant surprise to her! I wash my hands of the whole affair," said Golding sneeringly.

Revere bit his lip. "You are pleased to be sarcastic, Hugh. I am fully sensible that prudence, interest, everything, demand silence on my part; but I tell you I did not imagine the sight of that boy would affect me so. So much like *her*, too! Let us get away from here, for God's sake, or I shall go mad!"

"Certainly, I will not detain you long. It is best we should go. Hush!—here he comes. Be careful! I saw him eye you sharply."

Jasper entered with the desired papers—bills of his scholarship and standing for the previous year at the Academy. "Good!" exclaimed Golding, nodding his head approvingly as he glanced them over. "Greek—Latin—Declamation—highest marks, I see. This speaks of application and talent. Well, you'd better go up to Harvard. And now, what's to be done with you this long summer vacation? Unfortunately, business calls me to Cincinnati and western cities for three months to come, so I cannot take you to New York as I had anticipated. It's rather a hard case, Revere," turning where he stood pale and listless by the window—"Here am I, with this fine fellow on my hands," familiarly patting Jasper on his shoulder, "and neither house or home to take him to. Faith, I oughtn't to have been a bachelor! I've half a mind to get a wife, if for no other purpose than for the sake of having a home to invite him to. It's too bad, Jasper!—You won't want to stay here to get the blues in this dull country town; nor will you care to go back to your quondam tutor's—will you, my boy?"

Jasper smiled. Here was the very opening he sought. He said quickly—

"Capital! It couldn't have happened more opportunely—your journey, I mean, sir—for you see Phil. Reade has been teasing me to go home with him into the interior of Massachusetts. He's planning all sorts of excursions—boating, gunning, riding. It is dull enough here vacations, after all the boys are gone. I should like to go with Phil., sir!"

"Well, I must confess to being greatly obliged to your good friend Phil.," replied Golding.—"Yes, accept his invitation by all means. Enjoy your vacation in any way you please. Is your friend well off? If not, mind and foot the bills," drawing forth his pocket-book. "I can afford to spare you a trifle, having lately been extra fortunate in some business transactions," and he handed Jasper a roll of bills—"and now, I suppose, as you're determined to become a collegian, I must rise on your quarterly remittances, hey?"

"Thank you," said Jasper placing the bills in his portemonnaie, "if the boys of the Senior Class don't have a jollification at my expense the last night of the term, then may I never see the classic halls of old Harvard—that's all! As for my remittances, of course I shouldn't object to their being increased, as my dignity—*ahem!*"—and he pulled up his Byronic collar with an assumption of manhood—"will need sustaining. And then, they play off such tricks on the Freshys at college, too! I shall want to treat 'em all to the best old Havanas, when they come to my room to smoke me out. A few more X's won't go amiss, sir!"

"No, I should suppose not," replied the guardian with a laugh. "Revere, don't your old college days come up before you? But there goes your bell, I suppose!" as a clear musical chime rang out from the tower of the Academy close by, and the rush of a score of students' feet came on the staircase and through the halls. "We leave town by the evening train

for Boston. Run over to the Hotel — which, by the way, is a fine one for a country town — after your recitations. Now good afternoon!”

“Good afternoon,” replied Jasper as he attended the two to the door, and once again felt the earnest lingering gaze of Mr. Revere’s eyes, ere, with a slight inclination of his head in acknowledgment of the youth’s graceful bow he turned away; then running lightly up the stairs he caught up his books, set his light Panama jauntily on his moist brown curls, hastened away to join his fellow-students, and soon found himself discussing the knotty passages of Felton’s Greek Reader with wonderful ease.

Meantime the two men had walked silently side by side down the smooth gravelled walks of the Academy grounds, then bent their steps up the principal long, cool, elm-shaded street of the village. At length Golding uttered a long low laugh, evidently in the best humor with himself and his companion.

“Ha, ha, ha! Don’t you think nature intended me for the boards? Capital actor, ain’t I? How did you think my fatherly relations became me? Spent your money like a prince, — didn’t I, Revere?”

A bitter smile shot across Revere’s lips. “Golding, I’ve been a fool. For heaven’s sake, don’t taunt me with it! Keep your peace, will you?”

“No,” replied Golding angrily. “Eternally harping me on the old string! You are a fool, Revere! And I, too, am one, that I do not leave you to your folly. Why should I trouble myself further about your affairs? You do not thank me for what I have done. Was it my work in the first place? Augustus Revere, who came to me, little upwards of twelve years ago, and said, ‘Receive this boy into your care — make yourself his guardian, give him your name, invent a story of his birth

—while from a distance I watch over him’? I took the boy: but I did *not* know then, that, to break the heart and remove from your path her who stood in your way to the beautiful heiress, you did this! When your scheme prospered, *then* I saw it; and then, indeed, I might have thwarted you; but at that time, as you doubtless remember, *my* necessity was *your* opportunity; besides, on neither of us did our morals sit any too heavily, so I let you go on. Now, after the lapse of these twelve years, during the half of which you have not been nigh my charge, you suddenly visit him and are fired with a desire to acknowledge him. Are you mad, that you do not see how the risk is great as ever? Walk into Julie Revere’s presence and introduce this youth as your son, and what think you the very pleasant result would be? Not a coveted one I imagine, to one who finds his losses and ‘debts of honor’ at Delmonte’s too heavy to be met by frequent drafts on the firm of “Revere, Stone and Co.,” and perforce is glad to avail himself of the proofs of his wife’s affection — in the shape of the revenues of her cotton plantations! I tell you, my dear fellow, that I know Julie well enough to affirm that, should this little affair of the boy’s paternity come to light, her love would not outlive her anger. With your present involvements, can you brave *that*? Do as you please now: I have only set the plain facts before you.”

“Good God!” exclaimed the man who could but see the truth of these words, — “you are right, Hugh. I see that plainly as you do: but there is another plan — I can reveal myself to my boy. Believe me or not, I tell you he was always dear to me. His mother, Mary — but I will not talk of *her* now!” and he laughed a hollow quick laugh — “I was a cursed villain: but I swear to you that it was not to break her heart. The boy was *mine*. I meant to save him for *myself* — some day

I would own him. Of course I was a villain, but I will repair the error in a measure now. Let me go to him! I tell you my heart yearns for that boy as it does for no other being on earth; and, Hugh Golding, I would give every dollar I ever won or lost at Delmonte's were they now in my possession, to hear him call me father."

For a few moments there was silence between the two. Golding walked on, apparently careless, idly striking his cane against the wayside hedge—but inwardly revolving thought after thought in his mind.

Then his resolve was taken. True, if he permitted the man beside him to obey the impulses of his heart in the decision just uttered, he did not lose one jot or tittle of his hold over him—for, in the exercise of the secret he held, there still remained *another* way by which he could sway him to his will; but of this he did not choose to avail himself now; that secret had been hoarded for sixteen years, and it must be kept for an hour of stronger need.

With a suddenly assumed grave earnestness of manner, he presented to Revere an argument by means of which he foresaw a victory.

"Revere, I have but one thing more to urge—then I have done. Go to Jasper—acknowledge him, if you like—but how can you answer *his* questionings? With what story can you satisfy *him*, when he asks you concerning his mother? 'That she was your lawful *wife*?'—he will ask you to take him home to her successor! 'That she was' well, my dear fellow, let us not be nice about words now—'*your* MISTRESS?' I tell you, and—I know the lad,—he would turn *and curse you*!—Now, Revere, if you say the word, I am ready to accompany you to his presence."

Dark, rapid changes went over Augustus Revere's face. The

awakened gleam of tenderness was smothered in his eye; his hard, haughty features repelled the momentary sway of better feelings; great ice-waves rolled back with crushing force on the erst melted heart. But a hollow groan of despair welled up from his anguished soul, as he said chokingly,

"Golding, you are right! For God's sake, let us leave this place at once. I could not bear to have that boy *hate* me! and I cannot *meet* him again!"

With an exultant smile about his lips, Hugh Golding walked down the street beside his victim. His subtle argument had not been presented in vain. And when the student youth sought his afternoon visitors at the hotel after his recitations were over, a hastily pencilled note was put into his hand:—

"Jasper, my dear boy, a forgotten business appointment calls us away in the afternoon train. I will write you from Boston.

Yours in haste,

GOLDING."

CHAPTER XI.

She grew fairer than her peers ;
Still her gentle forehead wears
Holy lights of infant years.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

WHO is she, Leafy ?" asked Orah Howland of a slight, exquisitely beautiful girl, in whose room she sat at Madame Southworth's Seminary. "I shall dislike her—I know I shall!" and she pouted her full red lips petulantly, "if for no other reason than because she usurps the place I meant to occupy—as your room-mate. And yet, the girl is'nt to blame. It was shameful in *Madame* to put me in with Nell Denmore for whom I don't care one pin, and break up our plans: so I shall regard this Miss What's-her-name as an interloper, I know!"

"Oh, no indeed! You'll like her, Orah, I am confident!" enthusiastically replied Leafy Earle, a lovely girl of fourteen, with transparent complexion exquisitely traced by blue veins, dreamy hazel eyes, and braids of chestnut hair singularly bright and burnished. "Oh, I know you will like her! Miss Bell says she passed a splendid examination in mathematics, and thinks we shall like her after we get acquainted; and that won't take *me* long, you know."

"Well, perhaps I shall. Certainly, I have a fancy for good scholars, and am happy to hear that this new comer has this redeeming trait. I do despise dunces, and wouldn't have one for a room-mate!—they generally manage to "pony" all their lessons out of others. Louis says his chum at Harvard used to try it on him, but he pretty soon gave him French leave. Nell

Denmore, thank fortune, is a capital scholar! But about this new one?—What's her name?—Who is she?"

Just then a slight tap came on the door, and Miss Bell appeared with a slender girl clad in black. "Young ladies—Miss Howland and Miss Earle," said the teacher; "this is Miss Wedgewood. Miss Leafy, I trust you will make your room-mate quite at home;" then turning to the girl who stood near the door with cheeks slightly flushed, "My dear, the porter will bring up your luggage. Our dinner hour is one. Miss Earle will accompany you to the Seminary this afternoon. Good morning!"

For the first time, Peace was alone among strangers. A feeling of desolation and home-sickness came over her: she sank into the nearest chair, and with trembling fingers endeavored to remove her bonnet. But the strings were knotted, and her endeavors to unloose them only rendered them more inextricable.

Leafy Earle sprang forward. "Let me assist you, Miss Wedgewood!" and, as her slender fingers unravelled the knot and smoothed out the long curls under the bonnet she removed, Peace looked up with a grateful smile and a gentle "thank you!" which quite won her heart.

But Orah Howland sat aloof. Leaning her elbow on the window sill and her head on her hand, she steadily regarded the new comer. Orah's was no common character. At fifteen she was mature, self-possessed, and self-reliant. Many called her self-willed and haughty; but they were those who could not understand the workings of a high noble spirit which often prompted her to an independence, sometimes a defiance of conventional rules and forms,—causing her to read character by a kind of intuition, thus creating sudden and powerful likes and dislikes,—and hindering her from moulding her thoughts or opinions by the creed of others. To such she was a "strange," "odd,"

"haughty" girl; to those who knew her, she was a creature to be loved strongly — full of all high, generous, and affectionate impulses.

In her *personale*, neither, was she after the common type. With features irregular, but each of its own style of beauty — a haughty Roman nose with thin curling nostrils, a massive, prominent forehead, heavy brows arching over — eyes of a calm clear gray, a pale, almost dazzlingly fair complexion, hair of uncommon wealth and glossiness almost approaching that purple blackness seen on the ripe Tuscan grape, a form not over tall but well-rounded and flexile — such was her exterior. No one would have dreamed of calling her handsome; but the words "noble," "queenly-looking," and "brilliant," successively applied by her school-mates, were not unapt. Indeed, the cast of her features, with her heavy brow, clear gray eye, and masses of hair, was almost masculine. But the small tender mouth with its expression of feminine sweetness was the redeeming feature. It was a womanly mouth, small, curved, and coral-red.

Now, as she sat with her head resting on one white hand — the full flowing sleeve falling back from her polished arm, revealing a massive bracelet of braided jet-black hair fastened by a large plain golden clasp — and the other toying carelessly with the charms on her watch-chain — her gray eyes steadily regarding Peace with a clear, piercing, but not unkind or curious glance — she looked haughtily beautiful.

At this moment the porter brought up two trunks and deposited them within the room. Leafy immediately began gathering up her books, that half the table they were to share in common might be appropriated to the use of her room-mate. But Orah stirred not; and Peace sat for a little time half-abashed under the strong gaze of those eyes. Then the innate independence of her own nature rose to her aid. She was far from

her home — alone among the threescore young ladies at the Seminary — here, in her own room, sat a girl, rich and haughty, judging from her dress and air, intently regarding her, perhaps criticising her plain black dress and contrasting it with her own rich attire — but she would not let that annoy her. Yet there was a slight flush on her cheek; but she rose very quietly, and, with a womanly air, laid her straw hat and shawl on the bed, took her keys from her pocket, and proceeded to unlock her trunks.

Orah Howland rose, and stepping toward her laid her hand upon her arm.

"Miss Wedgewood, beg pardon, but please tell me your other name!"

"Peace," was the quiet answer.

"Well, then, I must call you so always. Peace — I like that; and I have looked at you, and I like you, too! Peace, will you let me love you? You look so much like somebody I know!" — and a brilliant blush dyed the cheek of the "cold," "haughty," Orah Howland, as she put her arm about her neck and kissed her.

Peace very quietly returned the caress — but, as she turned hastily aside there was a quick quiver of her red lips, and a tear sprang to her eyes.

"I thank you," she said, gratefully.

Orah looked at her for a moment, earnestly; the red deepening on her cheek, then glancing at her black dress, said, "Are you an orphan, Peace?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Aunt Patience and uncle Reuben brought me up. Aunty is dead. Then after a moment she added — "I never knew my mother."

Orah caught her hand, pressed it hard, then suddenly turned away to the window where she stood long with her lips pressed

passionately to the jet-black bracelet upon her arm. Long she stood there, while Peace wiped the tears from her own eyes, and, assisted by Leafy Earle, busied herself in removing her dresses from the trunks, hanging them in the closet assigned her, and arranging her books on the little study table. Suddenly she passed from the room with a quick impetuous step; but as her eyes fell on Peace a moment ere she closed the door, they sparkled with tears.

"She lost her mother just before she came here two years ago," said Leafy. "That bracelet is of her hair. There isn't a girl in the Seminary but covets her notice. She has taken a great liking to you, Peace, I see. There, all finished!" she exclaimed, as, after busying herself with arranging the books on the white draperied table, she sat down beside it—"I've placed your books as you'll want them—but let's see, I'll leave out the text books for the afternoon. Ah, Andrews' Latin Reader. You will take Latin, then?"

"Yes, I've read it a little already—but let us talk about her—Miss Howland, if you please."

"Ah, I see," said Leafy with a smile. "She has fascinated you as she does all. But beware! I shall be jealous if you usurp my place in her heart. Do you know that we were talking about you just as you came in—and Orah was declaring herself vexed because Madame Southworth put you in with me. We have been room-mates for a year, Orah and I—Why, I expected she'd prove your sworn enemy!"

"Indeed, I'm sure I didn't intend to separate you," replied Peace deprecatingly.

"Oh, you couldn't help it dear!" exclaimed Leafy. "It was only one of Madame's notions. I suppose she thought the wealthy Judge Howland's daughter was getting too intimate with the humble Leafy Earle. And so she told Orah that she would

regard it as a particular favor if she'd room with Miss Nell Denmore, whose father also happens to be one of the upper ten of her native Gotham. But never mind, Peace. You and I will be the best of chums. I shouldn't resign you, even were Orah herself to invite you to share her bed and board."

Peace laughed merrily; but her thoughts reverted to the girl who had obtained such a hold on her heart.

"Then she is wealthy—and lives in New York? Tell me all about her."

"Well, to begin," said Leafy burying her dainty little figure in the depths of a rocking chair and resting the tip of her tiny slippered foot on a low stool. "O. Howland is *the* best girl in Northfield Seminary, whom, if you hear anybody say they don't like, be sure they don't *know* her, or she *won't* know them. You *can't* know her in a day or a week; her character will bear studying, and repay you well, too, for your pains. Her father is very wealthy—Judge Howland of New York—they live in the city in winter, and in summer have a splendid country seat somewhere, or travel. Her mother died two years ago, as I told you. She mourns her a great deal still; and she told me the other day, that, if she had a step-mother, she believed she should hate her! That's just like her—where she loves, she loves strongly, and will let no second object supersede the first. She went everywhere with her mother for her health the two years previous to her death—to Washington, the South, to the Springs. When she graduates, she says her father has promised a foreign journey—to visit Europe—Italy! Ah, that's the only thing I envy her—the means to visit the land of Tasso and Michael Angelo—the home of the poet, the painter, the sculptor! It is all I would ask—yet I am poor, and it must be denied me!" The flush on the girl's transparent cheek deepened to a rich crimson, her hazel eye gleamed with a beautiful

light—but a soft sigh escaped her lips. “Yes it must be denied me!” she repeated sadly, “for *I am poor!*” Then all her beautiful enthusiasm died out, and she dropped her head listlessly on her hand.

Peace comprehended in part the longings of that enthusiastic artist soul; but her own gentle loving heart held another creed—another, and a better. She ventured to breathe it in a few quiet words.

“Yes, it must be pleasant to have wealth—to go to other and beautiful countries. But would it not be better to *do good* with it? There are so many poor and suffering in the world, I have heard—so many poor, and suffering, and ignorant.”

“That’s one of Orah’s doctrines, too! You two are much alike,” said Leafy, looking up. “I will tell you. Only last night she said almost the same. We had been talking here, but were quiet then—when suddenly she broke out, ‘Leafy, I thank God I am rich! You don’t know what plans I’ve formed of doing good among the poor, when I go home. There are hundreds, you know, in great cities—they starve there, or perish with cold and sickness every year. I thank God that he gave me the means to do good with!’ That’s what she said—does that sound as if she were haughty or cold?”

“No indeed! I love her already!” exclaimed Peace with warmth. “She’s a noble girl.”

“Yes, that she is! but I declare, how my tongue aches! I have chattered like a magpie. It must be near dinner time!”

Peace went to the mirror and began brushing out her curls. Their golden length fell in profusion down her slight tall form.

“How old are you, Peace?” asked Leafy.

“Almost fourteen,” was the reply.

“Why, I should take you for fifteen, certainly—that’s Orah’s

age and mine. You are taller than I am,” and Leafy stood up beside her.

Leafy was indeed a very child in appearance, save when the sudden flashes burning on her cheeks told of the impetuous blood coursing a woman’s heart. Then,—her face lighted with the glow of enthusiasm, and her hazel eyes getting darker and more brilliant,—one saw that it was not mere childish animation which stirred her usual playfulness or listlessness of manner, but the betrayal of strong and earnest feelings. With exquisite sensibilities, and a power of appreciating the beauties of Poesy and Art, and of reproducing them, too, in language and limnings of her own, the young girl was both an artist and a poet; and in personal loveliness she equalled those for whom the lyre has been swept or the canvas painted. But now, standing side by side with Peace before the mirror, she gracefully adjusted the braids about her head—chatting meantime like a very school-girl. In five minutes she had graphically thrown off sketches of the teachers and half the young ladies at the Seminary.

“Yes, Peace,” she continued, after the Principal and the assistants had been discussed, “I’m confident you’ll like many of the girls here. There’s Nell Denmore, Orah’s room-mate, rather quiet and haughty, but a grand scholar. Belle Allston—she’s a capital girl for fun—always up to some frolic. But Madame seems blind to her faults; on the score of her scholarship, I suppose—for she’s splendid—stands next to Orah who takes to the substantial—they both excel in the mathematics and languages. Then there’s Alice Doane and Kate Drew—two prim, old-maidish girls—study, eat, sleep, and walk by rule. Martha Wells—well, if you *wont* laugh when I point her out in school!—such little old-fashioned sleeves as she wears, and plain linen collars, an an eternal knot of green

ribbon! she's worn it three terms, to my knowledge. Then she's so thin, too—all lines and angles. Ugh! I never look at her in the drawing class, but I think of withered trees and leafless branches—no grace or beauty about her. And Carrie Elton—she's a splendid pianist! Do you play, Peace?"

"No," answered the young girl, athwart whose brain stole a memory of the only music heard within the old farm-house—the buzz of Aunt Patience's spinning-wheel—"no, but I hope to take lessons. I should love it, of all studies."

"Yes indeed! I wonder how one can help loving music! But the best I hear is out there, in that old grove," pointing from the window to a thick dark woodland in the hollow between two hills—"such concerts as the birds get up there, these beautiful September mornings! We must go there often. The dear, care-free birds! I almost envy them their liberty, while we are shut up here six hours in the day, and half the rest of the time in our rooms, subject to Madame's 'Rules and Regulations.' Dear me! I wonder if I shall ever view life soberly, or with a sense of its seriousness? The time will come, perhaps, when I shall grow sedate and thoughtful: but now, give me freedom—yes, freedom—and love—I couldn't do without *that*, Peace—and I am contented. What are you going to be, after you graduate, Peace?" turning soberly toward her,—"not a teacher, I hope?"

"Yes, I want to be!" was the quiet reply.

"*Want to be?*" echoed Leafy, with an expression of amazement. "Oh dear, how can you say so? Why I couldn't, *from choice*. I wish there was no such thing as work in the world. But I suppose I'll be obliged to do something for a living, one of these days. You see, I've got a dear good mother who has saved up the little my father left, to educate me; and by and by I must repay her. It won't seem like toil, though, with such an

object in view. I long for my school days to be over—that I may go home to her."

"And so you'll teach, then?"

"Not little children their a-b-c's!" and Leafy laughed and shrugged her shoulders. "'*Par d'ong*,' as Mam'selle Lucie says. '*Mais excusez moi*.' No! I love my beautiful Art too well. I must teach *that*, or starve! Shall I show you something?" and she brought a portfolio from the table and sat down beside Peace.

A beautiful flush gathered on the young girl's cheek, as Leafy removed, one by one, the sketches from the portfolio. They were done in crayon, for the most part—heads, busts, landscapes, ruins, towers and waterfalls—the faultlessness of their shading and nicety of finish evincing a correct and cultivated taste; but Peace, to whom these pictures opened a new field in the realm of the Beautiful, lingered longest over several vigorous and faithful pencilled sketches from nature—forest, hill, river, and winding brook, as seen from the windows of their room. These the young artist girl had considered her *chefs-d'œuvres*; and a bright grateful smile hovered about her lips, as she saw the appreciative glance which Peace alternately cast from them to the landscape without.

"They are very true, and beautiful," said Peace softly and with sparkling eyes as she closed the portfolio.

"Now you know, Peace, why I cannot teach children to read and spell. To my Art, must I devote myself; but sometimes I have bitter thoughts because I cannot wholly indulge my love for it. Were I a man, I would toil and struggle, and become a great painter; but as I am only a poor feeble girl, I must be content to make pictures and sell them for my daily bread. Poverty is a hard taskmaster, Peace. I almost envy Orah Howland the wealth which will take her to Italy. Why is it

denied *me?*" and she paced the floor, with carnation cheeks and flashing eyes.

Meantime Peace sat very still. She was thinking of her own little patrimony—the three hundred dollars, which had been the fruit of a lifetime of economy and self-denial to good old Aunt Patience—how little, how very little way it would go toward purchasing the elegant attire, the jewels even, of the rich Orah Howland—but how far she must make it extend in procuring for her what she valued far above the luxuries of dress—the knowledge her thirsting spirit would acquire at the Seminary.

"The dinner bell!" exclaimed Leafy, breaking her reverie as its peal rang along the passages, and a tap upon the door was followed by the entrance of Orah Howland and her room-mate. "Come, Peace, I will matronize you!" and with her arm about her slight waist, the affectionate girl led the new comer along the corridors, down the broad staircase, where joined by a score of young ladies issuing from their rooms, they sought the long dining-room.

CHAPTER XII.

"Ha! I have thee fast
In a net of my own weaving!"

It was late at night; Augustus Revere and Hugh Golding sat together in the former's mansion,—a table strewn with cards and dice between them. A massive sideboard was covered with glasses and decanters of choice liquors,—and an open escritoire strewn with papers.

Both men were strongly excited; there was an angry flush on their cheeks, and a sparkle in their eyes not wholly induced by the wine they had drank. Golding leaned back in his chair, an expression of cool determination deepening over his face—furtively eyeing his companion on whose cheek an angry red spot stood. At length, after full five minutes, in which no word had been spoken, the former broke the silence. Bringing his hand down on the table so heavily that the cards flew in every direction, he said in a slow measured voice—

"It's no use, Revere! The money I *must*, and *will* have! Here, for three years, I've not troubled you—what the devil do you mean by hanging off so, now?"

Revere's eye flashed angrily, and the flush deepened. "Golding, I won't submit to it longer!—I *can't*!—Such cursed exorbitance! You're a very leech upon my purse. For twelve years I've fathered all your debts——"

"Even as I fathered—*your child*," sneered Golding. "We are at quits, then!"

"Yes, we *are* at quits, Golding. I mean it now. I've been

“a fool to be kept in leading strings so long. Go to Jule — tell her all — I’ll risk the consequences.”

“Ah, yes! I see! You’re quite willing *now* that the *exposé* shall occur, when, what with your extravagant drains upon it, the depths of her purse must have been reached. Cotton field after cotton field has been sold by that loving, yielding woman, plantation after plantation has been converted into money; and that money, you have squandered! To keep your name above board in the *mercantile* world, she has almost beggared herself. And now you would repay her. Oh, most rare, most dutiful husband! But, Revere, though you can cheat the world — Jule even — you cannot *me*! I know by what means you have retained your hold over your wife, commanding her heart and fortune — it is, that she has always regarded you as immaculate, so far as concerns *affaires du coeur*. Content, so you do not run after pretty actresses or ballet girls, she has winked at your lesser vices, and submitted to pay your debts of honor. But, some fine day, walk in with young Jasper Golding on your arm, and post her up regarding his paternity, and *then*, what think you? — However, these arguments have all been presented before; I did not come all the way from New Orleans to refresh your memory with them. But I would merely suggest, that, should you persist in this course, a certain set of diamonds owned by Mrs. Revere said to be worth no less than ten thousand, can never be pawned, pledged, or borrowed, to get you out of the tight place you are now said to be in. — Ha! you start, Gus! Where’d I learn *that*? You wonder? I stood at the faro table *last night*, when you lost! But come, let us not sit here half the night, beating round the bush. I tell you, Gus, I’m in a tight place, and you’d better come down with the money, or raise it for me in a given time.”

Revere’s face darkened; but his lips seemed cut of iron.

“Hugh Golding, once for all, I *will not*! Take the boy, tomorrow, if you like, into Jule’s presence. She’ll storm at first — of course she will — I expect it, — but, mark me, she’ll give in at last. No woman like her would publish her husband’s error to the world; and, after all, what have *I* done worse than hundreds, aye, thousands of others? In my younger days I was no saint — Mary Halpine was beautiful, and I loved her” — and for a moment he passed his hand over his eyes as if to shut out a vision, and his voice grew thicker. — “Yes, by Heaven, I *did* love that girl as I never loved any woman on earth before, or since! But I couldn’t *marry* her — at least, I was fettered by such cursed debts that, when I met the heiress, I *wouldn’t* — which amounted to the same thing. And so we parted. Had I done differently — but it’s no use talking now. I married Jule — and have been faithful to her. So long as she walks unharmed amid the thousand temptations which assail a woman of fashion, I should be a very brute, were I to desert her for another. No! my passion for gaming has been my only absorbing sin. Though I married with vows of reform on my lips, I have not found strength to keep them — they were weak as fetters of sand to bind me. Hugh Golding, I have *heard* men prate of the terrible power of habit — heard them tell of the fascinating thrall of dice and the wine cup — and I used to vote it all humbug, gammon — but I tell you,” and here the pale haggard face of the speaker, and his thin trembling hand, added fearful weight to his words — “I tell you, *it is all true*! These passions are *strong as death*! I verily believe, had I my last dollar in my hand to-night before twenty-four hours I should stake it at Delmonte’s!”

For a time there was deep silence.

“Then you will not let me have the money?” ventured Golding at length.

"No!" was the inflexible reply.

There was no discomfiture on the careless, smiling face turned toward Revere. On the contrary, a cool assured expression, like one secure of his aim, settled on every feature. Golding leaned back in his chair, stretched his feet in a comfortable position over an ottoman before the fire, and said, leisurely —

"Well, then, Revere, since you will not comply with my request, perhaps you will be glad to make terms, after I have revealed something which has lain on my conscience rather heavily for these nineteen years. I *did* intend to spare you this — but you will not have it so!"

Revere, whose temper was thoroughly aroused, sneered. "Bring on your conscientious scruples. I am waiting for 'em."

Golding smiled exultingly. Leaning over the table, he whispered with eyes keenly bent on his companion's, "Augustus Revere, I have the proof that your marriage with Julie Courtney was illegal. *You were, at that time, the lawful husband of Mary Halpine!*"

It is impossible for pen to portray the change which came over the face of that man. First, an ashen hue went from lip to forehead, as he sprang to his feet; then the knotted veins stood out like whipcords, and his eyes struck sparks of flame. With a groan, he grasped the marble mantel for support — then staggered back heavily into his chair, covering his face with his hands.

After a little he recovered. "By Heaven! it is a lie — a cursed lie!" and he smote his fist on the table till the glasses rung.

A cool, derisive smile curled Golding's lip. "Oh, ho! Take it easy, Gus! What's the use to get in a passion and call your best friend a liar? Be sure I assert nothing of which I have not *the proof*," and he carelessly drew forth a letter-case from

his pocket from which he took a folded paper. Handing it to his companion, he leaned forward and took a cigar from the mantel, ignited it, and placed it to his lips.

With nervous hand, Revere clutched the paper. As he read, his countenance grew livid. *It was the certificate of his marriage with Mary Halpine!* With a wild glare in his eyes, glancing furtively at Golding who sat idly watching the curling wreaths of cigar-smoke, he crumpled the paper in his hand, then quick as lightning dashed it into the burning grate; and when a tiny heap of white cinders whirled round and round then leaped up the chimney-flue, he turned triumphantly round, faced Golding, and said in a tone of exultation: —

"*Now! now!* what is left of it *now?*"

There was no look of baffled cunning on Golding's face; nor did he stir the slightest to save the paper from destruction. He took the cigar from his lips, twirled it carelessly in his fingers, and said blandly: —

"Why did you try that game, my dear fellow? Do you take me for a verdant one? I know you as well as I do myself — and would say that I have the *original* of that document safe in my pocket-book. You have burned *the copy!*"

Revere was powerless. He sank away into his seat with a groan.

"Did *she* — Mary — know this?" he asked at length, hoarsely.

"No," — and Golding transferred his cigar to his lips, — "never told her, 'pon my word of honor!"

"Where is she now? Do you know? — living, or dead?"

A shake of the head gave a negative answer. Revere breathed freer.

"Then what the devil do you come here with this story for? But, after all, I don't believe it. It's a hoax that you've trumped

up to scare me with, because I cannot let you have the money. If you forged *one* certificate, you would another. Golding, you aren't the man I took you for. Let us call it a joke, and let it pass — yes, a confounded good joke, Hugh!" — and he laughed nervously, and gazed eagerly up into his face.

Golding threw his half-burned cigar into the grate, and his whole manner changed instantaneously.

"Augustus Revere, look at me! Am I the man who would joke with you on such a subject as this? You doubt my words: well, listen! When you invited me to officiate on a certain occasion quite a number of years ago, when we were both younger than we are now, I didn't see fit to obey your directions *literally* — because, firstly, *prima facie*, I had no taste for the clericals, and didn't know for my life how I could easily find my way into a surplice, or out again if I once got in; and secondly, because a very happy idea occurred to me then, that, should I substitute a certain young acquaintance who wore the cloth by right, and thus the ceremony were performed *bona fide*, the proof of this might be rendered available to me on some future occasion, for instance, like the one that has just turned up. You see into it now, I reckon!"

"Yes — yes — I see!" gasped Revere in a voice choked with sarcasm and passion. "And I am sure I thank you, from the bottom of my heart! Julie, too, has reason to be very grateful. Very proud she must be of her cousin! Will you not walk up stairs, and inform her of the delightful change in her prospects? what she *was*, and what she *is*! It would be such a friendly, cousinly favor! Come!"

Golding winced under these cool, sarcastic words; and at the mention of Julie's name, his cheek grew pale, and he bit his lip. Leaning over the arm of his chair, he hissed into his companion's ear: —

"Beware! Revere, I may take you at your word. You taunt me with aiding in my cousin's ruin! Listen: But a few hours before Julie Courtney accepted you, I — who had loved her from my earliest boyhood — begged for but the smallest word of favor from her lips, and was scornfully, aye, contemptuously rejected! 'Because of the known laxity of my principles' — *that* was her insulting plea! Forsooth! it was a brave exchange between *me* and *you*! Revere, do you wonder *now* that I went to the gaming table that night, maddened? — that I played desperately, and lost? — that, when I sought your help in my embarrassing debts, and when I learned to *whom* Julie Courtney had pledged herself, I was tempted to make my *necessity* the means of securing my *revenge*? Aye, I tell you, the temptation was *strong*, and I *did not resist it*! To know that her fate lay in my hands — to let her walk her own way and never to divert her step from the path! Oh, this was noble, manly — an *honorable* revenge!" — and he paced the floor, with a bitter smile upon his lips.

Revere comprehended the emotions which had swayed that fiery soul. All his old coolness and cunning came to his aid. He saw, clearly, the peril he was in. There was but one way of escape. Going up to Golding, he laid his hand heavily on his shoulder.

"How much money do you need?"

Golding turned sharply.

"I got bondsmen in New Orleans for three thousand. But I must have a surplus to commence anew upon. To-morrow I go to Boston to try my fortune with the fickle goddess there. In ten days I shall return to New York. Have in readiness for me six thousand — not a dollar less. You can easily obtain it by borrowing from the firm, or, what would be easier for you, pawning Julie's diamonds. Ball and Black will gladly advance

that sum on them. *Then* this marriage certificate is yours; and we have done with each other forever."

Revere was very pale; but he replied firmly, "Golding, the money shall await you!"

CHAPTER XIII.

He went to his grave nor told what man he was.
He was unlanguage'd, like the earnest sea,
Which strives to gain an utterance on the shore
But ne'er can shape unto the listening hills
The lore it gathered.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

It was dreary November. October, golden and crimson hued, had exacted her last tribute from the trees; the pomp and glory of the autumn was over; the last flaming banner had flaunted on the air; from the skies as well as woods the hectic flush had died; and dun, leaden clouds—meet attendants for the sun's journey, those short, dreary days—gloomed athwart the gray skies. In the forests and the hollows, waves of dead leaves surged to and fro; the grass was short and brown and crisp on the stubble-fields and meadow-land, save where some faint strip of sickly green marked the track of the low water-courses; the rushes and willows along the river-banks were dimly powdered with hoarfrost; lonely bird-songs were piped at intervals from the reedy marshes; and sad winds went singing their Banshee wail over all the land.

What was there in those dreary skies, the sobbing wail of the mournful winds, to send a thrill to Reuben Wedgewood's heart and a shiver over his frame, as he wandered about his farm,—or, crossing the low meadows, and going sadly along the path through the naked woodlands, went often in the gloaming to the graves on Wood Hill? Why sang the pines and firs there so

mournfully—and, tossing their dusky plumes aloft upon the gray air, seemed to whisper dirges? Were they *warnings*?

Of all the lonely autumns—and there had been three since Patience was laid to rest, and Peace's footsteps, save at intervals, had ceased to make the music of his heart—of all these lonely autumns, this was the dreariest to Reuben. Not only the wind piped its sad songs about the corners and gables of the old farm-house—not only the skies gloomed, and rushing rains fell, swelling the water-courses and making the brook roar turbulently through the valley down to the river, and the swollen river surged on its way, and from the distant sea, the moan of the billows lashed into fury on the rocky beach, came distinctly with a sound of desolation and storms and shipwreck on the main—not only over outward nature was this “saddest time of all the year” gaining dominion,—but over his spirit. For then, in that sad autumn-time, when the sheaves were all garnered into barns and storehouses—when the reapers had finished their toils, and the year and Nature were groping along to their death-sleep—came a foreboding shadow of the Great Reaper, who binds up into sheaves that he may gather into his granaries every human hope, and love, and joy—whose sickle is sharp and merciless, and who spares none from his path—even Death!

And day by day, slowly but steadily, the gloom of the outer earth had penetrated the inner life of Reuben. He heard in the whispering pines, the rush of the rain-storm, the distant moan of the angry sea, and the wail of the winds, solemn voices speaking to his heart; and then came a great peace to him—a peace down-falling from the Throne of the Infinite—a serener light to his dark gray eye, and a mild benignity to his seamed, wrinkled face. The shadow fell from his soul.

One afternoon at twilight, Reuben came in from a long walk

over his farm, and sat down in thoughtful quiet by the kitchen hearth. His face was pale; and every now and then he pressed his hand convulsively on his heart.

“Are you sick, Reuben?” asked the tall, angular Hannah Ward, who bustled about—now stirring the fire, now hanging the iron tea-kettle on the trammel, then drawing out the old-fashioned round table and laying the cloth for supper.

“No,” was the reply. “Only a touch of my old complaint, that’s all. It’ll go off by and by. I walked too far this afternoon.”

Hannah went about in her scant homespun dress and thick shoes, bringing the dishes from the buttery, placing two plates and knives and forks evenly upon the table—and then, measuring out the tea from the caddy, poured in the boiling water, and raking open the ashes, set it down to “draw.” All was very quiet; for Hannah was no talker, and the man by the fire-place was too much absorbed in his own thoughts to break the silence. At last he looked up suddenly.

“Hannah, do you believe in *dreams*?”

“No—not I!” answered the spinster in her harsh rough voice. “But *why*?”

“Oh, no matter!” replied Reuben. But after a pause he added, “I dreamt about sister Patience a good deal last night. I seemed to see her, a beckoning me. Some would say it’s a bad sign, Hannah.”

“La, that’s nothing!” retorted the spinster in a quick, jerking tone. “If ’tis a sign, ’taint a *bad* one! Dreams allers go by contraries—at least them says so that believes such nonsense. Dear knows, *I* don’t! ‘Dream of the dead, and you’ll hear from the living,’ they say.”

“Well, p’raps so—p’raps so!” returned Reuben with a smile. “I guess we shall hear from Peace. Let’s see, it’s three

weeks since she wrote, and I haven't answered her yet. I'll write this very night. We must have her home to Thanksgiving — a week from next Thursday. Don't you think she could come over then, Hannah? I believe the term is out a week after."

"Yes, I s'pose she'll come if you write. No doubt she'll be glad to get out a week aforehand!"

The voice which uttered these words was hard and cold, but Reuben did not heed it, neither the keen angry glitter of her little black eyes, or her heavy step, as she took up a candle and went out into the buttery. "Poor old fool!" she muttered, taking down a pie and plate of doughnuts from a shelf — "It's always 'Peace,' 'Peace!' Eternally that gal! And bimeby, I s'pose, she'll be coming back here to take the lead; and when *he* dies, step in and heir the property, and wrong his own blood relations!"

Then she caught up the candle, and returned to the kitchen. Transferring the steaming cakes from the tin baker on the hearth to the table, she made another trip to the outer room for a plate of golden butter and fresh herb cheese; then pouring out the tea, drew up two straight-backed kitchen chairs, and said gruffly — "Come, supper's ready!"

Reuben took his place at the table; but only drank a cup of tea.

"Come, why don't you eat?" exclaimed Hannah, herself doing justice to the food. "You must be sick. You *do* look dreadful pale. Hadn't I better do something for you?"

"No — it'll pass off after a while. No doctor's stuff for me, Hannah. When this palpitation comes on, quiet's the best cure.

"Well, I don't think much o' medicine, either," said Hannah, as she rose from the table — "only roots and 'arbs, and sich. There's some power in *them*. Patience thought a deal of her

garden — her rue, and sage, and balm, and elecampane. She was an excellent hand in sickness — Patience was."

"Yes," and Reuben sighed. "But she's gone where sickness never comes, Hannah."

"That's true," echoed Hannah in a voice a little softened, tying on a wide checked apron and rolling up her sleeves preparatory to the process of "clearing away;" then with rapid movements, she carried the food to the buttery, brought a bright pan in which she washed the dishes, folded the snowy homespun linen table cover and laid it evenly on the dressers, brought a hemlock broom to sweep up the red brick hearth till the embers crackled and sent a perfect shower of sparks up the wide chimney mouth; then, drawing the table nearer the fire, she placed the candle in its *centre* and the snuffers evenly in the tray, and bringing out her knitting work, sat down in a straight high-backed chair close beside the hearth.

After knitting a few rounds, she stopped suddenly. "I meant to go over to neighbor Sanders to-night, to get that wool for carding; but as you seem so poorly, p'raps I'd better stay at home, Reuben."

"No, no! don't stay for me, Hannah! I feel better — the pain's almost gone now. I can sit still here by the fire — or, if I feel smart enough, write to Peace by and by. Go, Hannah; and jest tell neighbor Sanders that he can have that winter wheat we talked about. I didn't know as I could spare it; but he can have what he wants."

"Well, I guess I will step over there for a little while then," and Hannah knit briskly round on the gray stocking till she reached the seam, then rolled it up hard, thrust the needles firmly into the ball, put it into the great pocket she wore outside of her dress, and brought out a large dyed woollen shawl and hood of black quilted silk from the bedroom.

"Guess I wouldn't go out to the barn to-night, Reuben," she paused to say, with her hand on the latch of the door leading into the little outer entry — "Chip 'll be home from the village about nine, I guess — and he'll attend to the critters."

After Hannah Ward had gone, Reuben sat in his arm chair by the fire, alone with his own thoughts. It was very lonely there in the old kitchen. It had been lonely always, since Patience's death; and, except when Peace came home to spend her few weeks of vacation, there was little to disturb the deep quiet of the old house. But the fair girl, fast growing into womanhood and becoming daily more interested in her studies, did not linger long at home. The commencement of every term found her at the Seminary; not, however, that she had learned to love Reuben less, for she said to herself: "When my happy school-days are over, I will go back to the farm-house again." And so there were necessarily many lonely hours for him when she was absent.

Hannah Ward had indeed been a faithful *housekeeper* to Reuben in the literal sense of the term — but nothing more. The kind cheerful presence his sister had always diffused around was wanting; from her daily rounds of labor — baking, churning, washing and sweeping — Hannah could afford no time for "idle talkin'." She was economical, neat, and thrifty to a remarkable degree. Indeed, neatness was the spinster's ruling passion. No speck of dust dared intrude on her domains. On the polished wood of the old dark bureau, the "hundred legged" table, the mahogany lightstand with its claw feet, the carved cherry-wood frame of the antique mirror, the woven carpet and braided rugs which adorned the west room, not a mote settled; even the three long sunbeams slanting in through the holes in the shutters had a pale thin aspect, and were not rich with a thousand floating golden specks as sunbeams ought to be. Not a mote,

either, on the old tall clock in the kitchen corner or the straight high-backed chairs; and from the kitchen floor one might have eaten, so scrupulously white was it kept. But the spinster's passion was carried to a painful degree — excluding all attempts at adornment. No fresh wreaths of evergreen were twined about the looking-glass — no feathery asparagus with interwoven bright red holly-berries decked the frame of the old clock — no dried grasses drooped gracefully from the old-fashioned china vases on the little mantel in the west room — as in Patience's time; because Hannah declared such all "trash" and "trumpery."

Everything had gone "by rule" since she came to the Ridge. Old Tabby, now grown to venerable cathood, stepped demurely, and with measured steps, across the evenly sanded floor, leaving tracks from the hearth, where her stereotyped abiding-place was the limits of a few particular bricks, in a straight line to the door — doubtless, because curved lines were strongly suggestive to the spinster of disorder; Bruno, now in a very stiff and rheumatic dotage, curled himself up in a warm corner, tolerated because of his master's sake; and it seemed, even, that the pendulum of the clock oscillated with measured sweeps in a dignified manner, lest it should be accused of *lightness*.

Out of doors, too, the one idea — *order* — held rule. The box border along the garden beds was straight, prim, formal; every sunflower and hollyhock nodded its head with precision; the old maid's pinks grew at a farther remove than of old from the ungallant bachelor's buttons, seeming to say in the triumph of their single blessedness — "See! we ask no favors! we can stand by ourselves!" and even the climbing beans, morning glories, and creeping jennies, trailed along the garden fence and over the kitchen windows more circumspectly than of old.

And among the living creatures on the farm, Hannah Ward's

dominant spirit prevailed. The kine, forgetting their old time freaks, never upset the equilibrium of milk-pail or milker, but quietly chewed the cud — doubtless of "bitter fancy" — when Hannah appeared with her pail and stool; old Whitey meekly dropped his ears at her approach; the crow of the rooster seemed less shrill and defiant, and every hen to have acquired a subdued, by-rule, cackle.

And Chip, too, even his chattering tongue was often silent, his quaint fancies unuttered, and his exuberant spirits chilled, by the presence of the gruff-voiced housekeeper. Yes, a change indeed had visited the Ridge: — it was no longer the pleasant, cheery home of Aunt Patience's time.

As Reuben sat in silence by the kitchen fire, his thoughts dwelt fondly on the child of his adoption. "By and by," he murmured, "she will come back to brighten up the old house. Another September will see her at the Ridge again, no more to leave me. Dear child — I must write to her and have her home to Thanksgiving!" and he went to an old-fashioned chest of drawers, and took from its top an antique writing-case. Opening the lid, he spread on it a sheet of paper and sat down at the table to write.

This was something of a task for the farmer. His fingers were cramped and stiff with hard labor; he had had no occasion to use a pen often; and when Peace was at home, her nimble fingers had always written for him. But he said to himself, "No matter — Peace won't laugh at my blots and mistakes!" — wrote the letter in a large, square, old-fashioned hand — sealed and directed it, and laid it out on the table.

Then, opening a little compartment of the writing-case, he took out a carefully folded paper. Reading it over and over, he read aloud, with a smile, "Yes — yes. 'To my well-beloved adopted child, Peace Wedgewood, I give and bequeath'

— let me see — 'the homestead, the meadow-farm, the woodland, the pasture-lot.' Yes, one day Peace will stand with the best and richest of 'em. How this would meet poor Patience's wishes! All Peace's — all but the legacy for Hannah. I mean to leave her something, of course. Sometimes I think she looks on the dear child with a jealous eye. I must see to that — yes, I must!" At length he refolded the paper. Suddenly, as his hand was uplifted to restore it to the writing-case, a sharp pang arrested him. Pressing his hands over his heart, the paper, loosened from their grasp, fluttered down to the floor.

The pang passed as suddenly as it came, and he stooped forward to regain the paper. But ere his fingers had touched it, again it came — a fierce, wild, keen thrill, sharp as a dagger-point, through his heavily beating heart. With convulsive grasp, clutching at the lid of the writing-case before him, Reuben sat erect for a moment, then his stalwart form collapsed — for another spasm came, bringing a moment of such keen agony as he had never before experienced — such agony as no man knows but once — when the death-throes are at his heart! Starting up, he gave one shrill cry of suffering, then sank heavily back again. The pang had passed — but there was a suffocating sensation in his throat — a marble pallor about his lips — lips, that with a gurgling, indistinct utterance, framed out the last word that ever warmed the struggling tired heart or passed into sound — "*Mary!*" Then his head fell forward; the death-white face sank down on the lid of the old writing-case; the clutching fingers relaxed their hold; the paper lay unfolded at his feet; and all was silence.

And the fire on the hearth crackled and died down; the old clock ticked shrill and solemn through the stillness; and the candle burned low, wavered, cast ghostly, dusky, flickering shadows athwart the wall, then went out in utter darkness.

But long ere its last gleam had faded, a soul had wandered from below that old farm-house roof to the dim shores of Eternity — a lone bark had crossed the Silent River amid the gloom of the chill night-time, and anchored in a still haven where nevermore storms vex, skies frown, or sad winds blow.

And what said the solemn "tick!" "tick!" of the old clock in the kitchen? — what typified the smouldering ashes falling down, charred and whitened, on the hearth? — what was the burthen of the sad wind's moan, and the hollow swell of the restless sea coming up through the awful stillness?

Ah, there was but one answer — "Death!" — "Death!"

And so Reuben slept on.

Two hours later, Hannah Ward stepped into the dark still kitchen, bringing with her through the opened door a gush of chill outer air.

"What! the candle out? and the fire gone, too? Why, Reuben, are you asleep?" and she groped along to his side, and laid her hand on the shoulder of the form dimly outlined against the faint glow of the dying embers.

With a shake, and a "Come, wake up!" she groped about for another candle on the mantel-shelf, raked up a coal from the ashes, and, lighting it, placed it upon the table.

"Got asleep writing, hey?" exclaimed the spinster as she saw the open writing-case and the letter. "Come, Reuben, wake up!" Then her eye fell upon the open paper on the floor. Stooping, she picked it up, and held it nearer the candle with curious eye.

"Ha! what is this? A *will*! Jest as I thought!" she muttered, a quick gleam of anger flushing her sharp face and darting from her black eyes. "Jest as I've thought, all along. I wish I could *burn* it!" and her form trembled with passion.

"This comes of taking that good-for-nothing Mary Halpine's brat to bring up!" Quivering with anger, she dropped the paper; then, bending over Reuben, laid her hand heavily on his shoulder. He stirred not: and with an amazed "Well, I never!" she lifted up his bowed head.

But what was there in that upturned white face of the head resting heavily against the high-backed chair — that face, so ghastly in the gleaming candle-light — or the contact of the nerveless, cold, pallid hand which fell by his side and touched hers — to chill Hannah Ward's heart with terror, and cause her to stagger back against the wall for support?

She was alone with a terrible guest — a Presence, which, unheralded, unattended, had crossed the threshold of that humble kitchen, and sat down quietly and sternly at the hearthstone — even Death!

Then, in that hour, alone with the dead, a terrible temptation passed athwart the brain of that hard, cold-hearted, avaricious woman; nor was the terror which chilled her heart, and made her teeth chatter, her lips livid, and her skinny hands to tremble, sufficient to hold her aloof from the committal of a great sin.

With pale guilty face, and hands almost cold as the dead, she bent down and clutched the paper; rapidly thrust it into her bosom glaring over her shoulder with straining eyeballs, murmuring exultingly, "Nobody sees me! It is mine now!"

Then, with a sudden shudder and a glance of terror at the dead man, she shut the writing-case and carried it to its station on the old chest of drawers, caught up her hood and rushed toward the door. On the threshold she met Chip.

"Hurry! Go over to Mr. Sanders!" she exclaimed, wildly clutching at his arm. "Run quick, Chip! — Bring the neighbors! — Reuben is dead!"

CHAPTER XIV.

What is man's love? His vows are broke,
Even while his parting kiss is warm; —
But woman's love all change will mock,
And like the ivy round the oak,
Cling closest in the storm.

HALLECK.

What though the world has whispered thee "Beware!"
Thou dost not dream of change.

MORRIS.

JULIE REVERE sat at midnight in the mansion where, fifteen years before, she had been installed as wife. It was an elegant establishment whither her husband had brought her after their three months' tour abroad. Everything which art and luxury could combine — statues embodying the sculptor's dreams of grace, pictures into which painters had wrought the beautiful conceptions of their lives, rare antique transparent vases, tables of inlaid mosaic strewn with costly *bijouterie*, couches and hangings of velvet, carpets from eastern looms whose grouped flowers seemed to rival Nature's — all these were gathered into her apartments, making such beautiful surroundings as would gladden an Artist's eye, and transform the poorest life into a dream of poesy and beauty.

But the mistress of this elegant mansion, with her dark, rich, Southern beauty — the curl of her short dainty upper lip like a rolled up crimson rose-leaf, the fire in her dark dreamy eye brighter than the flash of jewels gleaming on her person, — above all, the impetuous throb of her loving woman heart —

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was she as happy as when, at eighteen, she had stood in the drawing-room of Magnolia Grove House, a bride? Had her dreams been realized?

Alas, no! no! What woman who makes an idol, but, waking, weeps to find it clay? Who worships blindly, passionately, remembering not the command "Have ye no other gods before me!" but, ere long, is smitten down to dust? Such wild, mad loves exhaust the heart, or leave it a prey to its own consuming feelings: red hot coals are they, that, dying, leave charred and blackened ashes.

No! spite of her splendor — the sumptuousness of her *fêtes* — the richness of her equipage — and the costliness of her apparel — it was a weary life that Julie Revere led. If the slight lines traced across her low pensive forehead, the anxious troubled light which had crept into her dark eyes, the expression of unrest quivering among the curves of her red lips, and the indefinable nervous watchfulness which pervaded her whole demeanor — if these were the criterions, then indeed she was not happy.

It was late at night; and the waxen tapers in the silver candlesticks on the toilet had burned low. Julie was in her dressing-room. Minnie, the faithful slave girl who, with Jupiter, had followed the fortunes of her mistress, had been dismissed; and Mrs. Revere sat alone. She was in full dress, for she had that evening entertained a party of her gay and fashionable friends in the splendid saloons below; and as she swayed herself to and fro in a low cushioned chair, the faint glow of the tapers struck a hundred shivered rays from the diamonds on her silken velvet robe. Bandeaux of diamonds also broke up the midnight of her hair; and the face which ever and anon anxiously turned to the hands of a tiny French clock on the mantel, looked pale, hollow, almost sad, in the ghostly waning light.

And she was sad then; aye, miserable; for she sat in utter loneliness, awaiting the return of him who had not been beside her that night as she received her guests, who seldom accompanied his wife into the saloons of others, who was rarely at her side at church, concert, promenade or ball, in social or domestic life.

This was not the first time that Julie Revere had awaited until midnight—until the gray morning dawned, even—for her husband's return. It was a lonely, joyless life she led—a constant struggle to be gay with the gayest, happy with the happiest—to subdue that hungering cry of her heart; for how had she lived all those long years, without realizing that upon her had fallen that bitter desolation—that woe, than which no true woman would not rather die than experience—the lot of an unloved wife?

The lives of such are sere, barren, arid wastes—deserts wherein no oases bloom, no springs of cooling water gush, no feathery graceful palm-trees fling down their grateful shade; yet how many who smile amid their desolation, teaching the eye to sparkle, the cheek to bloom, the voice to swell in song and echo musically in the laugh—giving the world no token how the heart is withering the while.

Grief and neglect kill slowly; the heart can bear much ere it breaks; and a loving woman will forgive injuries, and bury the thorns of disappointment though they rankle to the spirit's core. So did poor Julie Revere.

But hours of neglect and coldness were fast doing their work upon her. Not outwardly alone, for the lines on her forehead were faint compared with the furrows in her heart whence the plough of Despair had uprooted every green and pleasant thing. At times she was capricious, petulant, almost insane; then the mood changed, and she would have humbled herself to dust for a

caress or love-word. The proud, defiant, agonized woman—the weak, loving girl—each by turn held sway. And still treading his own mad downward way, looking with cold scorn or with intervals of fitful tenderness on this poor suffering woman whose only weakness lay in loving too strongly an unworthy object, went Augustus Revere.

It was a May night, cold for the season; heavy clouds brooding in the sky, completely shut out the stars; and as Julie Revere sat in the midnight silence, she heard the patter of rain-drops on the leaves of the vine at her window. Throwing up the sash, she leaned out to cool her heated throbbing head. Long ago every footfall had died out from the streets; and if the slightest noise broke the silence—the quick tread of some belated traveller hastening homeward, or the watchman on his rounds—she leaned eagerly forward, listened anxiously till the echoes died in the distance, then with weariness and disappointment, sank back.

At last a hurried step came on the pavement, ascended the flight of marble steps, the click of a night-key was heard in the lock, and Mr. Revere entered the hall and went up to his wife's chamber. The watcher gave a long drawn sigh of relief, withdrew her white jewelled hands from their nervous clasp, and leaned slightly forward in an expectant attitude—a rich bloom breaking over her cheek.

Entering the room hurriedly, Revere's face was flushed; and his hair, still beautiful, and in thick curling masses unstreaked with gray, was tossed in disorder over his head. Fifteen years had left something of their impress on his face and form. His features had lost much of their delicacy; his fine elegant figure had approached almost to corpulency; and yet the general expression of his firm full lips and cold steel blue eyes, was little changed.

Approaching his wife with a careless "What! up yet, Jule?" he kissed her.

Julie recoiled slightly from the contact of those lips whereon lingered the nauseating fumes of wine and tobacco; but she replied, "Yes, Augustus, I have been expecting you for an hour past."

Mr. Revere was not intoxicated. Wine never affected him to drunkenness or imbecility. On the contrary, it seemed to sharpen his faculties to acuteness; therefore it had not escaped him that Julie shrank from him. His brow darkened.

"Well, it seems that even my return, at this late hour, is not welcome!" he exclaimed with an oath. "Jule, what the devil ails you? You're cold as an iceberg!"

For a moment the warm Southern blood of the proud woman was up in her cheek, and an angry retort trembled on her lips; but she did not utter it. Nervous, weak, weary with the evening's excitement, her watching, and his unkindness, she burst into tears.

Revere saw that he had gone too far; and he had a purpose to accomplish that night which would not permit him to injure her feelings past forgiveness; so he pushed a low ottoman towards his wife, and seating himself on it rested his head in her lap, saying soothingly:

"There, there, Jule, don't cry! I didn't mean anything; but it does vex me to come home late nights, and find you always up watching, pale as a ghost. But kiss me, Jule—let us not quarrel! I'm confounded tired, and half-sick to-night."

Julie Revere's dark eyes swam in tears; but she crushed them back with the strong impulse of her forgiving love, and bent her head down to his, kissing his white forehead again and again, threading her fingers through his thick curls. Bitter thoughts had been in her heart; often, as she sat alone in her

desolation, the pride of her nature whispered, "Why do you love him so? He is unworthy!" But now, in the caresses she lavished on him, her woman's heart was the prompter. It was seldom of late that her husband had shown any symptom of tenderness—so seldom, that, when such came, she drank them eagerly as desert travellers quaff the few precious drops bubbling up from the sand-spring. And so before the words he had that night uttered her pride had all melted; and she bent over him, kissing his forehead, murmuring "My dear Augustus! Love me, only love me!"

To say that she had been the wife of such a man as Augustus Revere for fifteen years without a knowledge of the life he led, would not be credible. That life had been the legitimate result of his youth. When, during the first years of the mercantile life, upon which, with the assistance of a liberal investment of her fortune inherited at her father's death shortly after her marriage, he embarked—when he often absented himself from her on the plea of detention at his counting-room, Julie readily excused him. Afterwards, on pretence of being engaged for the firm in extensive cotton speculations, he paid long visits to Southern cities—writing thence repeatedly for loans and drafts on her banker, which she never refused; nor then, did the trusting woman once suspect how the passion of Gaming was obtaining complete ascendancy over her husband.

But latterly, when he seldom sought his home until the midnight hour was past, and then came, flushed and heated with wine, demanding money in harsh, irritable tones—when, in his fitful slumbers, he babbled of cards and dice, winnings and losses,—how *then* could poor Julie Revere fail to realize the degrading truth that she was the wife of a gambler?

Ah, she learned what almost broke her heart! but even then, her wifely devotion did not fail. No means were untried to win

the deluded man from his ways. Faithful expostulations, pleadings, large loans to meet daily-recurring embarrassments, were all of no avail. Even remonstrances failed; answered only with reproaches, or days of absence and silent scorn — until, sinking under his coldness and neglect, she forbore them.

Sometimes, indeed — as for weeks, when Revere's winnings were great, and mercantile affairs went on smoothly — their life was calm; and if he was not profuse in his old-time lover demonstrations, at least he was not unkind, — and with an outward show of attention accompanied his wife into society, where his still elegant person and the polished manners he knew so well how to assume rendered him a favorite; but there were darker hours, when, maddened by losses, his demands for money became violent and imperious — and then again she yielded.

Thus this proud impetuous woman, with her haughty Southern blood — the mistress of a splendid household — queen of the world of Fashion, where her example was patterned, her smile coveted, and her nod treasured — whose rare beauty enslaved others abroad — in her own home, was a very slave to the fascination of a love she hugged tighter to her heart; and literally *purchased* the favor and attentions of her own husband with her fortune.

But she said to herself, "I will bear it! I might have let him go his downward way alone — I might have saved my fortune; but it was my pride to uphold him in his business relations with men — to make him master of a splendid home. And the world shall never know what return he has rendered me; they shall never gloat over my anguish, and say, 'Behold! an unloved, neglected wife!' I can bear *his* scorn — but no mocking pity! I will give festivals where rich and proud women shall envy me! — they shall envy me *him*, even! I will so cover his every error that, to the eyes of the world, he shall

never be humbled. This, for a time, until the last dollar of my fortune has melted — for I cannot resign his love while I have the means of securing it — this, for a time, until the crash comes and we sink together, and *then* —"

Ah yes! That was the sad refrain to all her heart-cries, "*What then?*"

It was a fatal stream on which Julie Revere had embarked, and she was powerless. Sometimes softest skies glassed themselves in waters on whose surface floated the rich blooming lotus-flowers of Youth, Pleasure and Love — and the voyager's fair white hands were outstretched to grasp them. Alas, that they withered in her touch! But oftenest, thunder-clouds hung aloft, and storms fell unpitifully — and the waves surged and boiled under her slight barque — and then came to her ears the roar of a deep dark cataract below. Sometimes Hope took the helm, and leaning forward, pierced the gloom with eagle vision, pointing to sunny skies and a pleasant shore beyond the wreck; but oftenest, dark, grim, sullen Despair sat at the prow, pointing downward, to the rushing fall. And so the boat drifted on. Already she felt the wilder rocking and swaying of the waves — already she saw the seething, boiling foam — the glassy brink over which she must glide; and the thunder-roar of the broken torrent echoed up from below.

They were on the verge of the fall! For, that night, Julie Revere had given her last festival; the last eagle of her once princely fortune had been expended; heavy mortgages lay on her house, furniture, plate, and equipage; her splendid wardrobe and jewels, it is true, were yet untouched — but, as the miserable woman bent over the flushed face which lay on her lap, she knew that once again her husband had left the gaming table a loser, and was prepared to sacrifice these, her last available resource, for him. No wonder that she pleaded in a sad, heart-hungry tone, "O, love me! *only love me!*"

And with this insight into her character, do you wonder, reader, that when that night he laid his head in her lap and recounted the old story of his losses — when, with his fascinating smile and honeyed persuasive words, he put his arm about her neck and drew her lips to his, whispering “Only this once, dear Julie — only this time! I know I shall be successful and retrieve my ill luck; and then, I will have done with this life forever!” do you wonder that, burying her face in his luxuriant curls, she burst into tears, saying, — “Thank God, Augustus, that this life is coming to an end at last! It is killing me! Everything has gone — everything but my diamonds — take them! Let this be your last visit to the play-house!”

CHAPTER XV.

She stood a moment as a Pythoness
 Stands on her tripod, agonized, and full
 Of inspiration gathered from distress,
 When all the heart-strings like wild horses pull
 The heart asunder.

BYRON.

JULIE REVERE sat with hushed breath, for her husband had fallen asleep with his head lying in her lap.

In that hour every womanly feeling of tenderness and softness swayed her; and she scarce dared to stir, lest change of position should break his slumber — quite forgetful of her own previous hours of excitement and watching, and consequent need of rest. Every now and then she bent tenderly over him, gazing on his upturned face, and letting her soft white hands wander caressingly and soothingly over his temples. His hair in thick curling masses lay outspread over the folds of her rich dress; his breath was heavy and damp with the fumes of wine; and a deep crimson flush upon his cheeks and lips told what poison-tide ran circling in his veins; and as Julie noted the Upas foot-prints of dissipation on a face whose every feature had once been the model of proud beauty, quick rushing tears sprang to her eyes and dropped silently among his brown curls.

It was a sad, weary night-vigil, that woman kept over him on whom she had wasted the best treasures of her heart; and a gloom deeper than that which shrouded the earth without settled down on her spirit. She wept silently. Upon the earth a morning would sometime break — the rain dropping down on the

vine-leaves at her window would cease; but when would the chill rain of neglect cease its pitiless peltings on her bleeding heart, and the dawn break, for her?

How many other hearts have wasted their treasures utterly! Rich freighted argosies, they sailed forth on sunny seas; but the chill winds blew out of gathering clouds—in mid-ocean they foundered on the jagged rocks of injury or neglect, and drifted astray, wrecked and rudderless, or sank down to deepest caves of forgetfulness, “unwept, unhonored, and unsung!”

There is no security for the earthly affections. At the altar we vow to “love, honor, and obey.” Alas, that words spoken so solemnly should be regarded so lightly! Then come years, when bright eyes grow dim with weeping—delicate frames shiver in the frosty airs of neglect and scorn—and thick gray ashes drop down on the hearth-stones of our hearts. And then such weary, weary years, dragging their slow circles into eternity! No hope that from those dead ashes can be rekindled the vivifying fire of answering love! No hope that from out the thickening folds of despair one ray can gild our gloom!

But in such hours, when all of earthly loves fail us—when the voice of Hope, the sweet singer, is heard no more—when the heart sinks, and the decay of our affections falls chillingly on the spirit—when for us there is neither love, or hope, nor any other joy, and we only hear the toll of their death-bells—then, oh *then*, if there is *One* arm reached down to help us, *One* eye to look down lovingly, *One* heart that will never thrust us out—that arm, that eye, that heart, the All-Merciful’s—how blessed are we still!

But of this Helper, Julie Revere had no experience. She who had set up an idol between herself and her Maker, could not see the *Divine* for the *human*; and now, when the shrine was crumbling and the idol tottering, her gaze followed it down,

down, to the dust. It must be trampled, broken, and her heart purified from its unholy worship, ere she could grow purer or happier.

For two long hours the sleeper lay with his head tossing to and fro in an uneasy slumber. Spite of the gentle pressure of Julie’s fingers on his throbbing temples, she could not magnetize him into calmness; spite of the silken cushions she gathered up from a couch near by and heaped beneath his head, he constantly changed his position and his sleep grew more disturbed and fitful. The glow on his cheeks became red as the flush of fever, his respirations came and went audibly, and deep lines corrugated his forehead which Julie vainly tried to smooth out with her delicate fingers. But though he tossed to and fro uneasily and dreams ran riot in his brain, he did not waken. His slumber seemed to grow more heavy in its very fitfulness.

Presently he tossed his hands aloft with violent gesticulations and uttered broken sentences.

“Six thousand! it is too much!—you shall not have it!—Golding, you shall not have it—go away! Money!—money!—you want money! Well, Jule will give it to us!—Jule—yes, *she* has thousands—gold and diamonds! But don’t tell her she is not my wife!—Ah, *she* comes!—*she* stands before me!—Mary Halpine, go away with your haunting eyes!” and he flung up his pale hands, wildly beating the air.

Every word fell thrillingly on the listener’s heart. She mechanically repeated them—“‘Is not my wife! Mary Halpine!’ What *can* he mean?” then groaning bitterly—“‘*Money*—you want money!’ Yes, and Jule will give it to us!’ Oh, Hugh Golding, you are the lure, then, to his ruin? *You* dog his steps, and drag him to these vile haunts? With your coming, come also his darkest moods. I see it now. It was for that, he begged my diamonds. Well, let them go!” she added

proudly. "You have won my jewels—but you failed in winning my *heart*. With all *his* weaknesses, this poor dreamer," and she laid her hand tenderly on Revere's forehead, "has the virtue *you* never boasted, my libertine cousin?"

Alas for woman's faith! Alas for thee, poor Julie Revere, —when the awakening comes!

Still Revere's sleep was troubled, still he tossed about uneasily, though nothing more escaped his lips; and Julie bathed his forehead in perfumed water from an elegant cut glass toilet bottle, gently unloosed his neck tie and unbuttoned his velvet vest, for his breathing seemed labored, then stirred the fragrant air of the luxurious dressing-room with her jewelled ivory fan. In loosening his vest, the elegant cashmere dressing gown fell back; and, protruding from a side pocket, the corner of a folded paper met Julie's eye. What was it? Some note for "debts of honor" contracted that evening? She felt almost sure it was such—she must see it? Perhaps to meet *this*, he had begged her diamonds! Heart-sick and shuddering, she said, bitterly: "Yes, I have a *right* to know this!" and drew forth the paper. As her fingers unfolded it, she saw her mistake. A torn envelope fluttered down to the carpet; it was a letter—and she would have returned it, had not her eye caught her own name and Golding's signature; then, ere she fully comprehended the act, with one lightning glance she had taken in the whole.

"TREMONT HOUSE, Boston, May 12th, 184—.

"DEAR GUS:

"Has Julie come down with the diamonds yet? I hope so, for I'm in a devilish tight box here—bad luck ever since I've been in this old Puritan city—scarcely spotted enough to meet my hotel bills. Shall set my face Gothamward in three days at farthest.

"Thought I'd drop a line, that you might have no excuse about not being in readiness with the money, as I go on to Phila., Saturday next, and don't want to be detained in New York longer than necessary for our interview, so meet me at Delmonte's on the arrival of the Friday evening train, with the needful."

"By the way, since I left you, I've been troubled with some few conscientious qualms because I compromised the affair so cheaply. Six thousand *only*, for a paper that would have lodged you in Sing Sing!—for, Revere, you know that, in plain English, you are a *bigamist*, and I could have proved it in any court in the land.

"But a bargain's a bargain. Meet me with the money, and I'll deliver up to you the marriage certificate; and Julie will never know that, when you made her Mrs. Revere, you were the lawful husband of little Mary Halpine.

"At Delmonte's, Friday night. Beware, if you fail me!

"Yours, GOLDING."

"P. S. Have just had a call from Jasper, who saw my name among the 'arrivals,' and looked in upon me with his chum. All right. A fine-looking fellow—will bear off College honors, so his friend says. A trifle steadier than when *you* or *I* were younger—he is, I reckon.

"H. G."

Every word was graven on Julie Revere's brain as with a pen of fire; then the paper dropped from the cold fingers locked tightly over her heart. A hue of marble settled on every rigid feature; a stony gaze grew in her eyes; and for a moment her teeth gleamed ghastly white through the parted lips that closed over them firm as though cut from iron. On her forehead, two swollen veins stood out like knotted purple whip-cords, then the

deep violet tide faded, and rushed back to congeal upon her heart, leaving her pallid as the dead. She did not speak or groan, for her breath seemed frozen, her form petrified; but that wild, agonized gleam — almost of insanity — looked out from her midnight eyes, like a wounded wild beast about to spring from its lair.

The sleeper's head lay very quiet now in her lap. His brown curls almost touched the hands clasped over a frozen heart; there was no sound in that chamber — not the throb of a pulse, or the rustle of a silken curtain — only the faint tick of the tiny mantel clock, and the patter of the dropping rain on the vine-leaves; but had a thunder-clap broken above, it could not have dissolved the icy deadly thrall which bound Julie Revere.

But at length the thoughts working idly in the dreamer's brain grew denser; his memory, wandering in the long gone years, gathered about a face long dim; and his thoughts shaped themselves into a word, which he uttered as his head turned uneasily on the silken curtain and his thick curls fell back against the hands clasped over Julie's marble heart — "Mary!"

The spell was broken. Julie saw it all. For fifteen years — oh, how many years of shame! — had she been that man's dupe; — for, how could she know that the poor girl, whose name he whispered in his slumbers, had been laid to rest ere the bridal ring was on her white finger, or the bridal kiss had touched her coral lips? — "Mary Halpine!" She saw it all now. And he, for whose truth she could have staked her life — of whom she had said to her own heart — "Despite his neglects and his coldness, he is mine — all mine" — oh, what a viper she had nourished! And herself? — what was she *now*? what *had* she been all those long, long years, but a dishonored woman?

Oh, it was terrible! She went almost mad with anguish — she beat her forehead with her clenched hand — she thrust the

head upon her lap to the sofa close by, as though his touch were poison — then rose to her feet.

Then rapidly, like a wounded tigress, she paced up and down the apartment. Furiously tearing off her jewels — the necklace, which rose and fell with every heavy respiration from her exquisitely moulded bust, the bracelets, that, wrought into twisted serpents, seemed to evolve lightning from their glittering gemmed scales, the costly watch and *chatelaine* at her girdle — and going to the toilet, where, imbedded in their dainty velvet-lined caskets, lay silvery pearls flashing and pale, blood-red rubies, and emeralds of the richest sea green — she gathered them all up with eager clutching hands, dashed them down on the carpet, trampled them madly into its depths till their fine gold settings were indented and broken, and the sharp gems pierced through her thin satin slippers, wounding her feet.

"There!" she cried, her eyes luminous with terrible anger, her white lips curved with terrible scorn. "*There* they lie — the jewels that tempted you! *They* won you — miserable wretch!" and she went up to him and shook his shoulder, hissing her words into his ear — "*They* won you — take them! — you have had all else! Soul and body I have been your slave — soul, body, and fortune. Oh, why did you not come to me and say, 'It is your *gold* I want — not *you*'? Why did you come to me with lies on your lips? Why did you drag me down from my happy girlhood innocence, from my father's arms, to misery — madness — moral death? Augustus Revere, God will judge you for that! Do you hear? If there be a God in heaven, he will judge you for that — base man, devil, fiend!"

But the man on the silken sofa slept on. Pitiable sight! Dead to her maddened words — unmoved by the whirlwind of passion which desolated her heart, sweeping away tenderness, pity, love, on its stormy track; still he slept on. His slumber

was no longer broken and fitful; the wine-flush had faded from his cheek, leaving him pale and haggard; his eyes were rimmed with dark circles; his hands fell prone down the side of the couch; and his breath came deep and regularly with every long low swell of his lungs.

Vainly Julie uttered her agonized reproaches; vainly her dainty white hands shook Revere's shoulder with almost giant strength; vainly she trode the broken gems into the carpet; and a curve of fine scorn seemed chiselled on her lips. For he lay not, as she imagined, in the heavy stupor of the drunkard's sleep. She knew not how, often of late, and every night since his interview with Golding and its terrible revelation, in order to deaden his brain and obtain sleep he had revived a long forgone habit. During his college days, in common with a set of idle speculative classmates, he had often indulged in opium reveries; now, he drugged his nightly wines for a narcotic; and thus, getting paler and stiller, his deadened brain lapsing into perfect forgetfulness, he lay under its influence.

With utter contempt and loathing Julie spoke.

"Fool, fool, that I have been these long years — to love, aye, worship, such a *thing* as this!" and she struck at his nerveless arm with her jewelled fan. "For fifteen years to worship him — to bring him house, home, fortune, everything! literally to *buy* his notice. To have no token of tenderness — not even the commonest attentions of a wife from her husband, save I bought them with my gold! For fifteen years filling a place such as abandoned women fill — believing myself *his wife* — ha, ha!" and she laughed such a wild shrill laugh that its echo startled her. "His *wife* — ha, ha! that is good! Here I stand, while he sleeps his beastly drunken sleep — that is good, too! Angel — man — devil! Coming here from his drunken revels, to wheedle my last gift — my jewels! Yes, he shall have them

— every one of them," and she stamped her bleeding feet again and again upon the crushed gems — "every one of them! I wish they were so many fiends to drag his soul down to perdition — aye, every one of them — and have them, *with my curse!*"

Still Revere slept, every long low respiration beating on her heart like the stroke of an iron hammer.

"Yes, sleep on!" she cried with withering scorn. "Men who break women's hearts can *afford* to sleep soundly — aye, *sweetly*, too. A merry pastime is it! But no matter: I will touch your heart yet!" and going to her writing-desk she dashed off a few hasty impetuous lines, threw them on the carpet beside the crumpled letter and the trampled jewels — snatched up a silken mantle from a chair, flung open the door, and fled rapidly down the staircase and out into the dark wet night — *whither?*

CHAPTER XVI.

"Go now — the lingering curse is given,
The spell is laid on thee;
The scorn of earth — the wrath of heaven
Is in thy destiny."

Oh! that my heart was quiet as a grave
Asleep in moonlight!

ALEXANDER SMITH.

THE gray night-clouds dissolved in gentle rain; and as the sun rose fair and bright above the mighty city, the hum of awakened life grew deeper, louder, in the crowded mart — swelling to its noontide height, then declining with the day; nor was it until the sun neared his setting, and long lines of golden light slanted through the rosy silken curtains of the luxurious dressing-room where he lay, tinging the perfumed air with a soft, glowing haze — not until then, did Augustus Revere awake from his lethargic sleep.

All day long, domestics had come and gone through the silent rooms of the mansion; Minnie had vainly sought her mistress — wondering at her strange absence, the broken jewels imbedded in the carpet, and still more at her master's protracted slumber which resisted all attempts of rousing him therefrom.

When Revere awoke, a physician whom he recognized bent above him.

Minnie glided cautiously in, shut the door behind her, and went to the sofa where the bewildered man sat.

"Where's your mistress? Send her to me!" he said petu-

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lantly. "She was here when I went to sleep. What! night, almost? Can I have slept so long?" and he looked in perplexed surprise to the western window.

The mulattress placed a confused mass of broken jewelry and two written papers in his hand.

"Lord, Massa Revere, 'pears like something dredful's happened. Missis 'nowhar to be found; and here's her diamonds, and rings, and splendid watch, all broke into bits and just stamped into the carpet. 'Pears like as if she's gone ravin' 'stracted. Here's some letters, too, I found 'long side — p'raps Missis says there, where she's gone to. Do read, Massa!" And the terrified slave crouched down at his feet.

With bewildered gaze, Revere looked at the broken, scarred jewels; then his eye fell on Golding's letter. In an instant he comprehended it all. With a groan of mingled rage and despair, he crumpled it in his clenched hand; then ran his eye over the paper whereon, in blotted, heavy pen strokes, as if written under the maddest excitement, were a few anguished words in Julie's hand.

"Augustus Revere, a dreadful fire is in my heart! It burns — it burns! Your hand kindled it. May God forgive you — I never will! One hour ago, so wholly — soul and body, heart and brain — was I your slave, I would have lain down at death's door to save you a single pang — now, now, I am about tempted to stop forever your vile heart's throbbings! I might kill you where you lie in your beastly drunken sleep — but I will not! *Live*, for her of whom you have babbled in your sleep — her, who, perchance, had not the gold and lands for which you won me and made me *what I am* — a mad, ruined, heart-broken woman! *Live*, to know how I scorn, loathe, aye, *hate* you! And, oh God, to think I have so loved you! — But no matter, the world is wide — somewhere must there be room for this

wrung heart, this wild brain. Lest I do you harm, I go! God forgive you — I cannot!"

"What is it, Massa?" asked the terror-stricken woman at his feet, watching the pallid face, dilated straining gaze, and trembling nerveless hands of the man before her. "Massa Revere, for de Lord's sake, what is it? Is Missis Julie dead?"

"Go down, slave! — Have done with your infernal talking!" thundered her master, stamping his foot heavily into the imbedded Cashmere roses of the carpet — his eye kindling, and his lips livid with passion or fear — But not a word of this! not a word of these letters or these jewels, as you value your life! Do you hear?" and he grasped her shoulder till his nails sank through her attire into the flesh. "Do you hear?"

"Yes, Massa!" and she shrank in terror and pain from his iron grasp.

"Then leave me instantly!"

Affrighted and trembling, the slave woman shrank away.

Late on the evening of the ensuing day, Golding entered a private saloon at Delmonte's gambling house. For a half hour he impatiently awaited the arrival of Revere; then a waiter tapped at the door and put a note into his hand.

"Golding: — I am confined to my room with illness, and cannot meet you at Delmonte's, per agreement. Come to me.

"Yours, REVERE."

"Well, if that's all, I'll go. I knew he would not dare play me false!" and Golding went out. Walking hastily up the business portions of the city, he soon found himself above the Battery and Park in a quiet and aristocratic quarter. Ascending the steps of an elegant mansion, a ring gained him immediate admittance.

Revere sat in the library where their last interview had taken place; and looking pale and haggard stepped forward to meet him.

"Sorry to find you ill, my boy! This little affair hasn't worried you, I hope? Perhaps Jule clung to the diamonds — women *do* love baubles, they say — and you had trouble in raising the money? Am sorry, 'pon my honor; but here's the document!" — and Golding drew forth the marriage certificate from his pocket-book.

Revere's face was pale as death, but a lightning gleam glittered in his eyes, and an iron curve settled on his lips.

"Hugh Golding," — and as he spoke he stepped to the door and turned the key in the lock, transferring it to his own pocket, and, coming back, stood side by side with his visitor — "Hugh Golding, I was not so ill but I could have met you to-night; but I wanted you *here* — here in my own house — *in my own power*! Do you hear? — *in my own power*! Julie knows all! Last night your letter fell into her hands — it matters not how. Blame your own cursed stupidity for ever writing it! *She has gone!* There are her jewels!" — pointing to the table where in a gilt card-receiver, lay a flashing heap — diamonds, rubies, opals, mingling their sparkling scintillations. "Look at them — examine them — their settings all defaced, broken, trampled upon by her angry feet, but the gems uninjured yet. Still would they bring me thousands; but, mark me, not *one dollar* raised from their sale shall ever cross your palms. For that paper you hold in your hand must be mine *without an equivalent!*"

Golding drew back. "Never!" he said firmly through his shut teeth.

"Softly," replied Revere in a cool hard tone as though secure of his position. "We are alone — I have the power! By

means of *this*” — and he drew a revolver — “will I *compel* you! And, by Heaven, if worst comes to worst, I will not hesitate.”

“Ha, two can play at that game, I reckon!” Golding thrust his hand into his breast pocket. But a hasty oath fell from his lips — his face grew pale — his hand fell nervously to his side. He was unarmed! In hurriedly changing his coat at the hotel before proceeding to Delmonte’s, he had left his weapon.

A grim smile broke the iron curve on Revere’s lips.

“I was prepared for this, or prepared for its opposite. It is best for you that you have no weapon — I should not have permitted its use!” — and his eye darkened and his hand touched his revolver significantly. “Fifteen years under your thrall have not been so pleasant but I desire freedom. This last week’s misery has made me bold. Resign me the paper, and you leave this house a safe man; refuse it —” and he raised the weapon.

“You dare not murder me!” said Golding with a sickly smile, and an attempt at careless bravado.

“*Dare* not?” echoed Revere scornfully. “You do not know me. I am a desperate man! and a desperate man dares *anything*! The paper!” — and he reached forth his hand.

To resist was folly — madness. Golding saw it. He yielded; and though futile rage played on every feature, he deposited the paper in the outstretched hand.

“I thank you — I am your debtor!” — and with a mocking bow, Revere took the key from his pocket and unlocked the door.

On the threshold Golding paused. A gleam of hate lit his eyes, and a deadly smile shot athwart his lips.

“Yes, you *are* my debtor, Augustus Revere! But for that paper I have rendered you up this night I will yet have ample recompense! That recompense shall be in *my revenge*! There

is *one* way yet — *through your boy*! I can touch your heart to the quick *there*! Go to him — claim him now, if you will — but *I will have been there before you*!”

There was a click of the key in the lock after Golding’s departure; and as hour after hour of the night waned, Augustus Revere sat with pale face bowed on his hands, and eyes bent fixedly on the paper before him; then rising, he locked it carefully in an inner drawer of his *escritoire*, and went back to his seat. So the gray dawn found him — his eyes still shaded by his pallid hands.

Was it possible that those were tears trickling silently through his pale fingers? Had that iron man a heart, where, in some long-closed secret chamber, had been lain away, unknowingly, some tender memory of the injured girl who long years before had mouldered back to dust? Had Remorse, with clutching fingers, secured him for her prey?

CHAPTER XVII.

Listen! There's shame, and hissing, and contempt, and none but laugh who names me; none but spits measureless scorn upon me!

BROWNING.

IN his room at C—— College, among a party of convivial friends and class-mates, where wit and wine flowed freely, and the brilliant coruscations of Jasper Golding's humor flashed athwart the social atmosphere like meteors — there and thus, came to him the knowledge which arrested the song and jest upon his lips.

A letter was placed in his hand; and though for a minute he seemed struck by a sudden blow, reeled in his chair and clung to the table for support, while his cheek was blanched to marble hue, he folded it calmly after the reading, thrust it carelessly into his vest pocket, and, turning to a companion, said with an attempt at a smile:

"Pass the wine, Howland! My throat is as dry as the old Prex's sermons! Pour me a bumper."

Louis Howland obeyed; but hardly had the glass touched Jasper's lips before his hand wavered, the goblet fell, and he sank in a dead faint from his chair. — In five minutes more, completely recovered by the cold water his companions had freely bestowed on his face, he took his seat again at the table.

"What's to pay, Golding? Bad news? Anybody ill or dead?" inquired a class-mate opposite.

Jasper's fresh beautiful boyish lip curled scornfully ere it was bathed in the rich red wine — and a light laugh confirmed his words:

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"Nonsense! It was absolutely nothing — a mere trifle, that's all! Positively, I'm getting womanish! I declare, my hand shakes! Here, Bob — drink a sentiment with me — 'Confusion to 'pony' chums, prayer-bells, and peaching tutors! From these, and other like college nuisances, 'good Lord deliver us!'" — and he held out a brimming goblet.

The toast was received with shouts of approbation; afterwards, Bob Darrah sang a "smoking song," — his head lost in the floating cigar-wreaths about him, and his feet at an angle of forty-five degrees on Jasper's study-table; then followed other songs, impromptu witticisms, gay badinage, and lively conversation — the latter turning mostly on college affairs, sometimes interlarded with expletives neither choice nor classical, though often not unapt, detailing how this class-mate made a complete "fizzle" in that day's recitation — how the "old Prex" was "down" on that one, and had him "up" for misdemeanor — what a "rich" time a quartet of dignified, bearded Sophs. had "smoking out" a newly-fledged Freshy — or how some particularly obnoxious tutor, convinced that "something was rotten in the state of Denmark," made the discovery of a brace of antique defunct cats in his dressing-closet; or, returning late some dark night from a visit to his Dulcinea, on gaining his room, met apparently some monster visitant from Goblin-land, which proved eventually to be some superannuated white horse perfectly at home among the said tutor's Greek "roots," giving token of his appreciation of the Classics by converting them literally into dead (and eaten) languages!

But over all the evening's festivities the utmost good humor prevailed; and no laugh rang louder, or wit-shaft cut keener, than Jasper Golding's.

"Come fellows — Edmonds, Reade, Darrah, all of you — let's break up. It's late — the tutors will be sneaking round," urged

Louis Howland, rising; for he saw that their young host was drinking to excess.

"No! no! let's make a night of it. Tutors be hanged! Sit down, boys!" and Jasper sprang up and locked the door, and placed the key in his pocket.

"No — we must go. It's time we were all asleep, or at our books. Think of your morrow's recitations. I must bid you good night, at least," and Howland approached the door.

His advice seemed sensible. Jasper unlocked the door, and in three minutes all had passed out. But Howland walked a few steps along the passage, then returned.

"Golding, I do not want to intrude — but *I* was not deceived about that letter. There was some bad news in it. Can I be of any assistance to you? My purse —" and he drew it from his pocket.

A quiver contracted Jasper's beautiful lips; for an instant he bowed a forehead white as a girl's and overswept with rings of brown hair on Louis Howland's manly shoulder; his hand wrung that which clasped his. Then he choked down the rising softness, raised his head, and spoke huskily:

"God bless you, Howland! but you can do nothing. Only leave me!"

Louis Howland passed out, looking back with something like moisture in his own fine dark eyes. When alone, Jasper drank off rapidly glass after glass of wine, then flung himself down on a chair at the window and leaned his forehead on the sill. Not a groan, tear, or sob escaped him; the wine circling in his veins failed to warm him; he was cold — cold as death.

O, terrible, when the thunderbolt falls headlong from a clear sky, blasting, blackening the fresh tree, steeping its green verdure in liquid fire, scarring it to its core!

So had all the hopes that bloomed for that proud, sensitive,

noble-hearted, ambitious boy perished — so had every green and pleasant thing been stripped from his life, and his heart been stricken. Like a lightning stroke it came — that cruel, cunning, fiendishly devised letter, wherein Golding sought to reach the father's heart through his boy's. Until this hour had this knowledge been hoarded — and now, a lie wrought into its whole fabric, it came — wild, maddening, stunning. There, upon the table, lay the terrible revelation — "Augustus Revere is your father! You are the child of shame!" More — much more — of hypocritical sorrow and hollow offers of kindness had Golding written; but Jasper only kept his eyes bent despairingly on those fatal, stunning words — "*The child of shame!*"

Alas for the dreams of his proud heart, his fresh youthful aspirations, his ambitious spirit! all stricken down to dust. To the *future* his gaze went forward — ah, *such* a future, with that stain, that heritage of shame and sin! The thought of those coming years was the keenest pang.

He sprang up and paced the floor madly. Save for two blood-red spots on his cheeks, his face was pale as marble. His eyes burned with a fitful hollow brilliancy, like lamps shining out of a tomb.

"Terrible! I had rather *died* than learned this! God! why did he keep it from me, to reveal at this late day? Why did he not keep silent eternally, or tell me earlier, ere I built me up such a fair bright future, — when I had associated *her* with every dream, and said, 'To win Orah Howland will I do this, and this'? Oh such an elixir as her love would have proved! By what feats of prowess would I have won it! — what conquests in the world of Mind and Thought! I would have gone on from victory to victory, wresting laurel after laurel till the crown was woven to lay at her feet. Now — now —

what have we in common? — she the peerless, proud girl, and I, the humbled, disgraced, degraded offspring of a debauchee? In her purity and her pride, she would strike me into dust with the lightning glances of her eyes. Oh, this is bitterest of all!" and the agonized boy flung himself on his bed in a wild passion of tears — blessed tears, for they saved him from madness!

From that night, began the downward course of Jasper Golding.

Maddened by the one haunting thought which followed him everywhere, he rushed headlong into the wildest vortex of dissipation — drank deeply of the wine-cup, handled the dice, drove fast horses on the race-ground, frequented theatres and every place of public amusement in the adjoining city — vainly seeking to drown memory in Pleasure's Lethean wave. It were bootless to recount the steps by which he trod his rapid downward way. A high, proud, sensitive soul, suddenly stung into madness, is not long in rushing to its own ruin. In the maddening anguish which rent the poor youth's heart — the blight dropped over his future — and the wide chasm which separated him, the illegitimate, penniless son, from the proud, pure, patrician girl — there was enough to appal a stronger nature than he possessed; and it was but a legitimate result that he should dash into the path which led still further from her side.

But this could not last always. Dissipation and late hours told upon him; neglect of study and total failure in recitation were not infrequent; midnight orgies, from which he often returned in a state of intoxication, could not always be kept concealed, though generous classmates often bore him to his room and remained with him the night through, that the tutors should not find him thus; at length the sad, disgraceful finale came. A letter was forwarded to his guardian — "Hugh Golding, Esq., New York city," stating that, "owing to irregularities

of conduct, neglect of study, and defiance of college discipline, it had become the necessary duty of the Faculty to forthwith expel his ward, Jasper Golding, from the University."

Hugh Golding read this letter with a smile. "It works well. I told you, Augustus Revere, I would reach *your* heart yet!" then, re-enveloping it, he directed it to the gambler merchant, and started to seek Jasper, whom it was his policy not to seem to desert. The remorse-stricken Revere also sought his son; but *too late!* Both guardian and father were unsuccessful — Jasper had disappeared.

"At least, my revenge is gained!" said Golding as he returned from his fruitless journey. "Though I did hope the lad would give me a clue to his whereabouts. But no matter now! I can afford to wait patiently his turning up — I do not intend to desert him altogether. Meantime, with his last quarter's remittance — which, thank Fortune, I never suffered to reach its destination — I can *live!*"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Oh! fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long —
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.

LONGFELLOW.

PEACE stood upon a flight of marble steps at the door of an elegant Fifth Avenue mansion. Her hand trembled on the bell-knob; and its clear sharp peal sounding out from the hall struck an indefinable dread to her heart.

Poor girl! her black dress betokened that she was again in mourning; but no outward token could symbolize the utter desolation of her heart.

Homeless! an orphan! Words which define the saddest of lots! Never a loving eye to grow tender at your coming, or weep for your going — never a lip to smile at your joys, or mourn for your griefs — never a hand to push back the curls from a young girlish forehead, or to draw down an aching head to a throbbing heart. God pity such! and help them! When every earthly friend and helper has been laid away under the sod — when the earth seems vast and drear and lonely — then may the great Friend stretch forth the Everlasting arm of His Love!

Peace was alone in the world. She stood now shrinking, trembling, at the door of the mansion within whose walls she must toil for a livelihood. She was to become a governess.

When Reuben Wedgewood's estate was settled, no will was found; and, according to the decree of the law, the whole passed

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into possession of the nearest kin — Hannah Ward. There were many who shrugged their shoulders, and said among themselves —

"It is strange! We always thought he meant to do right by Peace;" and some even dared to whisper their suspicions that all was not as it should be; but when did ever the opinion of man prevail against the stern codes written down in statute books? And so the Ridge farm passed into the hands of the harsh spinster, and the bereaved girl was left literally portionless as she was homeless.

It was a dull, aching pain which thrilled Peace's heart as she went to pay a farewell visit to the graves on Wood Hill; and, leaning against a tree, looked with swimming eyes on the mounds which covered the still pale faces of all who had loved her. September had not faded — the September which had witnessed her graduation at Northfield, and saw her fitted, by Aunt Patience's precious legacy, for that teacher's life to which she must now look as her means of support, — but already sad, sighing winds were astray in the forests — their mournful voices, premonitory of the coming dreary autumn. How unlike it was to the September of a year ago! Then the hazy beauty of an early Indian Summer flushed the landscape into living beauty, — then, amid her pleasant school duties, she penned long letters to Uncle Reuben and read his affectionate fatherly responses, anticipating the time when she should return to the dear old home and watch lovingly over his declining years. Now, that home was hers no more; another grave lengthened its swelling mound on Wood Hill; — beside the wrinkled, aged sister, and the girl who in her bloom and beauty had found a grave, Reuben also slumbered quietly.

True a home — a shelter, rather — had been offered Peace. It was a deep game that Hannah Ward had played; and she

could not long bring herself, despite her grasping, avaricious nature, to look unmoved upon the pale face of the orphan; besides, she feared the construction the people of Meadow-Brook would put upon so harsh an act; but the high-spirited girl, with an instinctive intuition that she had been wronged, and revolting from a life with the hard, cold spinster, rejected the grudging offer, and resolved to earn her own livelihood.

An opportunity soon presented itself.

On the day previous to her graduation, Madame Southworth sent for Miss Wedgewood to visit her in her own room. An open letter lay before the lady.

"My dear child," she said kindly, smoothing down the curls of the beautiful girl, and taking one hand in her own, "This letter contains an inquiry for a governess from my Seminary. The applicant is unknown to me, — but a New York lady, who says her former governess was educated here, and she is desirous of another to fill her place. The pupils are her two children, a girl and boy of twelve and ten. Salary, three hundred per year. Knowing somewhat of your circumstances, I give you the first offer. What say you, my dear? — shall I write in the affirmative?"

"Thank you, madam, I will go!" said Peace, gratefully and bravely; and thus was made the decision that should take her far from those quiet classic shades.

There was a brief visit to the Ridge — a farewell hour in the morning twilight on Wood Hill, tears dropped upon the new-made grave and the sod which covered Patience, and a passionate, clinging pressure of her lips to the little white headstone whereon was rudely graven, "Mary, — aged twenty-three;" and then she turned away and walked back down the hill slope and through the valley to the Ridge, where Hannah Ward was moving with heavy steps from kitchen to dairy and dairy to kitchen.

"La, eat your breakfast, child! You'll be sick, if you ride on an empty stomach," urged the spinster. But little food passed the girl's lips; she rose from the table, walked through the house where every room now deserted showed some token of the dead; took down the old-fashioned profiles of Patience and Reuben from the west room wall, and laid them in her traveling satchel; then sat down on the front door threshold, where stood Chip watching the approach of the old yellow stage-coach up the willow-guarded highway.

"I'm thinkin' it 'll be dreadful lonesome here, Miss Peace, after ye're gone," said the bound boy, leaning his lank form against the doorway, with a sorrowful look in his dim blue eyes. Time, though it had added to the stature, and subdued the quaint chatter of the faithful lad, had not eradicated his reverence for Peace. "Yes, there comes the darned old stage to take ye off! Taint as if you was goin' to school this time, and Patience and Uncle Reuben was here to see you start. You see," and he approached with a mysterious air, and a whisper, "between you and me, I b'lieve *she*," snapping his fingers toward the kitchen, "don't care! She's glad on't! The old dragon, — I *hate* her!" and he ground his teeth.

"Hush, Chip! You mustn't talk so! I shall come to see you sometime — another year, perhaps. There, help put my trunks on the stage. I shall not forget you!"

Hannah now came to the door, hearing the roll of wheels.

"And so ye're goin', Peace? Well, good luck to ye — and when ye want a nice comfortable home, jest remember the offer I made ye. Maybe, you'll be glad to get back some day. Good bye!" and she held out her hard horny hand.

"Hannah Ward, I would not accept a home from you, if I starved! When I come back here, it must be as I have always lived here — *by right* — the right of *adoption*! Aunt Patience

meant it — she said so on her death bed: Uncle Reuben meant it, *you knew that*; but the law gave to you, and made me a beggar! But I am going where I can earn my own bread: if you can eat yours, without the stings of conscience, you will be a happy woman! Yet one thing I would ask of you — be kind to Chip — treat him well — he is good, honest, and faithful. Hannah Ward, good bye!”

It was the old passionate spirit which had occasionally stirred the quiet of her childhood, that prompted this outburst of indignation. Peace felt that she had been wronged — though, certainly, of the heinousness of the sin Hannah had committed, she had not the faintest suspicion — and she had not so far learned prudence or subjection as to restrain her thoughts in this parting hour. She walked proudly down the path to the stage with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes.

“Good bye, Chip!” she cried from the window, as she was borne down the road.

“Well, I never! — What impudence! — Can she *know*?” and Hannah Ward dropped down on the nearest kitchen chair, a shade of paleness on her hard cheek. “But no! what a fool to be scar’t to death! She was only mad — that’s all! Much good’ll the property ever do Mary Halpine’s brat *now*!” and with a bitter smile on her thin withered lips, she set about her daily work.

Chip, meantime, hung over the gate gazing after the stage; and when it turned a bend in the long sweeping highway, he went and hid himself in the long barn a full half hour, till Hannah’s shrill call broke his sorrowful reverie.

So, Peace had gone forth from the home of her childhood; and now she stood on the steps of the stately city mansion which, for one year, was to be her abiding place. Little wonder was it, that, wearied with the long journey, alone in a great metropolis,

the stately free-stone walls seemed to frown down threateningly upon her, and the sharp bell-peal struck a thrill of dread to her heart — and when the heavy door slowly turned on its hinges, and a fat porter who looked the very personification of over-fed insolence, stood before her with a contemptuous stare, she seemed ready to sink.

“I am expected —” she at length faltered forth.

“Ah, so I should suppose!” said the man, superciliously elevating his eye-brows and eyeing the trunks the hackman had deposited on the steps. “Your name, miss?” — and he stood across the threshold, not inviting her to enter.

A sudden revulsion of feeling swept over Peace. Her spirits rose indignantly; a lightning flash darkened her blue eyes, her cheeks were crimson, and her form seemed to dilate.

“Go to your mistress instantly. Tell her that Miss Wedgewood is here!” she said haughtily, stepping over the threshold and setting foot on the velvet carpet of the hall.

The proud self-possession which displaced all her drooping timidity would have commanded the respect and obedience of the pampered menial who involuntarily stepped backward and laid his hand on the knob of the drawing-room door to admit her, had not the voice of Mrs. Delano been heard from the upper hall, as that lady leaned over the rosewood banister, saying:

“It is the new governess, John. Show her up.”

With a firm step Peace followed him up the spacious staircase, her foot sinking inch-deep into the luxurious carpet — the dim light through the ground glass of the windows revealing a richly frescoed wall and ceiling — and was ushered through an open door on the right into a boudoir draped with hangings of pale blue silk and lace embroidery, and furnished with lounges, *tete-a-tetes*, and easy chairs upholstered with satin brocatelle of the same azure hue. On a sofa near the door sat a large, over-

dressed woman of perhaps forty, with a face whose vulgar red the paling tint of the curtains could not subdue, holding a fat pink-eyed poodle affectionately in her arms; and in a window recess from which the hangings were looped back with massive cord and tassels of blue and silver, her graceful form clad in an exquisitely embroidered snowy cambric wrapper and half-buried in the depths of an ample reception chair, her tiny slippered foot on a velvet cushion, and intent upon the perusal of the French novel in her fair jewelled hands, sat an elegant girl. These were Mrs. Delano and her eldest daughter, Florence.

"Ah, you have come, then? for I presume I address the young lady sent by Madame Southworth," said the former, with what was intended for a dignified inclination of her head, but which the shortness of her neck transformed into a little jerking nod.

"I am Miss Wedgewood, madam," replied Peace quietly, taking the nearest seat.

"Florence, my love, this is the teacher."

The young lady glanced up from her novel, and with a haughty nod coolly scanned Peace from head to foot; but the quiet self-possessed look from the calm blue eyes under the shadow of the mourning veil, dispossessed her, — and, feigning an aristocratic indifference, she dropped her eyes upon her book again.

"Miss Wedgewood, I had no idea but Madame Southworth would send me an older person. You look very young. The last governess was much older."

"I *am* young," rejoined Peace; "not quite seventeen. But I shall be growing older every day," she added, slightly smiling.

"Ah, yes! But that is very young — a mere child. Really, Victorine is almost as large as you are. You are tall — quite tall — but too slender. Are you strong, miss?"

Peace's cheek flushed.

"Madam, is my size, or strength, or years, the criterion of my qualifications to *teach* your children? Madame Southworth's statement only involved my *scholarship*, I presume!" she said spiritedly.

"Dear me! Why, Miss Wedgewood, you're hasty! I meant nothing of the kind, I assure you. Pray, sit down!" — for Peace had risen. "Your youth seems objectionable only so far as your power of *governing* is concerned. And yet, after all, it may be best — for you will enter more into the feelings of the children. They always complained that Miss Benson was too stiff and unbending. You see, my dear," — and the lady smiled condescendingly, — "I, for one, don't believe in taxing teachers too hard — nor pupils, either. Thus your duties will not be onerous — no dull, flagging scholars to urge along — for Alexis is uncommonly clever; indeed, Doctor Parbox assures me that his brain is prematurely developed — and then Victorine's passion for Music is really wonderful! You are an accomplished pianist, your Principal wrote me. Do you sing, also?"

Peace nodded an affirmative.

"Well, I am glad of that. Miss Benson had no voice. Victorine will be delighted. As regards management, no doubt you will find my darlings perfectly submissive. Perhaps, now and then, a little exuberance of spirits on Alexis's part will need restraint — but usually he is an affectionate and yielding child. There is little Cora Palfrey — my nephew's child — whose home is with us — you will not object to her, occasionally, in the school-room, Miss Wedgewood?"

"I am very fond of children," replied Peace.

"Well, the child will be no care. She is a mere baby, following Victorine everywhere. But hark! I hear the darlings now from the nursery. Rather noisy, I declare! That Kathleen! — dear me, I must dismiss her! She don't manage right

with Alexis!—always crossing him!”—and at that moment sundry shrieks, a kicking of boots against the wall, and the sound of an angry boyish voice interlarded with expostulations in a rich Irish brogue, issuing from a room across the passage-way, proclaimed an “exuberance of spirits” on the young gentleman’s part quite shocking to Peace.

At this moment, the pet poodle, Marco Bozzaris, leaped from his mistress’s lap, joining in the chorus with a series of sharp, yelping cries. Miss Florence put her white hands over her ears, exclaiming, “Dear me! mamma, how shocking!”—and Mrs. Delano gave the bell-rope a vigorous pull.

“Ha, ha, ha! Marky never hears Alexis’s voice, but he joins in the cry. I’ve no doubt but Kathleen has been crossing him in some harmless sport. These Irish girls are so impatient! I shall dismiss her immediately. It seems her special delight to worry my darling. Come here, Marky—come here this minute, I say!” she called out, in a tone which, if “a low sweet voice in woman” be the criterion of true gentility, certainly removed Mrs. Delano from the slightest suspicion of such pretensions. “Ah, Robert,”—as the serving boy appeared—“tell Kathleen I want her *instantly!*”

Peace had not spoken during this scene, but now she said, “Madam, if you please, I will be shown to my room.”

“Ah, bless me!” exclaimed the purse-proud woman whose richness of attire and elegant surroundings could not conceal her innate vulgarity, “I had forgotten, Miss Wedgewood, that you might be weary. You came by the boat, I presume, and they are dreadful for making one sea-sick when the Sound is rough. In consideration of your journey, you need not commence your duties in the school-room until to-morrow. Kathleen, show Miss Wedgewood her room; and then, do you return to me!”

Peace followed the Irish girl who had just made her appear-

ance at the door—through the long hall covered with carpets of the choicest texture into which her little feet sank as in a bed of flowers—up a flight of stairs, through another hall and up another flight covered with plain straw matting, into a low chamber sparingly furnished with a bed, table, wash-stand, and a couple of chairs, and whither the porter had already conveyed her trunks.

This little attic chamber was in no respects better than those occupied by any servant in that household; and the good-natured Kathleen understood Peace’s glance of indignant surprise, and said half-apologetically:

“Please, miss, ye mustn’t mind the place for a little while. Miss Florence is to give a monst’rous birth-day party the next week—and it’s ivery room in the house’ll be crammed, sure; but after that, Mrs. Delano will give ye a nice great room down stairs. It isn’t the likes of yez, miss—for ye’re a rale born leddy, ivery inch of ye—that should be put into the garret! And is there anything I can do for ye now—to help ye, miss?”—and the honest-hearted girl lingered at the door.

“No, no! thank you. Only leave me!”—and Peace could scarcely restrain the sobs that choked her voice until she was alone; then she turned the key in the lock, threw herself in a chair, and burying her face in the bed-clothes, burst into tears. And bitter, indignant tears, were they too, that streamed from her blue eyes.

“And *this* is the place to which I have been looking forward as a happy refined home! This is what I have educated myself for—to teach wild, spoilt, romping children! to be little better than a hired nursery girl! I will never stay! That purse-proud, vulgar woman—that haughty daughter, with her doll-face and insolent stare! They may keep their gold—and I will go forth, and do anything—teach the children of the back-

woods—do anything, rather than remain here!”—and she rose and paced the room excitedly, and with flashing eyes.

But softly, softly, Peace! Have you never heard that arrogance and pride of purse always look down contemptuously on those one round below them in the social ladder? that the only “golden calf” was not set up for worship in the long gone ages, but even, in our own day, there be many who stand on gilded pedestals?

No, you have never seen the great world—you never learned any such teachings;—but you will.

At seventeen, when the blood boils with life’s early fever, and wells up angrily against slight and insult, I know it is hard to bear! But Peace, you must school that warm, rich heart—gird on a breast-plate, as of steel, against which the barbed arrows of contempt and injury shall glance harmlessly off—keeping every treasure of your young spirit—Faith, Trust, Love—hoarded carefully for one who cometh, that spirit’s lord and king!

CHAPTER XIX.

Have you not heard the Poet tell
How came the dainty babie Bell
Into this world of ours?
The gates of heaven were left ajar:
With folded hands and dreamy eyes
She wandered out of Paradise!

T. B. ALDRICH.

At nine, on the morning following her installation in Mrs. Delano’s house as governess, Peace found herself in the school-room. It was a large apartment on the second floor, in the rear of the nursery with which it communicated by a folding door; and well furnished with a handsome carpet, desks and chairs for teacher and pupils, a piano, table for books, and maps on the walls.

Mrs. Delano, attired in a showy wrapper of green brocade with broad crimson facings, and jaunty cap of tulle, ribbons and flowers, on the back of her head, had preceded her—and already sat pompously awaiting the governess: Miss Victorine—a miniature of her portly mamma, in a rich frock, elaborately embroidered pantalettes, and her long braids of red hair tied with heavy ribbon—balanced her rotund body on the music stool, alternately dodging from her brother’s reach, crying, “Ma, Alex. keeps plaguing me!” or drumming the bass keys of the instrument with a noisy, kettle-drum sort of an accompaniment.

This scene, with its somewhat ludicrous concomitants, Peace comprehended at a glance as she paused a moment on the threshold; then her eye was enchained by a little fairy child

who emerged from the adjoining nursery, tripping eagerly over the carpet, her tiny hands filled with toys.

Sweet Cora Palfrey! — the very prototype of Aldrich's "Babie Bell!" With the plumpest of little white shoulders peeping from her blue thibet frock — dimpled arms, braceleted with gold and coral — tiny rose-leaf fingers, grasping dainty toys — eyes blue as the skies hanging over country meadows in summer time — and lips like cleft cherries; — such was the darling four-year-old child who bounded into the school-room with baby glee, nor paused until she caught view of the stranger teacher.

Then uprose in her violet eyes a look of childish wonder that gradually subsided into a smile, as of recognition — she outstretched her dimpled hands, scattering her toys over the carpet — then bounded to the teacher's side, and held up her little scarlet mouth for a kiss, lisping "*Aunty — aunty!*"

Mrs. Delano nodded a "good morning!" then turned to the child, saying sharply —

"Cora, child — come away! That is not aunty."

But the little one was not so easily satisfied. She gazed from Mrs. Delano to the governess in bewilderment; but in a more positive voice repeated "Aunty!"

"She mistakes you for her aunt, Mrs. Livingston, because of your black dress — she being in mourning for her mother, Cora's maternal grandmother," said Mrs. Delano apologetically.

Peace stooped involuntarily and kissed the rosy lips still uplifted to her own. — She had never seen much of children, — and, from her yesterday's insight into the disposition of her employer's "darlings," she had at once foreseen how uncongenial must be her situation as their instructor; but now, in the sweet little elf who clung to her neck, pressed her dewy lips to hers, and persisted in calling her aunty, her lonely heart had found something to love.

At last she put her gently away, saying kindly — "No, my darling, I am not aunty."

"Who *be* you, then?" asked the child, a frightened look gradually displacing the incredulous one which lay in her blue eyes, and elongating the curves of her pouting lips till she seemed ready to burst into tears.

"I am the teacher. Call me Miss Peace. There, don't cry — I love little girls," and with another kiss and a pat of the golden curls, Peace advanced to Mrs. Delano, who had risen, and played nervously with the cord and tassel of her robe.

"Do pray excuse the child," she said at length, "she has been quite spoiled by her aunt Livingston. When she went south, and wished me to take Cora and her nurse, I'd no idea she was such a mere baby. I fear you may find her troublesome. There, Cora, run away — do! You shouldn't lean on Miss Wedgewood so!" for the girl had again sought Peace, and hovered close beside her, leaning her golden head affectionately against the folds of her black dress.

"But she say she *do* love 'ittle dirls!" persisted Cora, sliding her fingers into Peace's hand; who besought also "Pray, madam, let her remain. She is a sweet little thing. I shall love her dearly," — but Mrs. Delano banished her with harsh, peremptory tones — "Go into the nursery immediately!" — and reluctantly, looking wistfully toward her new-found friend, Cora glided away.

Peace had much tact, and could not fail to perceive that, from some cause, her notice of the sweet child was particularly obnoxious to Mrs. Delano; and attributing it to a pardonable feeling of maternal jealousy, she advanced to that lady's "darlings" at the piano who eyed somewhat defiantly their new teacher. "And so these are my pupils?"

Miss Victorine ceased her rotary motion on the piano-stool;

and Master Alexis's defiant gaze softened. The ogress conjured up by their vivid imaginations — a tall, severe, frowning "mistress," had vanished; — in its place stood a young, beautiful, pleasant girl. "I shall not fear *you!*" plainly uttered both their countenances.

"Yes, these are my children," was the answer in a prideful and almost stentorian voice. "Victorine, Alexis, my darlings, this is your new teacher — Miss Wedgewood. Alexis has a wonderful partiality for the sciences," turning to Peace, "Dr. Parbox — a learned Professor friend of mine — assures me he is a prodigy. My son, repeat to Miss Wedgewood that lesson in Philosophy you recited to the Doctor the other day."

Thus addressed, Alexis — a bluff, red-faced boy, also inheriting his mamma's *physique* in an extraordinary degree — left pinching Victorine's fat neck between his fingers, and, snapping the blade of a new bright jackknife as a sort of vigorous jerking accompaniment, rattled off glibly a curious amalgamation of the terms of Natural Philosophy, in which "attraction of gravitation," "cohesion," "lectricity," "optics," and "h'draulics" with their definitions, resounded sonorously on the admiring mother's ear.

"Now decline your Latin verbs, my dear!" urged Mrs. Delano at the close of the boy's parrot-like performance; and, taking in a fresh supply of breath, the "prodigy" started on his new round. Fast and dissonant the conjugations fell from his glib tongue, until a long-drawn inhalation and an extra snap of the knife-blade, proclaimed the *finale*.

"Very well," said Peace, who saw that some expression of admiration for the *role* her pupil had enacted was expected, but whose greatest exertion was to suppress her laughter, — "Madam, your son has truly a strong memory — a gift which, combined with application, must ensure success in his studies; but Alexis, I presume you are familiar with the rudiments of

mathematics? Let us see: will you repeat to me the Multiplication Table?"

With a look of scorn, the boy confidently began, and volubly repeated the Table half through. Then his recital grew lame — hesitating glances were frequent; but the mother, who stood amazed that so simple a thing was required of her "precocity" rendered him no aid, nor did the teacher. Finally, he quite broke down, and hung his head, for Peace's searching gaze embarrassed him. In another moment, however, he fully recovered — for it was evident that timidity was not one of the qualifications of either of Mrs. Delano's "darlings" — and shouted —

"There, mamma, it's no use! I'm stuck! Didn't I tell you that Alf. Warren, if he is the cook's boy and lives in the kitchen, can beat me in 'Rithmetic?" Then turning to Peace, "I can't say it, ma'am — for I never went to school with the other boys. Alf. — *he* knows it by heart," and the knife-blade went open again.

"No matter, my son. Go now to your desk! but do put up that knife — I'm fearful you'll injure yourself. You see, Miss Wedgewood," said Mrs. Delano complacently, "I never approved of putting my children into the city schools, where they come in contact with everybody's. Alex. was always delicate — and I particularly requested the last teacher not to tax him, — Dr. Parbox assures me I ought not — and that will account for his seeming deficiency in some of the elementary studies. Now he took to his Philosophy at once; and one might as well endeavor to move the Battery, as turn him from it. The Doctor says 'never cramp or distort a young mind' — and I have allowed Alex. his own bent. — But hadn't you better hear Victorine play? I wish her to attend to music, particularly. Vic., my love, the Battle of Prague."

The young lady addressed whirled rapidly on her seat, tossed

back the twin braids of long hair, and dashed violently at the instrument. Truly a "Battle" was it—every separate strain wrung from the tortured keys fighting most desperately to maintain its footing in the fray—advance, retreat, discharge of artillery, cannon boom, bugle note, and the rush of battalions, all mingling in one crashing din.

"Excellent! never better, my love!" exclaimed the delighted mamma, allowing the teacher no opportunity for an expression of her opinion—"Now, Miss Wedgewood, will you play something?"

With a smile, Peace seated herself, and played—with marked attention to time and emphasis, which, by-the-way, were evidently myths to her pupil—a few simple arias, rondos, and marches from an instruction book; and then, in a voice neither powerful or fashionably affected, but soft, sweet and clear as a lute strain, sang that sweetest of all Scottish ballads—"Annie Lawrie."

"Ah, pretty—very pretty!" I dare say you are an accomplished pianist. Madame, your Principal, recommended you as such," said Mrs. Delano, patronizingly—"but Monsieur Figaro would say you lacked *style*. Now my Florence—she will play for you some day down in the drawing-room—her piano is superb, quite different from this the children practise on—my nephew, Cora's father, selected it in London when he went on his foreign tour—Florence was at boarding-school then—well, as I was saying, Monsieur pronounces her style *brilliante, magnifique!*

"But really!" drawing forth her jewelled gold repeater, "Almost eleven! and I promised to accompany Florence down to Stewart's this morning, to select her new party dress. Your dinner will be served in the nursery, with the children's. Good morning, Miss Wedgewood!" and in stately grandeur Mrs. Delano sailed from the school-room.

That evening, as Florence Delano, radiant in azure satin and pearls, the folds of her Cashmere opera cloak drooping from her graceful shoulders, stood in the drawing-room, her mother entered with flushed face and a frown on her brow.

"Florence," and she sank into a couch fanning herself, "it is perfectly unaccountable—the fancy Lucien's child has taken to this new governess. Even this morning I was forced to send her away, she clung to her so; and just now, passing the school-room, I saw her through the half-open door in her lap, and the governess hugging and kissing her as though she had found a treasure. But I sent up old nurse Allen instantly. Artful creature! I'll warrant she is!—these poor teachers always are.—You don't suppose, Flor., this fondling round the child is for the sake of the father? She *is* handsome—he might take a fancy to her—I have a great mind to send her away!"

A rich silvery laugh floated through the apartment, and a scornful curve deepened on Florence Delano's proud lip as she adjusted her ermined cloak before the mirror. "Nonsense, mamma! how perfectly ridiculous! Cousin Lucien in Europe, and this poor country governess! What strange ideas run in your head."

"Well, if I am over anxious, remember it's for *you*, Flor.! You know on what I have set my heart, when Lucien returns."

"Your heart is set upon *that*, no more than mine, mamma!" and the deepening curve on her ruby lips, and the settled blaze of her clear blue eyes, told what iron will ruled that beautiful girl's spirit—"I have not slighted so many hearts, to go unrewarded. Lucien Palfrey shall be mine!"

"Carriage ready!" and the obsequious porter flung wide the drawing-room door.

And that evening, as, amid the blaze of gas, the flutter of

fans, and the swell of rich music, Florence Delano sat in her crimson lined box at the Opera House, coquettishly receiving the homage of some half dozen admirers, and the purse-proud woman at her side beheld her daughter's triumphs with an exultant eye — Peace, the lonely governess, for whom no heart in the wide, wide world was beating, sat alone in the dimly deserted school room.

But when her thoughts were saddest, the door of the adjacent nursery where Cora Palfrey had been put to sleep was softly opened — a little curly head peeped roguishly in, two tiny fingers were laid on the rosebud lips, two white naked feet pattered across the carpet, and Peace was startled by a little girl in a white cambric night-dress climbing resolutely into her lap.

"Nursy went down stairs, and so Cora got out sly, and come back to see you: now, 'cause you love 'tittle dirls, p'ease tell me a pretty story!" and the curly head snuggled down to Peace's bosom.

And so "story" after "story" — such as in her own childhood she had heard from Aunt Patience's lips — repeated Peace to the listening girl, — about wondrous Jack the Giant Killer, and the little Red-Riding-Hood who set out on her mission of love to the good old grandmother, while Cora asked the usual number of children's questions, wondering if nobody ever killed the "ugly old wolf," till her blue eyes grew misty with sleep, — and Peace, parting the golden rings of hair from her moist white forehead, carried her back to her little crib, murmuring as she watched her infant slumbers, "Blessed child! you will render the days I spend under this roof endurable — even pleasant. Darling Cora!"

Ah, yes, yes! What little child is not a darling? — a blessing? Sparkling eyes, pouting lips, tangled curls, toying hands, caresses, gushes of baby laughter — they are all heart-traps!

Sunbeams in life's sky, dainty blossoms in life's pathway — little warbling golden orioles, flitting in and out the sunshine or shadow wherein we sit — making always May-time in our hearts!

Bless God for the blue sky, the dancing waters and singing birds, for clinging vines and flowers, for all of Nature's beautiful things — but bless Him most for those who creep into our hearts and vivify our affections, frolic and caress us when sad, or, if we weep, wind their tiny arms about us and lay their cool soft cheeks to ours — bless Him most for darling little children!

CHAPTER XX.

"One, a queenly maiden fair,
Sweepeth past me with an air,
Kings might kneel beneath her stare."

ORAH HOWLAND stood alone in her drawing-room. One by one had her guests taken their elegant hostess's fair white hand, and bidden her adieu; one by one had the waxen tapers burned down in their gilded holders, and the gas jets been turned off by the drowsy servants going through the apartments after the festival was over — till now but one solitary flame in a mantel candelabra faintly lit the long drawing-room; every burst of music and gush of silvery laughter was hushed; flowers withered in the vases; Judge Howland and his son had sought their own rooms; and Orah stood alone in the shadows of rich drapery muffling a deep embayed window.

Orah Howland's home — elegant, stately, and refined, was an index of her character. Is not *every* home an exponent of the character and tastes of its inmates? The furnishing of an apartment betrays the mood and mind of its occupant, no less than do the garments one wears, the glances that escape them, the words they utter; if refinedly beautiful, graceful, and neat, indicating well-cultivated minds, gentle and loving natures, — if disorderly, untidy, formal, or presenting an array of costly furniture disposed with a mere view to show, then betraying untrained, heedless, cold, selfish, or innately vulgar souls. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh:" — is it wrong to add, "*and the hand doeth*"?

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It matters not though your pictures be from the brush of a Claude or Rubens — your curtains of silk and gold — your carpets from the tapestries of the Gobelins — your statues of the delicately pure Italian marble, and glowing with a poet-sculptor's inspiration — though luxury and art fling down for you their treasures in a palace — if no tasteful hand arrange those silken hangings into graceful folds, no artistic eye guide the disposal of those paintings and statues with due regard to the effect of light, shade, or fitness, and bind flowers in accordance with the harmony of colors, relieving a snowy spray or regal crimson blossom by a foil of rich glossy green — then you are poor indeed, for the element of genuine refinement is lacking. All may not have elegant and luxurious homes — but, thank God, all can have *beautiful* ones! Flowers, birds, books, pictures — it does not need a fortune to procure *these*. In the pleasant country, flowers are the Creator's free gifts; everybody can pluck them — everybody can adorn their homes with them! And even in the stifled courts of crowded cities, a slip of mignonette or verbena, a solitary daisy, though blooming in a cracked earthen vessel in a poor man's window, will do more towards keeping pure and fresh thoughts and influences in the hearts of the lowly, than a hundred envious glances into the splendid conservatories of rich men's houses; pictures — the choice engraving, the exquisite lithograph, the cheap print, all embodying some artist's idea of the Beautiful — such are within the reach of all; words of useful teaching, and the creations of Poesy, are found within cheap bindings, in this "age of books;" and birds, though caged, trill forth such echo-songs as a Jenny Lind never sung.

And so Orah Howland's home, with its massive furniture carved in quaintest design, eloquent statues, pictures wherein painters had wrought out their lives, the conservatory where

tropical birds sang amid rarest Indian exotics — this home, so grand, imposing, yet its every luxurious detail softened and refined by a woman's hand, was a fitting exponent of the character and tastes of its elegant and accomplished mistress.

Since the time of her school-days at Madame Southworth's Seminary, Orah had grown very beautiful. Now, as she stood in the faint glow of the candelabra burners — her rich black hair, satin-smooth, reflecting wavy lines of light, her transparent olive complexion soft and creamy, folds of emerald velvet draping a form perfect as the stately Juno in its niche, long loose sleeves looped up by a single gem from arms perfect in their rounded outline as the Medicean Venus — it were difficult to conceive a being more proudly beautiful.

But not, like the marble statue, was she cold and pulseless. It was not the warming hue of the crimson window drapery bathing her cheek in such a burning glow; and by the restless clasping and unclasping of her hands over her heart, the nervous tapping of her slippered foot, the veiled brilliancy of her eye, and the heaving respirations escaping her scarlet lips, it seemed that some strong emotions swayed her being.

And yet that evening, moving among her guests with queenly tread; scornfully beating back the haunting gaze of impassioned eyes that followed her everywhere; her haughty shafts of wit and pride sending forth from her presence one, who, in going, bore with him all her life and inspiration; — even then, that proud girl, who had hitherto laughed at Cupid's trammels, would not acknowledge what was forced upon her heart in the stillness of her deserted apartment — that she loved!

Never before had this independent, self-reliant girl met the person who could sway to his her own strong proud will, or kindle, in all their enduring intensity, the fires of her heart. In society she had been the recipient of much attention from men

of intellect, station and wealth — not merely because she was the daughter and heiress of the wealthy and honored Judge Howland, but for the very originality of her own nature, bearing with it its own peculiar charm, her talents, and her dark rich style of beauty, — and in that clime where, with her brother, she had made her home for the year following her graduation — Italy — titled lovers had sued for the favor of the accomplished American girl; but from all had she turned with untouched heart. But now her hour had come.

And to whom had her spirit bowed at last? And why, then, when this new idol was enshrined there, did she — by some strange anomaly — refuse to pay it homage? Was it from coquetry? No! Orah Howland's nature scorned that. It might be from pride. Let us see; and to do this, it is necessary to review a little.

Orah's strong, earnest, *unique* nature had one safety-valve; — *in action*. There were no idle minutes for her; she was always employed; and as her moods changed, so her many absorbing pursuits. Literature was a passion with her: now it was the classics — now the sciences — now the arts, and lighter accomplishments. At boarding-school, French had been to her like her mother tongue; the Italian had been rapidly and easily acquired abroad; since her return, she had conquered German, and read Goethe and Schiller in the original; now she attended the Opera nightly, and next day dashed off scores of *arias* and *sonatas* — for her musical talent was unexceptionable; but her latest absorbing *penchant* was the Drama. Not a "star" appeared in the dramatic world, not a tragedy or comedy was produced, but Judge Howland's box was occupied by his admired daughter, attended by her brother Louis — now a rising young lawyer — or some devoted escort.

During the early part of the winter, masquerades, tableaux, and fancy balls, were much in vogue in that exclusive circle of fashion and gayety in which Orah Howland moved; but at last, satiated with the constantly recurring round of amusement—ball, rout, and party—and, secure in the advantage which her elevated position in society afforded her, of following the bent of her own fancies, she resolved to depart from the stereotyped order of entertainments, and introduce a novelty. She would give private theatricals.

No sooner did the idea strike her, than, heart and soul, she entered into her preparations, enlisting her brother as aid. The play decided upon was Scott's tragedy, "The Bride of Lammermoor." She would enact Lucy Ashton; and cards were issued. The fashionable world was delighted. Young ladies voted it "charming;" gentlemen forthwith hunted up theatrical versions of the tragedy, prepared, if called upon, to "do" Edgar after the most approved dramatic style. Orah herself studied the heroine's part night and day; but, among her circle of gentlemen friends, Orah could single no one who, to her fastidious taste, seemed a suitable representative of the dark, gloomy Edgar of Ravenswood. One after another was decided upon,—then dismissed. This one had no just conception of the character; to another she had a personal dislike, and would not be supported by him. Thus, from daily closetings with her brother she came forth undecided.

At last Louis Howland came home to dinner one day in high satisfaction.

"Who do you think I met on Broadway this morning, Orah? An old friend, and just the fellow for your Edgar. A *bona fide* actor, too! Never was more surprised in my life!"

"An actor? an old friend? You surely are dreaming, Louis!" replied the girl in surprise.

"No, sis—a fact! But you'd never imagine him. Seen the young actor at Niblo's—Carl Linn?"

"Yes."

"Well, and you have not forgotten that summer vacation at Uncle Reade's farm—nor Jasper Golding?"—and Louis Howland furtively watched his sister. "The actor and the student are the same!"

"Oh, Louis!" Orah half sprang from her chair; a crimson blush on her cheek faded suddenly to marble white.

"Yes! I told you, I believe, how, notwithstanding his high promise at Cambridge, he suddenly neglected study—everything, but his mad pleasures—went down like a rocket, and was expelled just before I graduated. I traced this to the night when he received a letter. What that letter contained, I never knew. He seemed mad afterwards; would have nobody's friendship or advice. Poor fellow! there was a fascination about him I never could resist; and when I met and recognized him to-day—though he seemed ashamed, and not until I pressed him hard for his present whereabouts, told me he was 'Carl Linn'—I couldn't, for my life, let him slip without renewing our old friendship. He was a noble fellow—the germs are not dead yet. Wish I could do something for him, without touching his pride! His second inquiry was for you. Will call at the office this afternoon. Shall I ask him up?"

"But, an actor!" rushed to Orah's lips. She did not utter it, however. For three years she had borne in memory that frank, high-bred, beautiful boy, whose companionship made that long pleasant summer vacation a golden dream. She remembered the careless grace of his brown curls, the gaze of his deep blue eyes—the rides, walks, and excursions they had shared those dreamy summer days—the books they had read, and the poems repeated in the old forests—like a dream it stole athwart her

brain once more; and now, he was near her once again; should her own pride part them?

For Orah Howland shared the feeling, so common in society, regarding the votaries of the Thespian art. She revelled in the creations of the great dramatists; admired the genius that successfully and truthfully impersonated those creations; gave the tribute of tears and hushed breath to the tragedian who from the boards of a theatre wrought upon the passions of immense auditories; threw bouquets at the feet of *cantatrices* and *commediennes*; but, to invite an actor or actress to her own home — to mingle with such, in private life — ah, that was quite another thing!

But, Jasper Golding! what mystery, caprice, or maddening grief, had transformed him, the ambitious student, to an actor? She must see *him*!

"Yes, bring him, Louis!" was her reply.

Rehearsals were over, and the night for the representation arrived. At the farther extremity of a suite of apartments, a stage had been erected, with properties, drop curtain, and scenery painted for the occasion, and a hired orchestra stationed near it; while seats arranged in a semi-circle accommodated the "house." The dresses had been prepared under the direction of a *bona fide* theatrical costumer; and, as the play went on, the rendition of every character was perfect; Orah Howland voted "sweet," "womanly," as Lucy Ashton; and Edgar, Master of Ravenswood, though recognized by many present as the "Carl Linn" of the dramatic world — from complaisance to their hostess, whose undeniable right to "oddity" was fully allowed, aided also by his own manly beauty and high-bred demeanor — was politely received by her guests.

The play over, all sojourned to an elegant refection; after which — the *quondam* theatre converted, meantime, into a danc-

ing hall by the removal of stage and seats — the band struck up one of Strauss's inspiring waltzes, and Terpsichore claimed the remnant of the night; nor was it until the gray morning tints broke, that the last carriage rolled from Judge Howland's mansion.

Next day, the affair was discussed over late breakfasts and in luxurious boudoirs; and one or two evening papers reported, under the head of "Private Theatricals," "An elegant, unique, and classical entertainment, given last night at the princely mansion of one of our most distinguished citizens, where the young hostess — already one of our reigning belles — was most ably supported in the dramatic representation by a promising young artist, well-known as a favorite with our theatre-going public."

So it was talked about, written about, read about, and floated away — a glittering bubble swept down the restless tide of fashionable life; but not so — as other *fêtes* which had come and gone like dazzling meteors in the sky of her social life — not so did the memory of that night fade from Orah Howland's mind; for there, in the midst of that festival, the hour which comes once to every woman, came to her.

In every scene of that representation — the rescue in the wood — Edgar's unspoken love, when the desolate Wolf's Crag gives shelter to sweet Lucy Ashton — their subsequent betrothal at the Mermaid's Fountain — the stern Lady Ashton's command, that her daughter's love be transferred to Hayston of Bucklaw — or lastly, when, returned from over seas, her fated lover bursts upon the marriage rite, crying in reproachful, despairing, impassioned accents, "I am still Edgar of Ravenswood," and, cold, white, statue-like, at the behest of her pitiless mother, she yields the broken piece of gold — token of their betrothal, — followed by the tragic *finale*, — in every scene, so absorbed, heart, soul, and brain, had Orah Howland become in the charac-

ter she rendered, that everything was forgotten. It was an actual, living reality. She returned glance for glance Edgar's love—fell prone to the floor—and when the curtain fell, was only conscious of one blest emotion,—that his arms were around her, her head upon his breast, his dying kiss upon her dying lips.

But the reaction came. Afterwards, when her friends gathered around her with compliments on her "splendid acting"—when she caught Jasper Golding's eye bent earnestly, tenderly, almost reproachfully upon her—when, alone in her own room, she thought it all over—a blush of vexation came to her cheek, and a haughty curl to her lip; and, by a strange contradiction, while she revelled in her old intoxicating memories of the boy-student, she resolved to forget the boy-actor; burned the copy of the *Bride of Lammermoor* she had studied; and, as she unbound her midnight hair before the mirror, paused to laugh contemptuously, "This is well of Orah Howland!—*turning actress!*"

Afterwards, there were many in fashionable life who followed the example of the brilliant belle. Private theatricals became much in vogue; "Lady of Lyons," "School for Scandal," and other comedies, were successfully produced. Even "Carl Linn," whose *entree* into Judge Howland's mansion procured him that of others, received many invitations; but in none of these entertainments, other than as an auditor, could Orah be persuaded to mingle. Yet night after night she frequented these scenes; for there she met one, whom—strange anomaly in woman's heart!—she both sought and avoided.

Now, by her kindness and favoring smiles, she won him to her side till his eye spoke the old tale of love; then, haughtily cold, she noticed his presence only with a careless nod. Now, her invitation bade him welcome to her own house, where, even-

ing after evening, sitting beside him, she listened to impassioned readings; then, in enacting the dignified, freezingly courteous hostess, she plainly pointed out the difference between them. So the struggle had gone on in her heart, till, on the night in question, a few scornful cutting words uttered purposely in his hearing, had driven forth Jasper Golding with a proud defiant blaze in his flashing eyes, and left Orah Howland to receive the adieus of her guests with a smiling lip,—and afterwards, to regret vainly the utterance she could not recall.

Every woman is an epicure in the matter of the affections. Let hearts be laid at her feet as plentifully as wayside flowers bloom, and she idly plucks them, toys with them, and tosses them to the winds; but let one become suddenly withdrawn, or stand "afar off" on some unattainable height, and she reaches forth her hands longingly. Nor is this, as some would have us believe, because there is a mixture of the coquette in every nature; rather let it be accounted for on the principle that "blessings brighten as they take their flight," and "difficulty to procure, only enhances the zest of passion." Never is there a flower so beautiful as that which has been plucked from the brow of the precipice; never a pearl so rare as that won from deepest ocean caves by the skilful diver; never a heart so valued as when we have climbed the barren steeps of Difficulty, waded through troubled waters of Fear, over the moorlands of Doubt, and along the barren shores of Despair, then wrested it suddenly for our own.

CHAPTER XXI.

Few — none — find what they love or could have loved,
 Though accident, blind contact, and the strong
 Necessity of loving, have removed
 Antipathies.

BYRON.

JASPER GOLDING left the presence of Orah Howland, and went out into the night. He walked rapidly — now in the shadows of tall buildings, now under the glare of street lamps, and then threading narrow alleys lighted only by the far off stars.

Very distant they seemed to him that night — the serene stars — going, as he did, from the presence of one who had been the brightest star in his life's sky, but who stood now as far above him as the orbs in the deep night heavens.

How distant *always* they seem to us in the great city — the holy stars! It is only out in the open country; standing on grassy meadow slopes, in orchard-reaches white with drifts of apple blossoms, on some hill among the pinewoods, or in cool shady lanes, that the heavens seem to lean down lovingly and the stars watch us like tender human eyes. There, when the gloaming falls, and you sit alone with Nature in her quietest moods, when the night comes on with hushed footsteps, and "With the night the stars creep o'er the trees" — there you learn to watch their coming with something akin to love. The pure — the holy stars! Sentinels on the walls of heaven, waving their little flaming torches on every pointed tower and battlement, lest some daring intruder attempt to scale their walls —

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yet watching you tenderly, compassionately, all the while, and beckoning with their glimmering lights, "Come up hither!"

But in mighty cities, where the pulses of life are never wholly laid to sleep — where the jar and jangle of trade is scarce hushed from sunrising to sunrising again — where the eye is blurred with the glitter of gold and the heart gets weaned from mother Nature — where crime lurks in shadowy corners and passions riot in human hearts — there the stars burn faint and cold, and the heavens stand high above — O so very far away!

And so they seemed few, faint, and cold, glimmering in the narrow strip of sky between the tall brick houses; and brought no quieting influence to him who walked on rapidly under their beams that winter night.

"So distant! so high above me!" he muttered. "So cold their gaze, like the gleam of a proud woman's eye! So far above me — but alas, no higher than is she! In her bright world of fashion and beauty and pride, what cares she more for the humble actor, than the stars for the earth-worm that crawls below? Pitiful fool that I have been! because she treated me with kindness, I have dared to worship her! Why did I not keep away from her? why, night after night, did I go into her presence, to sit by her side, listen to her words, feed upon her beauty, till my brain grew maddened? I, who *should* have been her equal — but am — *what*? The veriest thing upon whom she would look, aye, upon whom she *has* looked this night, with scorn. And *who* made me what I am? *who* smote me from the same level with her? Curses on him who, bankrupt in honor, stands this night in high places, while his child goes forth with the weight of her cutting scorn on his head! Oh these heartless, dissolute men of the world! they send their victims broken-hearted to the grave — they bequeathe to the fruit of their sin the dowry of shame — and the world fawns on and

flatters them, as though their hollow rotten hearts were the receptacle of truth and honor! Oh, I would rather own my father among the poorest day laborers in this city — yes, rather earn my bread by the humblest drudgery, than live this life, maddened by this crushing stain. Men may not know it — they may not *call* me by my rightful name. — *She* does not know *what* dashed my boyhood dreams to earth — but it is eating into my heart's core. It has brought me to this life; — it has brought me to her scorn; — for did I not hear her say, not a half hour ago, with a contemptuous smile that stabbed me to the heart — “Oh no! I could never *marry an actor!*” “An actor!” and his lip curled bitterly, then after a slight pause his eye kindled, and he muttered almost defiantly, “Proud girl! I wish I could prove to you that I am not wholly unworthy! — Can it be, that *this* alone divides us? By heaven, if I *thought* so” — and his eye softened. “If I thought so! but no, I am a fool — and yet, a thought strikes me — a thought strikes me — it may be so — I will do it!” and he walked rapidly on.

Onward still he kept his way through lighted streets and dim alleys, until, striking into a great thoroughfare, he trod half its length and paused before a large stone edifice, its front rich with architectural adornment, and its entire upper story brilliant with the glare of gas. The broad entrance hall was light as day, revealing a flight of massive stone stairs, with a ticket office on each side; large posters about the sidewalk and entrance, before which he paused, announced, “the last night, positively, of the celebrated “star actress,” and the “appearance of the favorite *danseuse*, Gabrielle Franck;” and the full tide of orchestra music sweeping down the broad staircase, to which a few loungers beat time with their heels on the pavement, announced that Jasper stood before a theatre.

But evidently he was no stranger here — for, muttering as

the music swept louder down the staircase, “It is the interlude — I am just in time,” he walked rapidly past the little knot of loungers, turned into a narrow by-way at the extremity of the building, and entered the theatre by a rear door. Making his way up a flight of dimly lighted stairs, stooping to avoid beams and rafters, hastening through dusky cobwebbed passages, turning a corner, then coming into a lighted passage and opening a door whence came the sound of voices and laughter, he stood within the green-room.

The play had been one of Shakspeare's tragedies, and several actors and actresses were huddled about the green-room fire *en costume* — princes, soldiers, maids of honor and peasants, all on the most republican footing — the “star” alone being absent in her dressing-room; — and, as “Carl Linn” entered, more than one friendly hand was extended.

“Ah, Linn, glad to see you, my boy!” exclaimed one. “Been into the house? — No? Why it's a crowder — crammed, packed, from pit to ceiling, like a drum of figs. The “star” draws like mustard. Pity we poor stock actors couldn't line our purses, likewise! Wonder when *our* name will draw half Gotham?”

“Oh, patience! patience!” exclaimed another, good-humoredly. “We'll strut our “brief hour upon the stage” of public enthusiasm, by-and-by. But how is it, Linn,” turning to Jasper, “how is it about this streak of good luck that's turned up for you? True enough, I suppose! Well — well” — winking significantly, “some folks are born with silver spoons in their mouths!”

Jasper's only reply was a glance of surprise, at which his companion laughed.

“Ah, look at the innocent! Plays his part capitally! You'll do, Linn! But I can't help wishing that accomplished, handsome, and wealthy belles — like this Miss Howland — who hap-

pen to take fancies to good looking young actors, were not, like angel's visits, "few and far between." Wonder if *our* handsome phiz will not make *our* fortune, too?" and he complacently stroked his chin before a mirror.

Jasper bit his lip, and a frown darkened his brow.

"Let Miss Howland's name be unheard *here!*" he said with withering *hauteur*.

"Aha! Coming the nabob already?" replied Dunn, with a sarcastic laugh. "So your divinity is too fine china to be mentioned alongside such crockery as trips on yonder boards?" pointing to the stage. "Ah! well—I suppose that's perfectly natural *now!* But don't look daggers at me, my dear fellow. Macbeth's done murder enough, for one night. I'm off for the farce. *Au revoir!*" and as the manager entered the green-room, Dunn, followed by half dozen others, made their exit to change costumes.

"Mr. Forbes, a moment with you, if you please, sir," said Jasper, as that gentleman greeted him with a courteous, "Good evening, Linn," and was moving on. They withdrew to a corner. Jasper was very pale.

"My engagement is soon up, I think, sir," said Jasper.

"Yes, in a fortnight. But why do you ask, Linn? You will continue with us, I take it?"

"That is what I wanted to speak about, to-night. I mean to quit this life."

"What! quit the stage, young man?" and the manager stepped back, amazed.

"Yes, sir!" answered Jasper, firmly.

"It is a new move, I imagine?" said Mr. Forbes after a slight pause. "Of course you know your own reasons best, Linn, but I'm sorry. You have every requisite for success as an actor—face, voice, figure, and elocutionary powers—couldn't

fail, with study and training, to stand high on the list. I fear you are taking a step you'll repent. Better 'nip it in the bud,' Linn!"

"Mr. Forbes," and Jasper spoke somewhat nervously, "you have belonged to this profession all your days, sir?"

"I have," was the reply.

"And you like it? You think it an honorable one?"

"Aye, aye! Most certainly I do, young sir!" and the manager brought his hand down heavily on a chair. "I regard the Drama as one of the most important branches of Art,—which can be made subservient, not only to man's amusement, but to his elevation and advancement. I regard it—but no matter, there is no time now to enter into a discussion of the subject. But why do you ask?"

"You have, in the course of your career, seen men come up from the humblest walks of life to the highest rank in their profession?" asked Jasper, evading an answer.

"Yes—yes!" and the manager rubbed his hands. "I did that myself—that is, I rose from 'the people,' and am proud to say it. Was call-boy, supe, toiling actor, and 'star' eventually. I tell you, my dear boy, the reward comes sooner or later."

"And you had a great deal to contend against—the opinions of many—their prejudices against actors as a class, I suppose?"

"Oh, of course, of course, young sir! Don't you know that's a 'perquisite' of our profession?" and the manager smiled somewhat sarcastically. "In 'this enlightened nineteenth century' there are thousands who, from sheer ignorance, possessing neither love nor appreciation for the sublime Dramatic art, hurl their anathemas against the wickedness of the stage and the heinous sin of countenancing its followers. They talk learnedly of classic beauty, and describe eloquently some master-piece from the sculptor's chisel—order paintings from the old masters

— pay some mustachioed piano-torturer exorbitant sums to teach their daughters Italian operas and German waltzes — but straight-way condemn the interpreter of Shakspeare's sublimest tragedies, and utterly ignore him a position in social life. I tell you, my young friend, these are not the days of the old Greeks, when an actor's profession was looked upon as most honorable — when such sat at the tables of dignitaries — and some of the highest officers of the State were ardent votaries of Thespia — when Sophocles, Æschylus, and Euripides wrote tragedies, and appeared in them, too, holding also highest command in civil and political life; but I am confident such times *will* return, — already, so me, by the majesty of Genius and transcendent talents have broken down the conventional pale which has hitherto separated the actor from the social world. Such have taken their proper station; others will follow; and the time is not distant when the condemned 'play actor' will be acknowledged as necessary and beneficial an element in the grand economy of society as the sculptor, painter, or poet — for his profession is but another form of Art. Yet not by Genius, or talent, *solely*, will this be accomplished; there are nobler attributes that go to make up the sum total of his good character. I tell you, Linn," and he laid his hand on Jasper's arm, "it is not the profession that makes the man, but the *man* his *profession*. Making your Art subservient to the cause of morality and refinement, and beautifying it by the example of an honorable upright life, you can be as useful a member of society — I do not hesitate to say, *as good a Christian* — as any one of the carping critics, no matter *what* position they may fill, who so sweepingly condemn you! But bless me, what a sermon I am preaching!" pulling out his watch. "And after all, I suppose it's entirely uncalled for. Somebody has been looking down on you? — some lady-love, perhaps, 'cuts' the 'actor'? ah, 'there's the rub,' I im-

agine?" and the manager smiled as Jasper colored violently and consciously — "Well, never mind it, Linn! go to work like a man — laugh at her — forget her — make Fame your mistress — and, ten to one, five years from now, on yonder boards," pointing to the stage, "she'll throw her bouquets at your feet."

The flush died from Jasper's face, leaving him very pale. Whether or not the manager's words had struck to the depths of his soul, he made no answer.

"Do you think the actor's life a *happy* one?" he asked.

"Why bless you, yes!" replied Mr. Forbes in apparent amazement. "It is like every other — one of toil — but after the toil comes the reward. And *such* a reward! To sway men's hearts — every emotion and passion — as the mountain wind bends the tree, shrub, and flower, — to bring tears or smiles, sobs, or shouts of enthusiastic delight, at your own mood, — to sow germs which shall afterward ripen into thought and action — to ride on the topmost wave of public favor! Why, my boy, the intellectual pleasure in itself, accruing to an actor's profession, must afford him the keenest satisfaction, aside from personal emolument."

For a moment Jasper's face glowed and his eye flashed with the fires of youthful enthusiasm; then the strong, deep undercurrent of his new resolve swept through his heart. The glow faded, and his glance became fixed and gloomy. He said moodily, in a bitter undertone, "The picture is alluring, but *her* hand dashes it out." Then, turning to the manager, he continued —

"And so, regarding this as a happy, honorable life, you recommend it. And if you had a son, you would educate him for the stage?"

"Why, Linn, I never had wife or children — but if a talented, enthusiastic young fellow like yourself called me father,

certainly it would be my ambition some day to see him a star actor."

"But a *daughter*, sir?"

"A *daughter*, too? Why, of course — well, let me see — after all, though from the days of Mrs. Siddons downwards, women have graced the profession — after all, I rather think — confound it, no! A daughter of mine *shouldn't* be an actress! But, bless me! preaching a homily, then refuting it with my next breath!" and the manager smiled. "But I am positive *my* daughter *shouldn't* be an actress!"

"Nor a *dancer*?" Jasper spoke short and bitterly.

"A *ballet-girl*! *Never!*" and the manager brought his hand down emphatically.

"And yet *she* — that young and delicate girl!" and the youth pointed to the stage whence the rich music swelled out in delicious measures.

Mr. Forbes moved uneasily. "Yes — yes — I know. Poor young thing! It is a pity!"

"And yet, sick, feeble, suffering as she is, you offered her this night's engagement. *This* is your mercy!" The words fell sarcastically from Jasper's lips.

The manager grew very red. "Bless me, young sir, what would you have me do? Are *your* feelings, or *mine*, the standard? I *must* give the public novelties! They *will* have a beautiful ballet-girl! She draws!"

"Yes sir, I understand you," replied the young man sternly. "Gabrielle Franck *draws*. Of the hundreds who sit in yonder theatre-room to-night, full one third — the men, the lads, who crowd the *parquette*, and the veteran *roues* who level their *lorgnettes* from their crimson-curtained boxes — *they* came hither, caring neither for tragedy, or farce, or 'star' actress, but solely to watch the young dancing girl! Ah yes, I under-

stand *now*! Her name on your bills packs the theatre. Poor Gabrielle!"

The manager breathed hard. "Linn, I never saw it in this light before, so witness me Heaven! Ill and suffering? I never dreamed of *that*! When I offered her the engagement, she accepted it eagerly, gratefully; and I regarded her but as a beautiful child whose graceful dancing had made her the people's favorite, and whom, if I did not secure, some other manager would. Ah, this life has *some* drawbacks, after all! Catering for the taste of the public, satisfying alike the appetite of the epicure and the gourmand, is not the easiest or most enviable task in the world. But Linn, I have excused some pretty plain speaking on your part — youth are hot-headed, sometimes — now what means your interest in Gabrielle? I heard, at the time, about your rescuing her from that terrible fire — and have overheard lately that you are much in her society. Young man, I have more faith in you, than to suppose you would deliberately injure that poor child?"

A flush dyed Jasper's pure white forehead. He spoke proudly.

"Mr. Forbes, I may have been reckless, but of such wickedness as your words seem to imply I thank God I am innocent! Gabrielle Franck is, to me, as a younger sister."

"I believe you, my lad," and the manager held out his hand kindly. "But remember, that the world sees through its own stained vision, and oftentimes refuses to sanction what it cannot comprehend. Your own good sense will show you that the dancing girl is very beautiful, and an orphan; and with such the tongues of many will be busy. But enough. You are not angry that I have given you this hint?"

"Mr. Forbes, you are my best friend." Jasper's voice was

agitated as he grasped the proffered hand; but the deep flush had not wholly faded from his forehead.

"I never dreamed of *this!*" he continued. "Tell me who has *dared* speak thus!" — and his eye flashed fire.

"No more! Not another word. Let what I have said guide you for the future. Now about yourself. If you believe me your best friend, prove it by staying with my Company. I will advance you rapidly."

"I thank you — I thank you with my whole heart! but I must leave the stage," was the firm reply.

"Then if your resolve is taken, I will not seek to change it. What have you decided upon?"

"My resolution is recent. I have hardly thought of the future. Possibly I may take the Law."

"Good! It will suit you — and you will suit *it!* I must go!" — again pulling forth his watch. "A fortnight hence, look out for your 'benefit night.' I shall announce 'Lady of Lyons.' So please, meantime, study 'Claude' with your whole soul, and I'll promise you a bumper at parting. Good night!" — and the kind-hearted, genial manager hastened away.

Meantime, upon the stage — advancing, retreating, poising herself on the tip of her dainty foot, then circling in rapid evolutions or gliding athwart the boards with passionate graceful bounds, her yielding form turning with every movement of the undulating music swells — Gabrielle Franck, the ballet-girl, appeared in a dreamy, voluptuous Oriental dance. She was a French girl of rare and wondrous beauty — a very child, of scarce fifteen summers, notwithstanding the perfection of an exquisitely symmetrical form. When she bounded upon the stage like a young gazelle, and softly dashed into the dance — her luxuriant ebon hair in short, crisp curls, her eyes flashing like night-stars, her cheeks crimson, and lips like petals of the damask rose

wreathed with smiles — every movement betraying limbs of faultless proportions — the slender ancle, dainty foot, and neck and arms of polished-marble whiteness — she seemed the living, breathing actuality of the phrase "poetry of motion."

"By heavens! this French girl's dance has a *soul* to it!" ejaculated a stranger who looked upon her for the first time; and certainly, while the flash of her eyes brightened, and her color came and went with each change in the measure, and the audience sat spell-bound giving her the tribute of breathless silence, it seemed as though the tide of her own being rose and fell with the swaying of her gliding form.

At length, when the last graceful *passes* were finished, and she sank away into a graceful courtesy, her white arms meekly crossed over her bosom, seemingly awaiting their dictum, the audience rose *en masse* to their feet, a storm of applause beat the air, and a rain of flowers and jewels fell before her. With a graceful movement, the *danseuse* gathered up the gifts, buried her crimsoning face in the gorgeous blossoms; then archly raising her head bowed her thanks, and, flinging kisses from her white fingers, bounded off the stage.

Down came the heavy drop-curtain; the enthusiasm of the audience died away into murmurs of applause; and the ballet-master, with a smile of gratification, caught Gabrielle's arm as she passed through the side scenes, —

"Mademoiselle, you have had a triumph. The Manager shall double your salary. I will speak to him."

"*Oui*, thank you, *monsieur!*" said the ballet-girl faintly, hurrying on.

The Manager's voice was heard, the call-boy and prompter came rushing to their stations, the bell tinkled for the raising of the curtain, one or two scene-shifters returned from the stage, and a light footfall, with the rustling of silks, came down the pas-

sage where Gabrielle had paused from sheer exhaustion. It was the "star" actress. The ballet-girl drew back, but not until she had witnessed the haughty withdrawal of rich robes which brushed her in passing, as though her touch were contamination. Quietly and humbly she crept away. The green-room was not yet deserted; but the door of the "star" dressing room was ajar, and she stole in. "She will never know it! Oh, I am weary—*so* weary!"—and she sank on the sofa, her burden of flowers falling on the carpet. The crimson had faded from cheek and lips; she pressed her hand convulsively on her side, and a hard dry racking cough rent her frame.

The door softly shut—a step was beside her. "My poor child!"—and Jasper Golding sat down and gathered her to his heart. How thin they were, the white hands she clasped on his shoulder! and the polished arms seemed fearfully emaciated! Was this the same lithe active form, this the same blooming face—now nerveless, drooping, and pale—that had enthralled in yonder theatre room? Ah yes! Have you not known how a powerful will and strong excitement can lend momentary strength to exhaustion, and the flush of beauty to disease? For the ballet-girl, Gabrielle Franck, who that night had danced before the crowd with crimsoned cheek and sparkling eye, and lips all wreathed with smiles, *was slowly dying of consumption!*

Again that dry, racking cough, succeeded by a low moan of fatigue.

"Oh Gabrielle, you are killing yourself! Why did you come here to-night?—with this cough, too! Did you not promise me you would not come here again so long as you were ill? I was pained, when I saw your name announced for to-night. Why *is* this?"—and his tone was grave, almost stern.

There was no answer; but the ballet-girl's head drooped lower on his shoulder, and she burst into tears.

"What means this?" asked Jasper, wrapping his cloak about her; for in her thin drapery she was shivering violently.

"Oh Carl, Carl!" she said after a little pause, "go away and leave me. I have been wicked in disobeying you; but I was very miserable, and wanted to get away from myself. I thought you had forgotten me!"

"*Forgotten* you! Why, my poor child, what *do* you mean? Who told you this?"

"Carl, don't be angry!"—and Gabrielle raised her eyes humbly but reproachfully. "They told me how the beautiful rich lady had invited you to her home—how her pride and her beauty had made you her slave. And, too, you did not come to me for many long days! O, I was *sure* you had forgotten me! Then my head seemed all on fire. Then the Manager came, I was glad. I could come here and forget, for a little!"

"My foolish Gabrielle! So you believed idle gossip, and in a fit of pique came here to dance when you were so ill! That was not right—was it, little one? I ought to scold you for this!"

"Then it *was* all wrong, Carl! You *do* not love this proud beautiful stranger? You *will* not forget Gabrielle?"—and she let her head fall confidingly on his shoulder.

Did not love Orah Howland? Would, indeed, it were not so, thought Jasper then. Would he could say to that clinging child for whom he felt a pure brother-friendship, "No, I do not love this proud girl so far above me!" But he could not. Nor would he wound Gabrielle by an avowal of a sentiment which, in that hour—reading the artless heart open before him—he

felt would give her pain. So he only said soothingly, caressing her damp forehead with his palm:

"Gabrielle, fear not that I shall forget you. You are to me as a dear child—a beloved sister!"

"Child! sister!" Gabrielle sprang erect to her feet. The crimson on her cheek faded to deathly paleness. "And I am *only* this to you? It is enough! I do not blame you! But go away and leave me. I want to be alone. You *do* love her! Go!—may the Virgin give you happiness! *Why* do you not go?"—and she clasped her hands beseechingly.

"Gabrielle,"—and Jasper took her hand and drew her down to his side again,— "What makes you want to send me from you? This lady, of whom you have heard, is nothing—nothing—to me! I am a poor actor, and she scorns such! Sit down here, Gabrielle."

The trusting girl did not heed the hopelessness of his tone as she sank down by Jasper. Had he spoken falsely? he asked his heart. No. In her beauty and her pride, Orah Howland was nothing to him—the actor.

"Then I need not go away?"—and Gabrielle nestled closer. "Oh Carl, I am so happy here! I wish it were always thus. O, I have been so wretched! You do not know. They cannot come here with their strange looks, and shrug their shoulders, and, when your name is spoken, say 'Hush, hush! poor thing!' Carl, what does it mean? I have not been wicked—but they all look at me so! they shun me! Nobody cares for me at all! What does it mean, Carl?"

Jasper's eye darkened, and he bit his lip. He could not meet the unclouded, innocent eyes lifted to his own. Mr. Forbes's words rushed upon him. "Had I known this before!" he muttered. "Base, craven, malicious, lying gossips! Could ye not spare *her*? Must your blighting breath taint the good name of a *child*?"

In that moment, looking upon his troubled face and averted eyes, Gabrielle comprehended all. Very quietly she rose, dropped his hand, and paused before him. A blush dyed her forehead; her form seemed dilated; she looked no longer a child, but a commanding woman.

"Carl,"—and her voice was soft and sweet as a lute-string—"I see it all now. I was blind. I know *now* why they looked so at me—why they smiled at each other. But the Mary Mother knows that, dearly as I love you—and Carl, if need be, I would lie down and die for you to-night!—dearly as I love you, I prize a good name better. You saved my life—you were all I had left to love!"—and tears dropped down on her clasped hands—"and I am very, very grateful! Holy Mary will listen to my prayers for you; but you must not forbid my going away from you. Nobody respects the ballet-girl—they think her wicked. But Carl, you know better; and when I go from this theatre, you *must not* follow me. I am going, Carl!"—and with hands clasped on her side, her words broken by fits of coughing, she turned toward the door.

Neither *rouge* or carmine could have imparted such a glow as the hectic on her cheek; and her eyes gleamed like sad stars as she turned once to look back. Jasper sprang forward. Tears were in his eyes. He grasped her arm.

"Gabrielle, you are right. The world will *not* let us be brother and sister longer. Mine has been the fault—mine must be the reparation. Go, take off this tinselled frippery, then come to me."

Mutely and quietly the ballet-girl obeyed. Presently she returned in a walking-dress of dark plain stuff, with her hair put back under her close hood.

"Now Gabrielle,"—and Jasper wrapped her shawl closer about her and threw his cloak over his own shoulders. "Now

you must trust me. From this hour, no tongue shall dare assail you! From this hour, your feet shall never tread yonder, or any other stage! Come with me!"

"Whither? Oh Carl, tell me whither?"

"To be made *my wife*! Come, my poor child — come!"

With a quick cry of joy, the French girl wound her arms about his neck, pressed her hot crimson lips to his, then they passed out together. And at midnight, before a French Catholic priest they stood side by side — the boy-actor and the ballet-dancer — and uttered the vows which made them one!

CHAPTER XXII.

Look back upon the silentness
Of unreturning years —
Thy faded hours of early bliss —
Of passion and of tears.

THE DESTINY.

Two years had passed since the desertion of the merchant Revere by his wife. The tenor of his life had little changed; his days were spent at his counting-house, and his nights at his old place of resort; not an additional wrinkle had seamed his brow, nor another gray hair threaded his clustering curls; outwardly no sign of Remorse marked his life, although its iron fingers were clutching at his heart.

For Julie Revere — the brilliant, peerless woman of fashion, the faithful, passionate, tropic-hearted wife — was gibbering and mouthing in a mad-house!

The terrible revelation of that night had been too much. Pride, despair, all the wild unrestrained passion of her nature, had lent her strength to write those bitter sarcastic words Revere had read on awakening, had nerved her to trample her costly jewels into the carpet till their crushed settings wounded her delicate feet, then to flee from his presence; and in her mad flight through the streets of the sleeping city she had but one purpose — to place miles and leagues between them — but at length, even her fierce wild strength gave sway, and she fell exhausted at the door of an humble cottage in the suburbs.

There, lying prone and senseless, its inmates had found her at

morning dawn, and borne her within, summoning medical aid; but with returning consciousness came a memory of that terrible revelation, and her anguish grew intolerably wild, until madness ran riot in her brain. With furious gestures she beat off her attendants, or sat for hours gazing at vacancy, moaning and wringing her delicate hands.

Three days after, the keepers of the Insane Asylum took her away. She had been recognized as the missing wife of the rich merchant, Revere, for whom unavailing search had been going on those three days,—the unhappy man, for appearance' sake, feeing the officers of the Police to prosecute their labors in every quarter of the city,—and so they found her. The events of that night never transpired. Eager to seize upon anything to satisfy the curiosity of the public, the merchant coined his own story and propagated it. "I came home, ill, late at night," he said to his physician. "I lay down in my wife's chamber, after asking for drink in which opium had doubtless been mingled. Insanity must have been working in her brain, even then. When I awoke, as you well know, she was gone." With this lie he covered his own guilt, and satisfied the world. Like a thunderbolt it fell on the fashionable throng, who, but that night, had revelled in her splendid saloons. Remembering how brilliant she had been, how loudly her laugh had rung out at sallies of wit, recalling her unnatural gayety and the sparkle of her eye, they said, shuddering, "All this was, doubtless, the workings of incipient madness!"

And so the verdict was rendered; and months passed, while the beautiful woman came not forth from the asylum walls; and the gambler merchant, by crafty cunning, had kept his good name untarnished before the world.

There was much need for the sums which Revere, disguised so that his most intimate friend could not have recognized him,

won at this time at the gaming table, for there were hard struggles to keep aboveboard. Every where, there were crises in the mercantile world which scattered the fortunes of years; houses of unimpeachable credit and integrity went down; money was only to be obtained at enormous per centages; liabilities occurred that every day grew harder to meet; and in the struggle, how could Revere hope to escape? At the time of Julie's flight he had just completed a business arrangement with his former partners, buying out the firm; consequently, with no one to guide or restrain him, he had boldly dashed into speculations, trusting to Fortune for their result. In some he had succeeded, in others failed; but when the "hard times" came, he found himself involved like hundreds of his brother-merchants. Then his old temptation recurred. He might win enough at Gaming to make all straight again; and nightly he trod his olden paths—seeing not, for the few wayside flowers, its perilous steeps and engulfing quicksands.

One night he sat alone in his library. Not the slightest change in his domestic arrangements had occurred. A species of dread, lest, should he abate a single appliance of wealth and luxury, the world might obtain a clew to the real state of his affairs, made him struggle like a drowning man to maintain everything as of old. His elegant mansion—though its sumptuous suite of rooms with tufted carpets was untrodden by feet now limited to a narrow cell—was still retained under a heavy mortgage; old servants had not been dismissed, though the posts of many were mere sinecures; Jupiter still exercised the sleek span of bays, taking his master to and from his counting house; and the faithful Minnie, who had begged vainly to follow her mistress into the Asylum, whence she was excluded by its strict regulations, busied herself with arranging and rearranging the furniture or wardrobe in "Missis Julie's" apartment, awaiting the

day of her return. And this at last began to seem not improbable. For that night, sitting in his library, Revere had read a letter from the head physician of the Asylum, whose closing words were, "If, from this long and prostrating illness Mrs. Revere ever recover, it will be with her reason. For many months mental disease has been succumbing to physical weakness—it may be longer yet, before the scales turn; but when they do, Death or Reason must be in the balance."

"Poor Julie! So it has been from my youth up. Every green and pleasant thing crushed in my pathway!" mused the merchant as his fingers closed over the letter; and in that silent hour, alone with Memory, a vision of his misspent youth swept before him.

Conscience never dies. The spells of Pride and iron Will are potent to lay her to sleep, but they cannot crush out her breath utterly. Every heart has its "Ghost-Walk" where, up-starting from muffling shadows, the phantom shapes of other years go gliding by. Remorse, too, is hydra-headed, and carries a quiver filled with barbed arrows; nor is there a nature so encased in its mail of selfishness or hard worldliness, but has some little loophole of attack where one of these rankling weapons may enter. Now, they pierced the heart of Augustus Revere. As he sat alone with his own reproachful thoughts, sad eyes haunted him, and the whole panorama of his cruelty to poor Mary Halpine passed before him. Covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud.

He remembered it but too well. It was a starlight night in early September, when he left the side of the brilliant Southern belle and rode hastily to the home where the patient, deserted girl awaited. Already a foul plot had been concocted to loosen the bonds between them. The abduction of the four year old Jasper, and the invention of the story that the child must have

perished in the unfathomed waters of a dark lake near her secluded home—this was a cruel tragedy; yet Revere was not so hardened in wickedness then, as to deliberately plan the utter separation of a mother and her child. Should Mary yield to the proposal he had determined to make that night, he would restore the boy on whom he looked with a feeling akin to paternal affection, so strongly had the little prattler entwined himself about his heart; but, was she obstinate, events must take their own course.

Mary met him with a glad cry of welcome.

"Oh, Augustus, it is so long since you were here! and I have been very lonely since little Jasper—" and tears choked her.

He remembered it all—how the moonlight came in at the cottage window—how he unwound her white arms from his neck, and put her away as one would a child whose caresses annoy him.

"Augustus!" she said, reproachfully; but still he came not near her, but paced the floor with agitated manner and a frown upon his brow.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Something troubles you. Let me share your cares!"

"It is nothing—nothing—at least not much. I have played deeply, and lost every dollar I owned. That is all!" He spoke bitterly. He acted his part well.

"Is it so bad?" she asked, looking up into his face in wonder. Then a gleam of sweet woman-love beautified every feature, and she folded her arms about him.

"We have *love* left, still. While *that* lasts, we cannot be poor. Do not be harsh to me. Do not turn away from me, Augustus!"

This reply, so meek, so tender, touched him for a moment; but it could not turn him from the base purpose his iron heart

had conceived. Yet it suited him then to lavish kisses upon the poor flower his foot was crushing.

"Forgive me," he said, gathering her in his arms, "I know not what I said—I am almost mad. It is not so much for myself I care, but for you. Every one of these luxuries will be stripped from us by the inexorable hand of the law!" and he looked around the apartment fitted up with every appliance of elegance.

"Let not a thought of this kind trouble you. I was reared humbly; and luxuries are no more needful for my happiness than a gilded cage to a wild bird. But it is to *you* they have become necessary. O, would there were *some* sacrifice by which I could preserve them for you, my husband!"

The time had come. "Mary," said Revere, "there is a way in which you can do this."

"Only name it!" she cried eagerly.

"You will keep your promise?" he asked.

"Yes—yes!—anything to secure your happiness!"

And then, with averted glance, for, with her pure sweet eyes looking into his, he could not utter his base proposal—with averted gaze, he said—"Mary, there is a lady who is the heiress of thousands. With *her* gold, I could win back all my lost wealth, and bind your brow with diamonds."

"But *how*?" and Mary Halpine looked up wonderingly into his face—"How can it be, Augustus? This lady—is she a near relative, my husband?"

"Child, can you not see? She *loves* me! You understand me now?"

Mary turned very white, then her pure brow was dyed crimson. She staggered to her feet. "Oh yes, I understand it now! It is very, very easy! Strange that I could not see it before! Augustus Revere would make the wife of his bosom a thing of

shame! That is all! Oh Augustus!" Her sarcastic words ended in a burst of tears.

Revere was in no mood to restrain himself. The sight of her tears maddened him beyond all bounds of prudence.

"Mary Halpine, sit down here and listen!" and he forced her to a seat.—"You might as well know it now, as any time. You *are* not—you *never were*—my wife! That marriage was all a sham—illegal every way! What do you sit there looking at me so white and ghostly for? What's the use to make a fuss over it? It can't be helped now! Besides, you're just as dear to me as ever—for, believe me or not, Mollie, I like you better than I ever shall any other woman in the world—and if I weren't driven to desperation, nothing should have induced me to take this step. But it need make no difference. My lady's thousands will come very conveniently for you and I to spend; but you shall still have my heart, and every moment of my leisure. There—the whole matter's out—now be a sensible girl, Mollie, and make the best of it."

Recoiling with a shudder from the arm he would have thrown about her, Mary Halpine rose. With outstretched palms, as though warding off a blow, she retreated. Fixing her eyes upon him, going backward to the door, she said in a hollow voice, "Augustus Revere, I am glad my boy is dead. God was merciful! It were better he perished under the deep black waters, than live to become like his father. God was very merciful! For myself, it matters not now.—I am a weary, heart-broken, betrayed woman; but, much as I have loved you, I cannot knowingly continue in sin. In thought, and word, and deed, I have been innocent—but may the All-Merciful pardon *you*! Nay, do not *touch* me!" and with a gesture of loathing, and a kind of benumbing terror settling down on every limb, she shrank away. "My poor, poor mother! And Reuben, too!

It is a judgment — a judgment!" she murmured as she passed out the door.

Thus it was that poor betrayed Mary Halpine went forth from his presence; and, after the lapse of seventeen years, her pure, sweet, sad eyes and reproachful words came from out the dead past to haunt him like spectres. The fangs of a terrible remorse were fastened on his soul.

CHAPTER XXIII.

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life swept through me into fever,

And my soul sprang up astonished; sprang, full-statured in an hour:
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic *Never*,
To a Pythian height dilates you, — and despair sublimates to power?

E. B. BROWNING.

"ORAH, what is this? So Jasper Golding is about to leave the stage!" said Louis Howland, lounging into his sister's dressing-room where she had been confined with a cold for several days. "Do you feel well enough to go to his Benefit, announced for to-morrow evening?"

"*Leave the stage! Benefit!* Why, brother, are you sure?" and delight alternated with surprise in the tones of Orah's answer.

"Yes, positive! Here it is in black and white," holding out the morning paper. "'Farewell to the stage.' 'Benefit of the popular actor, Carl Linn.' And, what confirms it, — happening into Laws and Truman's office not a half-hour ago, they mentioned that they were to receive a new student — the young Golding whom they had met at our rooms. I remember — Esquire Laws sat waiting for father's return the afternoon of Jasper's call, and we talked over our college days in his hearing. The old lawyer prophesies a hard student, and seems to take quite a fatherly interest in him. The secret of his life, as an actor, is not out there. Our friend has two characters, it seems; and I shall undeceive no one. I am right glad Jasper is coming to his senses. His wild oats sown, there will not stand a more

talented law student in the city. But Orah, this seems to surprise you! You had no forewarning of this?"

"Certainly not," she answered with heightened color. "But I wonder what induced the change? I hope it is not a mere whim!"

Louis Howland drew up an ottoman to his sister's low chair, and sat down by her side, laying his hand on hers.

"Orah, has Golding been here since your birth-night party?"

"No!" and her eye fell beneath his.

A smile of intelligence rippled about Howland's mobile mouth.

"I see it all; and I more than suspect that a certain sister of mine has been the chief instrument in bringing about this 'consummation most devoutly to be wished,' " he said archly. "Orah, on that night, in a conversation with Mr. Eustace, when that gentleman playfully rallied you on your success as 'Lucy Ashton,' and recommended you to choose your future liege lord from among the votaries of the Drama, did I not hear you reply scornfully, contemptuously, to his bantering advice? And did not Golding also hear those words? I do not say, my sister, that you uttered them wantonly, to wound his feelings — but I do say, that, by his flashing eye and his hasty withdrawal, they struck home. His after absence confirms it."

A blush of shame reddened Orah Howland's cheek; but a proud curl sat on her lip. What! unveil her heart to her brother? Her woman's pride was up in arms against it. Let him see that she cared for this actor — she, who never had bowed before? No!

"Orah," — and Louis Howland's manner grew very earnest, as he took her hand between both his — "be yourself, my dear sister! Put off all this foreign pride. It is not your nature. Now listen: Since I met Jasper Golding in his present career I have not been forward in my proffers of advice, because I knew

that, with his hot proud heart, he would not receive advice as I intended it — for his good. And I also foresaw *other* influences. He is high-spirited, impetuous, passionate, yet noble-hearted and generous; and only the control of a similar nature can affect him. 'The like may sway the like.' Orah — sister — the influence of a true-hearted, strong, decided woman would be of incalculable benefit to him, and I believe that power is yours. Nay! do not deny it — our lawyer-craft makes us skilful in reading the heart. I have long known what you surely must have seen, since woman's perception is allowed to rival all the lawyers' in Christendom — Golding loves you! And Orah, if your words — spoken in whatever mood they might have been — were the incitement to the step he has taken, then I see no cause why you, or I, should repent them; moreover, if he prove true to his better nature in the new career he has entered, you will have no need to crush the pleadings of your own heart. There, not a word — not a word! Look your best for to-morrow night! Good morning!" — and affectionately kissing her forehead, he went out.

Orah Howland thought long and calmly after her brother had left her. There had been struggles in her heart — struggles such as every proud woman with strong prejudices, experiences many times in her life; but they were over now.

Half-trembling, half-afraid, she took down every barrier, and let in the great tide of happiness upon her heart — its surging waves uprooting and drifting afar off every old land-mark of pride or coldness. The natural independence of her character found sway, softened by the deep tenderness of her woman heart.

"And I have influenced him to do this!" she murmured. "I have swayed him to my will! Henceforth he will leave his errors and his follies — the wine cup and the stage; and, in the profession he has chosen, build himself an enviable reputation.

He *must* prosper! Every one allows his talent. He will become honored, respected, loved. Yes, loved!—for henceforth *my* proud spirit shall bow to his, and acknowledge him my king. That hour which witnesses his farewell to the stage, shall see also the silent betrothal of my heart to his!

That "benefit night" was a splendid *finale* to "Carl Linn's" brief and successful dramatic career. Never was there a "Claude" more dangerously fascinating—never high-placed, ambitious love found more fitting exponent; and as the young actor poured forth his burning tide of devotion, Orah Howland, who sat radiantly beautiful beside her brother, suffered its waves to overwhelm her heart. Mentally, she was the Pauline of his love. Every enthusiastic sentiment seemed a call from his own passionate soul to hers; and in that hour, hearing not the deafening applause that greeted his farewell words, when, in a short address, he expressed his heartfelt thanks to the audience whose kindly presence had made this farewell a "benefit" indeed, alluding gratefully to their leniency and encouragement of his poor endeavors—hearing nothing, heeding nothing, save the rush of her own emotions swaying her spirit to their flow, she resigned herself to their blissful tide.

"What! dreaming, sister mine?" playfully asked Louis, tapping her arm with her fan. "But the enchanter's spell is over. Come—let us go!"—and so she gathered the folds of her opera-cloak about her and rose.

"Wait here a minute—please. I will return presently," he said, after handing her to the carriage. In a few minutes he returned; but not alone. By a gas-light near, Orah caught sight of a pale handsome face and a well-known form. Her brother talked gayly and in high spirits.

"Here, sister, I have brought you an old friend. Somehow,

he was decidedly ungallant—urged the lateness of the hour, and all sorts of excuses; but I was inexorable. Orah, why don't you welcome him? Come, jump in, Golding!"

A white gloved hand was offered from the carriage window. "Mr. Golding, I am happy to see you!" she said softly.

The hand was held tightly for a moment, then dropped suddenly; and a "thank you!" in a hollow formal voice was his only reply—nor was another word spoken after he entered the carriage.

Orah felt hurt, almost chilled, for a moment, but in another had pardoned him. Her own pride had prepared this reception. He had not forgotten her words, then? The thought sent a thrill through her heart. Louis was in his most genial mood. Orah mentally blessed him for it—it was such a relief. The two gentlemen conversed together.

"Come in, Golding!" said Howland gayly, as the carriage drew up at the curb-stone. "I want to celebrate a victory! Will illuminate every window! Rouse up Tom, Dick and Harry, and have three cheers for the emancipated actor. Come—don't hesitate!"

"No! it is late!"—and Golding hung back. "I ought not!"

"Ah, your excuses are not valid! The midnight chimes have not yet rung. Your hand to my sister, if you please! You will not refuse a lady!"—and laughingly the young lawyer ran up the steps and turned his night-key in the lock. Turning up the gas in the hall, he threw open the drawing-room door.

"Ah, there you are, then? Walk in! Orah, you have dropped your fan!"—and detaining her a moment by that pretence to whisper softly, "There, I have been a good brother—have I not, sis? Now pray, do cheer up the poor fellow, while I pay my respects to Morpheus. Good night!" He lightly

sprang up the stair-case; and once again Orah Howland found herself alone in the presence of Jasper Golding.

A struggle had passed in his heart as he stood on the threshold of that dwelling. "I must not enter!" he had said, but her pleading eyes conquered. Was it wrong to sun himself once more in the light of those radiant eyes ere he went out into the cold world of darkness? Yes, it *was* wrong—he knew it—but he was weak, and he entered a dwelling whose threshold he had thought never to cross again. But when he stood alone beside her, the voice of Honor came speaking in thunder-tones—"Go hence! You are acting unmanfully, dishonorably!" He turned toward the door.

"Will you not sit down? You are pale—ill! Shall I bring you a glass of water?"—and Orah's hand was on the ebony door-knob.

"No, no!" he said, arresting her hand and retaining it almost unconsciously, while the gleam of his eager hollow eyes seemed to burn into her own. "No, I am not ill—at least mine are not such ailments as physicians can cure. There are no potions for a sick heart. For I am sick—sick as death—of myself, of the world—everything! Orah Howland,"—and his hand tightened over hers with a grasp cold and hard as steel,—"*I was mad, to cross the threshold of this house to-night! Some of the happiest hours of my life have been passed here—but this is the most miserable! No, not this!—for when I stood here last, THAT was the time when hope was stricken from my heart, leaving it dead and sere! Proud girl, I wish to Heaven I had never met you!*"—and he flung her hand away. "But what am I saying? what am I saying?"—and he put his hand to his head. "Let me go! Why did you bring me here to mock me?"

"No, Jasper Golding,"—and Orah stood close beside him,

her hand upon his arm and two bright crimson spots on her cheeks—"No! In this hour, I do not overstep the bounds of maidenly propriety, if I tell you you shall not go hence till you are calmer, stronger, happier! I am not mocking you—I am not, indeed. Listen: Do I deceive myself, when I say that my words won you from your past profession and enticed you to another career? Was it for *me* you did this, Jasper?"

"It *was* for you! But it is too late now! Your kindness should have been earlier, Miss Howland!"—and he laughed a short, nervous, almost frenzied laugh.

"No, it is *not* too late," said Orah firmly. "Jasper, I acknowledge my fault. Do not blame me too much. I *was* proud—I am so still! I cannot help it—God made me so; but if I tell you how all the time you have been in my heart—how, all the while—"

"Stop, Orah Howland! You must tell me nothing more!"—and Jasper put away the white hand laid appealingly on his arm, looking very white about his lips—"Nor must I longer listen to words it would have once so thrilled my heart to hear. God knows, had I foreseen *this* hour, I should have been sorely tempted to desert Gabrielle—but it is too late! There were barriers enough *before* between us—your pride, my follies and my profession—but nothing like *this*. Orah, *I am the husband of another!*"

Orah Howland spoke no word, but sank against the wall, her midnight eyes fastened in a dull blank stare upon his. First, her face was of an ashen hue; then a hot, burning, crimson tide rushed over it. She covered it with her hands.

Jasper stood grasping the carved back of a French chair. His nails sank deep into the polished rosewood; his lips were compressed like iron.

"Orah Howland,"—and the words came rapidly and proudly,

—“you *must* not — *shall* not despise me! Listen to my defence: Three months ago, I rescued from a terrible death a young and beautiful girl. In the smoking ruins of the burning dwelling whence I bore her, they found, next day, the charred skeleton of that poor child’s father. Then, alone in a stranger-land, what wonder that she clung with a child’s gratitude to her deliverer? I placed her among kind people in a quiet boarding-house; I obtained for her a situation in the theatre where I was engaged — for Gabrielle Franck was a dancing-girl. But afterwards, when I knew that young child better, and saw how pure her heart was, I would fain have dissuaded her from that life. But she had been educated for it — had crossed the wide sea to appear in our theatres; and with a woman’s energy in a child’s frame, she resolved that she would not remain a burden to others — she would earn her own livelihood. Afterwards, she took a violent cold, grew ill; and I forbade her going any more to the theatre. For a time it went on so; till — going from your side two weeks ago this night — I saw her name announced, and found her there once more. — Poor child! and what *sent* her thither? Orah Howland, that child wreathed her lips with smiles, and danced, to hide an aching heart — for she loved me! And, though I bore her only such feelings as might a brother for a younger sister, the world had not spared us; venomous tongues were busy with her reputation. That night I had left your presence — you, proud and cold, and I despairing — I found her ill, and drooping under the shafts of venomous scorn. Was it strange that I shielded her, even if I could never give her the strongest, deepest worship of my heart? Answer me faithfully. Miss Howland, *ought* I to have done otherwise than make Gabrielle Franck my wife?”

Orah’s eye was humid, and she proffered her hand.

“Jasper Golding, you acted nobly! Had you left that poor

girl with a tarnished name, much as I loved you, I could never, *never* have forgiven you! It was no sacrifice. Go on now in the new career you have chosen. I shall always watch you from afar, as your friend.”

“Orah Howland, whatever of good you may hear of me in the future, remember *you made me so!* Farewell!” — and pressing his lips reverently to the proffered hand, he went out from her presence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A warm and drowsy sweetness
Is stealing o'er my brain;
I see no more the Danube
Sweep through his royal plain —
I hear no more the peasant girls
Singing amid the grain!

The elm and linden branches
Droop close and dark o'erhead,
And the foaming forest brooklet
Leaps down its rocky bed;
Be still, my heart! the seas are passed!
The paths of home I tread!

BAYARD TAYLOR.

THERE was a great stir in Mrs. Delano's mansion one bright February morning. Lucien Palfrey had returned. The aunt welcomed her "dear nephew" with loud-voiced welcomes; and the elegant blonde, Florence, came down to the drawing-room in the most becoming Marie Louise blue silk wrapper, and offered her lily hand to her foreign looking cousin with her sweetest smile.

When little Cora was summoned to meet her father, the maid found her in the school room at the governess's feet, busily endeavoring to make a large waxen doll comprehend an illustrated edition of nursery rhymes; and when the child found herself carried to the drawing-room, to sit on the knee of a strange tall man with a dark face and a quantity of unshorn beard on his chin which pricked her little velvet cheeks as he kissed her over

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and over again; then she was sorely frightened and tried to shrink away; and though he tempted her with *bon-bons* and dainty toys, asking mournfully, "if his little girl would not stay with papa," she managed to slide from his arms — and, as he turned to answer a question from Mrs. Delano, slipped unobserved from the drawing-room.

"Cora, pet — but, ah, the truant has flown!" said Dr. Palfrey, with a sad smile, hearing a little laugh of childish glee from the stair-case. "Well, aunt, I need scarce wonder at this, I suppose — for it is my own fault that my child looks suspiciously on the strange intruder. It must be my study now to win her love. Old nurse Allen doubtless regards her claim on Cora as stronger than mine."

"Oh yes, Allen is a good, faithful, necessary creature," returned Mrs. Delano. "It gave me pleasure that the darling had so devoted an attendant; especially, as both my children are now beyond the age when a nursery girl is necessary. You see I have made no change in my establishment since poor dear Mr. Delano died. Not that *I* cared to continue here, my dear nephew. — Oh no, no!" and a lace kerchief was applied to the lady's eyes — "some more retired home would have accorded far better with a poor bereaved woman's feelings; but I thought of Florence — how dull it would be after her graduation — and for her sake, remained here. When I opened the house for her coming out party, it seemed like opening a tomb; but I struggled hard with such feelings. Society has claims on us all, you know — especially the young —"

"And *beautiful!*" gallantly interrupted Palfrey, crossing the floor and taking a seat beside his radiant cousin.

The gratified mamma's countenance glowed with pleasure. "Really, Flor. should feel flattered that one who has met the beautiful and titled of foreign lands finds his own countrywomen

—but laws! what *am* I saying?" and she laughed with an affectation of embarrassment. "You will think me a foolish mamma, nephew?"

"Maternal pride, in this instance, is pardonable — nay, *commendable*," replied Palfrey, bowing, with a side glance at Florence. "Flatterer!" interposed the beauty, pouting.

"Nay, what story does *that* reveal?" and he playfully held up her mirrored fan. "Seriously, my charming cousin, you are looking little like the unmatured school-girl to whom I bade farewell three years ago! But I forget that Time never lingers on his way," and the brightened countenance fell.

"Lucien, I trust you do not intend going up to Springdale at present?" interposed Mrs. Delano.

"Oh, no indeed! Surely you will not take away our pet! I cannot spare *her*!" chimed in Florence, looking more beautiful than ever to the gratified father's eyes.

"Surely not, if you wish to keep her. Your words are law, *ma belle* cousin," and he gallantly lifted her taper fingers to his lips, adding in a tone of deep feeling, "Florence, I thank you from my heart for this interest in my motherless child. She is indeed a true woman who suffers such gentle feelings to sway her nature — who loves little children," then turning to Mrs. Delano, continued, "Aunt, at the time Mrs. Livingston placed Cora here, I feared she might be an intrusion on your household; but I see now that I misjudged you. And now, my child in such kind hands, perhaps I had better defer opening the old house until Spring — taking rooms, meantime, at the Astor. But after all," and he sighed heavily; "after all, a man longs for his *home*. Travel wearies; foreign lands cease to charm. The old world, with its classical antiquities and treasures of art — ruins and temples, fallen obelisks and eternal pyramids, ancient libraries and galleries of painting and sculpture, Italian

sunsets and glaciated Alps, the castled Rhine and sparkling Guadalquivir — each and all, pall on the taste after a season, and the wanderer's eye turns longingly homeward over the ocean. And even the simplest thing — a voice, a tone, a strain of music — has power to bring the homesick tears into his eyes. I can understand now," and his words were addressed to Florence who sat trifling gracefully with the tassel of her jewelled fan, "why the Marseillaise so stirs anew all the old fires of bravery in the enthusiastic Frenchman's soul — why the Swiss peasant so yearns for his native mountains when Alpine songs are sung — and why the sound of the bagpipes brings a vision of Highland lochs and glens and heather bells to the eyes of Scotia's wandering sons. One day — it was in Florence, and I had just left a picture gallery where I had lounged away a half-day — in passing an old cathedral, I heard a familiar strain that made my heart leap. And what was it, think you, cousin mine? — The *Casta Diva*, or *Il Trovatore*, sung in their own liquid Italian? — or any Opera you may have heard *prima donnas* warble at your theatres, and which salute one's ear at every turn in Italian cities? — No, indeed! but, instead, there stood in front of the cathedral steps a poor, half-clad, dreamy-eyed beggar boy, strumming the strings of an old guitar to the stirring accompaniment of "Yankee Doodle!" — Now I am not naturally enthusiastic, or over-patriotic — but, cousin, I declare *that* thrilled me!" and as Lucien Palfrey rose, and, crossing the floor, leaned against the marble mantel, an eloquent smile lighted a dark face whose features in repose were sad almost to sternness.

"Yes, it thrilled me like a trumpet call — the trumpet call of *Freedom*! Here, in down-trodden, priest-ridden, enslaved Italy, the very street beggars sang the stirring National song of a great, glorious republic! Does it not prove, I argued, that no thrall, no enslavement, can utterly crush out that inborn yearning for

Freedom which the Creator has implanted in every human heart? — And straightway I had builded a most fair and powerful structure — a very Temple of Liberty, with domes and towering spires rending the blue Florentine sky — and all this, reared on the flimsiest foundation — an Italian beggar's broken version of our National pæan! And when, at the close, those sad, dreary eyes looked wishfully into mine, and an outstretched, olive-hued hand implored, in bad English, 'Charity' of the 'Signor': half the contents of my purse were enthusiastically awarded him. I was not giving alms to a lazy beggar. — Oh, no! I was investing a few coins of the 'filthy lucre' toward the embodiment of a great, noble principle — *Liberty!* But, alas for my delightful air castles! Wandering that way again a half hour later, the refrain of an air strangely like 'God save the King,' died away; and I came suddenly upon my youthful hero, clad in a gay scarlet tunic, lazily sunning himself on the steps of the Church *Santa Croce*, alternately humming the above-named monarchical song, and greedily devouring that delectable of Italian beggars — *maccaroni* — which, together with the gay tunic, were the very democratic investments of my 'charity.' Ha, ha!" and the smile broke into a rich manly laugh, "Cousin Florence, *there* was an end of my enthusiasm! Down, down, like a plummet dropped into the Adriatic, sunk my Temple of Liberty — spires, domes, national emblems and all. The dreamy-eyed Italian was speedily transformed into a roguish, lazy specimen of the 'Great Unwashed'; and the comparison I involuntarily made between the sons of our sturdy Anglo-Saxon race and the enervated children of the effeminate Southland, was anything but inspiring. American soldiers starving at Valley Forge, and dirty Italian *lazzaroni!* *Yankee Doodle*, and *maccaroni!* Bah! I went to my palazzo 'a sadder and a wiser man!'"

"But this is a digression," added Palfrey after a slight pause.

"I wanted to tell you that the Italian beggar-boy's song answered *one* purpose — perhaps not an unimportant one, since it sent me *home*. Yes, it set me to thinking. A breath of air from the pine woods at Springdale seemed to sweep over me. The first Mediterranean vessel bore me as passenger. So had my acquired cosmopolitan tastes grown upon me, that I came near forgetting the child I left behind — a care to others. I came home."

"No, Cousin Lucien," and Florence Delano artfully veiled her blue eyes, and threw such a quiver of emotion into her sweet flexile voice that no wonder it deceived her hearer — "No, you wrong us! Little Cora has been no care — on the contrary, the light and joy of this house. For her own sake, no less than yours, is she dear to us!"

"Yes indeed, nephew," added Mrs. Delano, "I love that child the same as my own darlings!"

"Thank you! thank you both, my dear aunt and cousin!" replied Palfrey in a voice by no means steady. "This is very grateful to me. Yet do not think that, though for three long years the world has claimed me, I have ceased to remember what drove me there. Aunt Delano, the old wound rankles yet!" and with a bitter compression of his lips he hastily left the apartment.

And why, walking rapidly, yet with his head bent down like one in a deep dream, did that bitter, sternly-sad expression deepen about his mouth — and every feature of that whilom gay, animated, genial face seem to settle into a petrified, gloomy repose?

Ah, because memories which had clung to him amid all his wanderings would not leave him then — nay, had revived tenfold when he looked upon his motherless child; — because a pale, agonized, beautiful face had followed him everywhere,

coming between him and the pictured Madonna, between him and every scene in every clime, looking up from the still waters of Alpine lakes, down from soft Italian skies, out from the murky folds of storm-clouds — always that death-white, agonized face — the face of her who had breathed out, with repentant breath, her life upon his heart — Cora's dead mother.

"Florence, my love," said Mrs. Delano in a more thoughtful mood than was her wont after the departure of her nephew, "Lucien is little changed. He will never forget his life with Jenny, or her death. I believe he is one of the kind who *never* forget. Do you think he will ever marry again?"

It was full three minutes before Florence Delano vouchsafed a reply. Then, raising her head from her jewelled hand, her scarlet lips were tightly compressed, and the deep steady blaze of determination kindled her eyes. "*Beauty* will never win him," she said. "Much as he may admire, he never would marry again for it. His first experience was too dearly bought. Mamma, there is *one* avenue to his proud heart. Whoever would win Lucien Palfrey, must love his child — must play the tender, domestic, humdrum woman! I wonder if I am equal to *that*?" and going to the full-length mirror she laughed somewhat scornfully, "Your very humble, devoted servant, cousin mine!"

Meantime little Cora had given her own version of the appearance of the stranger.

"O such a great big man!" and she opened wider her bright eyes — "ever so big, like the giant Jack killed, I guess! — and great black bushes on his face! they scratched me jest like nossing! See!" — and she placed her chubby hands against her cheeks. "Peace kiss it, and get it all well!" and the dim-

pled face was uplifted lovingly to the teacher who gravely went through the process of "making it well."

"Cora don't want a papa — 'cause, maybe, he don't like little dirls, nor dollies, either! Cora don't want to go down stairs where the great big man is, any more! Miss Peace got a great big papa, too?" and she lifted her eyes inquiringly to the teacher's face.

That a child's words should have power to move her so! Lonely Peace! She choked back the rising sobs in her throat, but she could not stay her quick rushing tears. Bending her head among the bright curls, she wept quietly; while a little wondering child-face looked grave and almost thoughtful, then pattering kisses rained on her forehead, and two dimpled arms made an embrace for her neck. When the governess looked up she was calm again.

CHAPTER XXV.

And now I will unclasp a secret book,
And to your quick-conceiving discontents
I'll read you matter deep and dangerous.

SHAKESPEARE.

ART never yet has rivalled, or equalled Nature. No painter's hand has transferred to canvas the gorgeous gold and amber and purple of trailing sunset clouds; the skies we see in pictures are not the deep-blue skies that hang over country meadows in summer time; gilded frames never enclosed seething green sea-waves or strips of desolate beaches, so terrible or sad as the revelation of a wild, wet, sandy shore by the lightning's flash; no pencil ever crayoned shadows so dusky as lurk in the hearts of pine forests; faces of wondrous beauty have gleamed upon us, and we said "Lo! the painter hath created a marvel. This hath no antecedent or counterpart among earthly beings!" when, straightway, some rare radiant countenance, illumined by heart-smiles and shades of expression which eluded the artist's grasp, upstarted to mock anew his strivings.

Art never yet has equalled Nature; and this is why no portrait upon the walls of a large picture-gallery exceeded in beauty the fair young girl who paused upon the threshold one bright winter morning, and threw back her veil from a face where the very perfection of an artist's dream of loveliness lay. It was as if a picture had stepped down from its frame, and the light of a beautiful soul, breaking through every feature, had permeated it into full, glowing, rich life.

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The attire of that young girl was of the commonest materials, yet fitted exquisitely a perfect, rounded, flexible form slightly below the medium height; curls of that hue which poets define as "brown in the shadow and gold in the sun" framed an oval face of classic beauty; eyes of hazel seemed dreamy wells, brimming with thought and tenderness; and long curling lashes swept delicate and transparent cheeks.

Rare artist-girl, Leafy Earle! One has written

"Methinks all poets should be gentle, fair,
And ever young, and ever beautiful;
I'd have all poets to be like to this, —
Gold-haired and rosy-lipped, to sing of Love,"

so, methinks, they who see visions and dream dreams denied to commoner mortals, they who strive ever to portray on canvas or embody in plastic marble the one idea of Perfection, such — painters and sculptors, as well as poets, who, walking in their own high paths, are shielded from contact with earth's meaner things — methinks *they* should learn some subtle alchemy by which the Beauty in the midst whereof they dwell might become imparted to their outward being.

Vain wish! No more the gods come down to dwell with men, and mortals grow radiant and beautiful by their ennobling nearness; no more, even, as in that elder time "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," the Creator, looking upon man — his best handiwork — pronounces him "good;" for, alas! ours is a sin-stained world, and the trail of the serpent is over all. With the downfall of man's purer, nobler nature, went also his high, stately beauty. The primeval curse won by his first disobedience — "By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread" — how has it transformed godlike beings to dull, delving earthworms — erasing the

Divine lineaments of those created originally in His image — dragging us ever, ever, nearer the dust! Anomalies greet us at every turn. Oftenest mere personal beauty is the veil for mediocrity or vapidness; and, as the commonest or unsightliest casket may hold the rarest gem, so inferior physiques, or Caliban shapes, even, enshrine the richest natures, most vivid imaginations, warmest hearts.

But, fair poet and artist-girl, Leafy Earle — how harmonious the blending of thy mind and person! — thy delicate, *spirituelle* loveliness but the type of an exquisite mental organization!

"She was born 'mong water-mills,
She grew up 'mong flowers and rills,
In the hearts of distant hills.

There, into her being stole
Nature, and imbued the whole,
And illumed her face and soul."

Fair, delicate flower, transplanted from quiet woodland haunts, what doest thou here in the glare and din of the great toiling city?

Let us see.

Lingering a little time before the pictures, the girl turned away and entered the adjoining salesroom. Producing a small portfolio from beneath her shawl, she paused before the counter, addressing a few words to a clerk behind it.

"Ah — hum! pictures for sale?" yawned the young man with a bold stare of undisguised admiration at the blushing face before him — "Let us see!" and he drew forth the contents of the portfolio. "Pshaw! we have hundreds of such on our hands now. But ah! what have we here?" examining two exquisite miniature landscapes in water colors — "Really, these are not so bad, Miss! If Mr. Blake were in, I think he would purchase. Can't you call again to-morrow?"

A shade of disappointment crept about the artist-girl's sweetly curved mouth. All that morning, and the long day preceding, had she offered those pictures for sale, and at every application received denial. Her need was imperative. In an humble chamber of a crowded quarter of that great city an invalid mother lay, and the fruits of her art must bring food and medicine and coal to that mother's apartment.

"If you please," she said, hesitatingly, "I am really in need of the money to-day."

"I will give you five dollars for them," said the clerk abruptly.

The shade of disappointment on the girl's face deepened. Those beautiful, beloved paintings, at which she had wrought hours and days and weeks — could she part with them for that paltry sum? "Perhaps I had better call to-morrow when the proprietor is in," she faltered. "Or, could I not leave *one* with you for that price? for, really, sir, I thought they would bring me much more."

The wily clerk read her need in her hesitation. "No, Miss," he said, coolly, "laying the paintings back in the port-folio. "But it's no matter. I offered you the five dollars at my own risk, and after all perhaps Mr. Blake might not want them;" and he turned away with indifference. "Still, I would not mind keeping my first offer," he added, looking up from his paper.

Heart-sick and weary, Leafy Earle was on the point of yielding up the paintings.

"Pardon me, young lady — but I will purchase those pictures at a better price. Will you take twenty dollars for them?"

Leafy looked up from the white hand laid upon her port-folio into the dark handsome face of a tall, gentlemanly-looking, middle aged man. She had not observed him in the picture gallery, nor has he followed her into the salesroom and overheard

the colloquy at the counter. With a gesture of assent she resigned them into his hand.

He examined the pictures, and at length, in a tone of kindness almost paternal, looked up fully into her clear hazel eyes. "My child, they are very beautiful. I want them for a friend" — and he drew out his purse.

"Oh, sir, you are too kind! I thank you sincerely!" and with flushed cheek and dimmed eyes she closed her taper fingers over the two golden eagles he laid in her rosy palm.

"Stay, my child! You are modest of your talents. These pictures — why, they are exquisite! Stop a minute, if you please," for Leafy was about departing. — "Will you not give me your address? I shall want to send orders for more of these, sometime."

Leafy wrote in her delicate chirography on a card, "Leafy Earle, No. 10, ——— Court," and with a gentle "Thank you! You are very kind," went out. Scarce had she disappeared, when the purchaser of her paintings gave a short laugh and said in a whisper to the clerk, —

"Who is she? Beautiful as a houri! Has she ever been in here before, Smyth?"

"No — never laid eyes on her. But she *is* devilish handsome. Ah, Golding — you're a sad dog! But come, say, shan't I take that brace of landscapes off your hands for a cool twenty-five? They're beauties, anyhow. Mr. Blake wouldn't have 'em slip through his fingers for that, I'm confident!"

"Oh, for that matter, take them!" replied Hugh Golding, carelessly tossing them on the counter. "But on this condition — you agree to take *all* the pictures I may bring you?"

The clerk winked significantly. "Ah, yes, I see! Pretty girl in distress — connoisseur in art — plays the paternal — orders pictures for friends — visits her often — ingratiates himself

into her favor. Ah, Golding, haven't done with your old ways? Mean to reform, perhaps, by and by? It's a bargain!"

"Enough!" and the evil man gave a brilliant yet heartless smile, as he stepped out on the pavement.

Suddenly turning a corner, he came face to face upon Jasper Golding; he stopped, confused for a moment, then hastily recovering himself, reached forth his hand.

"Ah, Jasper, my boy, then I have run foul of you at last! Where'd you drop from? — the skies? Haven't heard a lisp of you since that affair at Cambridge. Rather bad, that! What the devil did you cut up such capers there for, just because I revealed what would have out, sooner or later? Come, walk to my hotel — I want to talk that all over," and he familiarly linked his arm in the young man's.

With a gesture of extreme haughtiness Jasper drew back.

"What! Pretty treatment this for your guardian, sir!" exclaimed the wily Golding, — an air of well-counterfeited surprise and pain overspreading his features.

"Mr. Golding," and Jasper's face was deadly pale and his voice full of concentrated scorn, "I have but few words to say to you. I cursed you when your letter reached me with its crushing revelation, and I despise you now. What your aim was, in rearing me through boyhood, and then, my manhood almost attained, showering on me those red hot scorching coals of disgrace," and Jasper ground his teeth together. — "What your aim was, I say, I know not, nor *care* now. It might have been a rare farce to you, but it was tragedy to me. But it is past — and I am what that revelation made me — a degraded man. Bitter as my heart is at this moment, I could forgive you all, could you restore to me the blissful ignorance from which you rudely hurled me. — But you cannot! Yet, low as I have fallen, there are depths to which, thank God, I have never de-

scended, and never will. — From such as *you*, my *guardian* and *friend*," and the words fell with withering sarcasm, "from such as *you* I will henceforth keep aloof! — Hugh Golding, during a six months stay in this city, your name has not escaped me. — Sir, *I know you* — and be assured that, in future, there can be nothing in common between him who passed once as your adopted son and ward, and Hugh Golding — the *gambler*, *libertine*, and *hypocrite*! That is all: now let me pass, sir! I have the honor to wish you a very good morning!"

Golding stood for a moment transfixed to the spot, with a blaze of astonishment and anger in his eyes; then, giving utterance to a prolonged whistle, he walked on.

"Bah! the lad talks bravely — but I'll take the mettle out of him!" he said contemptuously. "Pretty treatment this, for bringing him up in a decent Christian manner! — But that villain, Revere, brought it upon him. Hang it! if I don't start the story of this illegitimate son! It can't injure me any more in the boy's estimation, for it's evident enough he hates me; — but it will blemish the hitherto cunningly preserved spotless name of the wealthy merchant, and secure my revenge in *that* quarter! I'll do it, by Jove!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

There is a beauty of the body; the superficial polish of a statue,
The symmetry of form and feature, delicately carved and painted.
But watch it well; for vanity and sin, malice, hate, suspicion,
Lowering as clouds upon the countenance, will disenchant its charms.
The needful complexity of beauty claimeth mind and soul,
Though many coins of foul alloy pass current for the true:
And albeit fairness in the creature shall often co-exist with excellence,
Yet hath many an angel shape been tenanted by fiends.

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

"CORA — Cora, come down," said old nurse Allen at the school-room door — "Your papa wants you!"

"Good bye, Miss Peace!" said the child gathering up her toys and large waxen doll, — "I must take dolly down — papa hasn't seen her," and hugging it tightly in one arm, she skipped lightly down the staircase; and a little time after found her duly installed on his knee, playing with his watch seals, playfully patting his dark cheeks, cautiously venturing to touch the mysterious "black bushes" that ornamented his chin, or chattering gleefully of the acquirements of her wonderful "dolly."

And the strong man's heart throbbed warmly, and his eye grew tender. He remembered a time, upwards of three years before, when he had clasped her — a baby child — to his heart, laid her back on the nurse's lap and then gone forth to his wanderings; he thought of one now sleeping — how beautiful she had looked upon her bridal day, how ghastly her features upon her death-bed; he thought of his early dreams of happiness — how they had faded like ashes in his touch; and gradually the old expression of bitterness stole over his features.

Little Cora had been watching his face during this silent mood; and, frightened by their gathering gloom, strove to break the clasp of his circling arms. This aroused him.

"Why, would my little one leave her papa?" he said mournfully.

"But, papa so still — Cora 'fraid," she ventured, shyly.

"Well, papa *was* very still," he replied with a smile. "He must talk to his birdie," and his eye grew moist with tenderness.

"Papa cry! Papa cry, like Miss Peace, when Cora find her all alone," and two dewy coral lips touched his eyelids.

"Miss Peace — and who is *she*, little one?" he asked, after a pause.

"Why, don't you *know*! Dear, good Miss Peace!" and the child's eye dilated in wonder. "Why, she lives up stairs, and reads out of big books, and makes Vicky play on the piano, and 'Lexis say ever so many hard lessons. And she lets me see all the *pitcher* books, and tells pretty stories!"

"Really! a paragon!" said Palfrey, smiling.

"Oh, she is *real good*! She says she *do* love little dirls — and I guess she love dollies, too, 'cause she makes mine such pretty aprons: — see! But, come up and see Miss Peace — come!" and she slipped down and began tugging at his hand.

"Not now, my dear," he said, patting her curly head. "Aunt, I take it that this Miss Peace is the governess?" addressing Mrs. Delano, who at that moment entered.

"The governess?" and a malicious look darted toward the little girl — "Ah, yes; a poor girl whom I have obtained recently. Your little darling has had the liberty of the school-room with my children. She is very fond of Victorine."

"But I like Miss Peace *best*," persisted the child with animation. "Oh, she is *real nice*! *do* come, papa — I will make her tell you such a funny story!"

"No, no — not to-day!" he replied, catching up the little pleader and tossing her high above his head — "but really, aunt, this elf has quite awakened my curiosity. Have you for a governess some Princess of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, or an Aunty Wonderful in disguise?"

"Or a *Mother Goose*," suggested Florence Delano, in a voice whose sneer was lost upon Palfrey as he turned toward the sofa where she sat busy upon a graceful trifle of embroidery.

"Mother Goose?" repeated Palfrey, advancing nearer while a genial smile lit up his fine eyes and an expression of quiet humor played about his lips, "Why, my fair cousin, your words have conjured up a host of memories. That same benignant dame was the Illustrissima of female poets to my childish imagination. Grecian Sappho never sang so divinely, nor tale of her headlong death, adown Leucadian steeps, sank half so painfully upon my heart, as the affecting recital of

"Ding dong bell,
The cat's in the well!"

No classics of the Homeric or Hesiodic school, conned in after years under the kind protection of my Alma Mater, were impressed on Memory's tablets like those wonderful Nursery Rhymes; and the voice of my old nurse, croning them over while I sat on her knee beside the twilight fire, was sweeter than any lauded *cantatrice* or *prima donna* I have heard these latter days in crowded theatres. After all, the child is your only true critic, — and I have wonderful faith in childhood, cousin mine," he added, with a dash of feeling.

"But, to change the subject somewhat abruptly, do you go to Mrs. St. Albans's to-night? Her 'At home' is on my table."

"Yes, I think so. That is, I believe mamma has accepted, — Have you not, mamma?" asked the fair beauty languidly.

"Certainly, my dear. But pray, do not go unless you wish! Would you believe me, nephew — this naughty girl of mine" — and Mrs. Delano tapped Florence's cheek — "has absolutely to be *forced* into society! I don't know but I should have had her turning nun on my hands, or settling down into a quiet, humdrum, domestic sort of body, long ere this, if I had not sent out invitations and accepted many, solely to win her from such a stupid life!"

Lucien Palfrey cast a look of interest upon the beautiful girl who sat there, fair as a peerless lily, in her delicate cashmere morning wrapper, and whose cheek did not redden for the mother who could utter so deliberate a falsehood. For Mrs. Delano knew the rock upon which her nephew's barque of domestic happiness had stranded in his brief wedded life; and Florence, too, anxious to bring Lucien Palfrey to her feet, was prepared to play any part. Thus she did not hesitate to take up the cue her mother's words had given her.

"Indeed, mamma," said the beauty with a becoming pout, "now why must you tell cousin Lucien that? You make me out the dullest of mopes, when I had really intended to go everywhere, and invite everybody here, in honor of his return."

"But suppose cousin Lucien will not accept the sacrifice?" said Palfrey with a smile. "But, seriously, Florence, am I to believe that one so eminently qualified by her accomplishments to shine in the gayest circles is sincere in preferring the quiet of her own home to such pleasures?"

Florence looked up.

"Indeed, you cannot blame me, Mr. Palfrey — cousin Lucien, I mean!" she said with modest hesitation. "I am aware that society has claims upon every one, which we ought not to ignore; but, to me, they are often irksome, and I find myself longing for nobler pursuits than this ceaseless chase after Pleasure."

Oh, she played her part right well — that artful girl!

A flush of gratification lit her companion's cheek. It was something decidedly new to the world-weary man, to listen to such words from girlish lips. But the old sore yet rankled in his heart; and though a smile crept about his lips the olden bitterness was infused into his reply.

"Then, Florence, I have to say that you differ greatly from most of your sex whom it has been my fortune to meet. Why, I had the idea that an elegant equipage, town establishment, Opera boxes, 'loves of bonnets,' and jewelry, were indispensable to a woman's idea of bliss! And, indeed, I fancied that the words 'domestic enjoyment,' 'home,' and 'happiness,' were obsolete!"

But Florence Delano understood too well the man beside her, and the stake for which she had cast down her truthfulness, to falter now.

"Cousin Lucien," — and dropping her eyes, yet smiling sweetly, she laid her white hand on his arm — "do you believe there are no *true women*, who prefer their own firesides and the companionship of kindred souls to the hollow flatteries and frivolous pleasures of the ball-room? Oh, believe me, cousin, you wrong us sadly. But really!" — and she laughed lightly — "I did not intend to read an essay on 'The True Woman,' or a homily on 'Domestic Joys,' — especially to one who has been so cosmopolitan in his tastes for the past few years. And yet, I have a mind to try and win you to my theory. See! I throw you a challenge!" — and she playfully drew a tiny white kid glove from her work-box and tossed it toward him.

"I' faith, my ladye fair," said Palfrey, securing the glove, "I accept the gage, but not as a challenge, though. Rather let me wear it here, next my heart, as a loyal knight should; and thus I cry your pardon for my ungallantry," — lifting her white hand

to his lips. "But Florence," — and his voice grew sadly earnest, and his trifling vanished, — "read to me, when you like, the homilies my heart loves best; for, my dear cousin, you can never know how, amid all my past three years' wanderings, I would have given all my wealth — aye, my right hand, even — for what has always been the Mecca shrine of my heart-pilgrimages — the goal of all my desires — true hearts to love me, and a happy, quiet spot to call my home! Cousin, in my boyhood they called me Dreamer; but now,

"Youth with all its dreams is over,
Manhood's seal is on my brow;
Life's Meridian Line approaching,
Turn I back a moment now —
Turn and gaze through lengthened vistas,
Back to Childhood's rosy hours —
To the Morning and the Spring-time —
To the pathway 'mong the flowers.

"Gone is Morning, gone is Spring-time —
Gone the early Summer days —
Gone with all their buds and flowers —
Gone with all their golden rays!
Gone are hopes most fondly cherished,
Plans matured with thoughtful care;
Castles grand, by Fancy builded,
All have melted back to air!

"Youth hath passed away like morning,
All its dewy freshness gone,
And my path is 'mong the mountains,
Which was erst upon the lawn;
Many a league, in truth, I've wandered,
On Life's checkered, devious way,
Since I started from the Orient
At the dawning of the day.

"Oft in sunshine, oft in shadow,
On my way thus far I've come,
Still a lonely, exiled wanderer —
Yearning still for Love and Home —
Yearning for a place of refuge
From the world's unceasing strife,
Where, by loving arms encircled,
I may find the Goal of Life!"

"But I weary you, Florence," he said after the pause following this recital, the flush of enthusiasm fading from his cheeks. "I am a very raven to bring my croakings into a bird of Paradise's nest!"

"No, not a bird of Paradise! Say, rather, an humble sparrow, that is content to sit and sing beneath the eaves," replied Florence with a brilliant smile.

"Half-won already. I have touched the key-note to his heart," said the fair blonde triumphantly, as his footstep died away in the hall. "*Domestic joys!* — ha, ha!" — and a low silvery laugh rippled its waves of sound throughout the apartment.

That night, Lucien Palfrey found his cousin in a bewitching *negligée* costume in her boudoir.

"Mamma has been gone to Mrs. St. Albans's a full half-hour. But do not lose your evening's pleasure for me."

"For once, gallant knight must disobey his ladye fair," he said, seating himself beside her; and it is needless to add that Florence did not send him away.

CHAPTER XXVII.

And a little child shall lead them.

HOLY WRIT.

"AND so the ladies are absent?"

"Yes, sir! at the Opera," was the porter's reply.

Palfrey half turned to descend the steps, then, changing his mind, entered; deposited his hat and cloak in the hall; and ran lightly up the stair-case. Meeting old Nurse Allen on the upper landing, he said cheerfully, "Good evening, aunty! this is Cora's room — the nursery, I believe?" pointing to the left.

"Yes, Mr. Lucien — but the little thing's fast asleep, I reckon. I left her in her crib. I'll jest step back with you."

"No matter, aunty. You were going below stairs?"

"Only to sit a few minutes with the housekeeper, that's all!"

"Well, never mind me! Go down, and I'll just step in and sit by my little one a few minutes before I go down town. Good night!"

A shaded lamp cast a faint light over the apartment; a child's crib, draped in white, filled a small recess at one extremity; and a little rocking-chair stood where its youthful owner had left it, near the grate. Advancing to the crib, Palfrey's foot touched something on the carpet. It was a dainty kid shoe, still rounded with the swell of a tiny foot; and, holding it in his hand, a tender smile rippled about his lips. Then, looking down where lay dolls, toys and picture-books, scattered about, he said softly, "Care-free child, these are your happiest days!" then parted the lace curtains from the crib.

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But no little sleeper lay on the snowy pillows, though they bore the imprint of a small head; and the counterpane trailed over the crib-side as though she had just crept out.

"Cora! Cora! where are you, my child?" said Palfrey, peering about the room, in corners, under tables and behind curtains, "Little one, I will get you!" for the thought involuntarily crossed his mind, that the playful child, hearing his approach, had slipped out and purposely hidden to tease him.

Presently a smothered laugh was heard in the direction of the sliding-door communicating with the school-room; and a little curly head peeped out from behind a large arm-chair, two blue eyes sparkled roguishly, and with a gay "Papa! papa!" Cora bounded to his arms.

"Why, little one," and he clasped her tightly — "Papa thought the fairies had stolen you. Now I shall put you right back into your bed again."

"No, no!" and she slipped adroitly to the carpet, fleeing in the direction of the school-room door, "No, no — Cora don't want to go to bed now! She wants to hear Miss Peace tell the pretty stories. Come, papa, come too!" and tugging hard at his hand, before he fully comprehended her movement she had pushed aside the door, and drawn him toward the school-room fire where, reading beside a table, sat Peace Wedgewood the governess.

Suffering himself to be pulled down into a chair which, with a great display of tiny strength, the child had dragged toward the grate, Lucien Palfrey found himself face to face with a beautiful young girl into whose lap Cora climbed fearlessly, and winding her arms about her neck pleaded, after a long breath, "There, I got him — but it was *ever so hard*! Now, dear Miss Peace, tell my big papa a nice story!"

"Why, Cora Palfrey!"

A slight flush of embarrassment rose to the governess's cheek, and she involuntarily started up. Palfrey rose also, a smile flitting across his lips.

"Pray, don't go!" he said earnestly. "It is I who am to blame for intruding here. I should have known better than to follow a wild, wayward child, and will depart at once, if need be; and yet it is right pleasant here," glancing from the fresh young face before him to the table laden with books, "and why must the edict of banishment be spoken?"

Peace lifted her eyes involuntarily to a genial, smiling countenance. "Certainly, if you wish it," she said with self-possession. "I were sadly deficient in politeness or hospitality, otherwise. Will you not be seated?" and she laid her hand upon a chair.

"Thank you," replied Palfrey. "But first — since there is no third party to perform the ceremony of introduction, and this little madcap does not seem suitably impressed with the necessity of these points of etiquette — we must, perforce, become our own mediums. Accordingly, permit me to present to Miss Peace — Peace — really, I am at a loss how to proceed," and he paused with a ludicrously grave air.

"I am Peace Wedgewood, the governess," was the reply with a low laugh.

"Ah yes, thank you! Then, Miss Peace Wedgewood, governess, I am Lucien Palfrey, M. D., father of this little elf here — at your service!" and bowing her into a seat he sat down opposite, lifting Cora to his knee.

In the short pause that followed, Peace lowered her eyes to the glowing grate — and her companion, studying her countenance, had no inclination to break the silence, — until, finding it becoming irksome, he said, caressing Cora's curls the while,

"You will not think me a flatterer, Miss Wedgewood, if I say

I do not longer wonder that this little one is tempted to forego slumber for listening to fairy tales. Nor will I hesitate to acknowledge that I have a decided *penchant* for hearing such narratives, myself — since, as somebody asserts, men are but children of a larger growth; so I have half a mind to request a like treatment."

"Oh, yes indeed, papa!" exclaimed the child, half-comprehending his words, and slipping from his arms toward the teacher. "Do, p'ease, dear Miss Peace, tell my big papa 'bout the great ugly thing that ate the good grandmother! Oh, do!"

A smile gathered about Peace's lips.

"What does the chick mean?" queried Palfrey.

"Why, don't *anybody* know?" said Cora pettishly. "The great naughty wolf, that ate the grandmamma all up, and put the bones under the bed — and had such great eyes — and such gre-a-t mouth? But do say it all, Miss Peace!" coaxingly putting her two soft palms against the teacher's cheeks.

"Not now, my dear!" she answered softly. A grieved look crept about the child's mouth; she turned appealingly to her father.

"It is no matter! Do not tease your teacher to-night. Come, let me take you back to bed. Nurse will scold her little girl."

But Cora evidently did not relish the proposition. Snuggling her head down to Peace's shoulder, she hid her face.

"Let her remain, please. She will sleep presently," pleaded Peace. "She often steals in here of evenings, and falls asleep so. During many hours of loneliness since I came to this house, even the company of a little one like this," and her hand smoothed the sunny curls with a caressing movement, "has been very cheering to me."

Her eyes sought the dim glow of the cindered coal fire, and

her head leaned listlessly against the back of the high carven chair.

Palfrey's eye rested appreciatingly on the picture before him. With her sable mourning attire enhancing the pale fairness of her complexion — her soft hair, burnished almost into gold by the glowing firelight, disposed in smooth bands over her white forehead — her meek, drooping eyes, — her small white hands clasped about the child's form — she seemed a beautiful Madonna picture, fairer than any he had gazed upon in his wanderings.

"Miss Wedgewood," and his voice thrilled with sympathy, "if a child like this is your only companion, you must be very lonely here. Is it not so?"

Peace raised her drooping eyes. "Yes — it is so different here," she said. "I came from a large school, and I *am* lonely here, but I do not think of it much. *These* are my companions, mostly, in my solitary hours," and she laid her hand on her books.

"Yes," said Palfrey, taking up a volume of Bryant's poems open at the *Thanatopsis*, "and you choose wisely. Books are the truest companions. They bring us the gathered lore of the historian, the sublime creations of the poet, the fascinating tissue woven warp and woof from the romancist's brain."

"And what is better, they change not, nor grow cold, nor leave us. Earthly friends may perish," and Peace spoke sadly, "but with these faithful ones left us, we can never be wholly alone."

Palfrey smiled appreciatingly. "You have known bereavement, then?" he asked kindly, glancing at her sable dress.

"Yes, I am all alone in the world!"

Those few sad words thrilled his very heart.

But, as yet, it was no feeling of common love which moved

Lucien Palfrey toward the lonely Peace. Much as a father might have gazed upon a daughter, or an elder brother longed to cheer a sorrowing sister, so his sympathetic soul warmed toward her.

"And so, in your solitude you turned to these silent teachers?" he said at length. "Most, like you, young and fair, would have sought instead, the gayeties and allurements of the world."

"Is it so very pleasant then — this great world?" asked Peace in a quiet tone.

"Its pleasures are always fair and glittering to the young. Have you never pined for them, sometimes?"

Peace smiled. There was a sudden flash of her eyes — but their lids drooped quickly as if to crush back their brightness.

"My experiences of life, although neither stirring or various, have partaken too largely of the actual to leave me little time for the ideal. My wishes have been circumscribed to an humble sphere. I am no dreamer."

"But surely you do not mean that you *never* longed for some change from the stereotyped routine of daily life? Long-fellow, somewhere, in speaking of a school-mistress, says

"She dwells beside Kanawha's tide
In valleys green and cool;
And all her hope and all her pride
Are in the village school,"

and is it that you are thus absorbed in your vocation, and rest content? You are an anomaly, then. Women are said to sigh for change constantly, you know!"

"A libel upon us," retorted Peace gayly. "You see that I, for one, am the embodiment of Content — that this school-room

is my queenly realm, my pupils most loyal subjects, and the sovereign supremely happy in her birthright!"

"Then, if I am to believe you, Miss Wedgewood," replied Palfrey — "if you *can* thus shut the door on the Past, dwell in the Present, nor strive constantly to pierce into the fathomless Future, then indeed you do enjoy a negative kind of happiness. You know nothing of that unresting heart which is haunted, aye, tortured, by Memory — you know nothing of the wearying, fruitless search after *peace*!" — and with a sigh he leaned his head on his thin white hand, gazing into the grate.

And Peace's head drooped lower, till her face was buried in Cora's curls. What could those two — each dowried with such sensitive, high-souled natures — know of the thoughts that slept in each other's hearts? of the death-white face ever haunting Lucien Palfrey, and the unrealized visions of a dreamy youth-time reaching their mocking fingers from out the perished past — or the one deathless wish, whose strong under-current swept continually through the waters of Peace's soul — "Oh, to live no more unloved and lonely." Each had veiled their nature. At length Palfrey drew a long sigh, and withdrew his gaze from the fire. He met the uplifted tearful eyes of the young girl.

"Pardon me, Miss Wedgewood," he said earnestly and warmly. "I have done wrong in making your, doubtless jesting words, a text for a mournful homily. Every heart knoweth its own bitterness. Sorrow comes early to some, late to others, but surely to all. Even this little dreamer has her transient griefs — tiny clouds in her young life-sky. Ah, would they might never grow larger, or darker, with years! But she is asleep, I see — let me relieve you!" — and he carried the child to her bed in the adjoining room.

"I have spoken freely," he added, returning, "but, somehow, in speaking to you thus, it seems as if I had known you always.

I never had a sister, Miss Wedgewood — but you are the realization of my ideal of one; and at least there is one bond between us — our mutual loneliness. For, save the little dreamer on yonder pillows, no drop of my blood runs in any living being's veins."

"Mrs. Delano, and Florence?" said Peace inquiringly.

"The former is my aunt but by courtesy. She was the relative of Cora's mother. But I see you have been playing," — and he approached the open piano, and leaning over it hummed the song upon the music-rack.

Peace stood by, and a shiver of delight ran through her frame as, in a rich tenor voice, he lightly sang:

"The dearest spot on earth to me
Is home, sweet home!
The fairy-land I long to see
Is home, sweet home!"

With an abrupt movement he turned away. A bitter spasm contracted his lips; then, observing the brilliant flush of Peace's cheeks and the dreamy light in her eyes, he smiled sadly.

"You said you were no dreamer — but, Miss Wedgewood, of what are you thinking *now*? Perhaps your imagination rears the fabric of a beautiful dream which has faded for me — domestic happiness. Once, I could have sung these words in fullest faith; now, they are dead letters on my lips. God grant no other heart may be desolate as mine! But what am I saying? I weary you. And yet, how lightly time has passed! Ten o'clock, as I live!" — looking at his watch. "Verily, Miss Wedgewood, I believe you *are* an enchantress, holding the hours in a rosy thrall; for I came near forgetting that I must look in at the Opera House on my return. I see now, what lure brings

my child hither; and am sorely tempted to ask the favor of an occasional admittance also. Am I presuming in asking this, Miss Wedgewood? May I come here again, sometime?" he added, lingering,

"No, and yes," replied Peace frankly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The fateful day passed by; and then there came
Another and another.

MARCIAN COLONNA.

She never felt —

The summer fly that flits so gayly round thee —
She never felt one moment what I feel
With such a silent tenderness, and keep
So closely in my heart.

PERCIVAL.

THE long cold winter had melted into spring. To the pale, earnest student, Jasper Golding, gaining a knowledge of his profession with hasty strides, and above all striving manfully to forget one whom it was a sin to love then, the months had passed rapidly, if not lightly.

The profits of his last Benefit night supported the student and his child-wife. Three rooms were rented in a quiet respectable portion of the city; and there Gabrielle's busy loving fingers burnished and brightened everything, making a pleasant home. It was very beautiful — the love which enriched her young life — and for a season held the ravages of disease in thrall, giving her strength to flit about her household tasks. Since the night of her marriage, her feet had never trod the boards of a theatre. It was enough to preside over the home whither Jasper had brought her — to bear his name — to arrange his books — to draw the curtain-folds over the windows at evening, place his dressing-gown and slippers by the fireside, draw the dainty tea-table nearer; and when, later, he lay on the sofa exhausted with

his day's mental toil, thread her attenuated fingers through his hair or murmur low sweet songs.

And the boy-husband — how could he do otherwise than give back love for her idolatry? Not, indeed, such a rich deep affection was it as his heart had once yielded to another — but a quiet, tender, cherishing love. And, seemingly, it satisfied Gabrielle.

This devotion had made her strong, I have said, — and so it was for a season; but advancing spring brought a change. Increasing lassitude arrested her step, the hectic deepened on her cheek, and a brighter splendor lit her eye. And yet, deceived by her fitful intervals of momentary strength, she walked blindly on.

"Jasper," she said one night as she sat beside him, "don't you see how well and strong I am getting? My cough is almost gone, and my cheeks are red as Provence roses. If it were not for this little pain in my side, I should be well as ever."

He took her in his arms, lifted one of her thin diaphanous hands and followed its faint tracery of shrunken blue veins, brushed back her short crisp curls from transparent temples, then drew her head convulsively to his heart.

"My poor Gabrielle!" was all he said. How could he stir the secure calm of her heart? For in that moment, like a lightning flash it had come upon him — that, so surely as the damask blaze of Consumption was on her cheek, and its light in her eye, she was doomed! Was it a wild thrill which swept through his heart then, saying, "One day I shall be free?" No, no! Only the bitterest sorrow; for, as he drew her head closer and bent his lips to her moistened forehead, hearing her whisper "*Mon ami*, I am very happy now!" only one prayer hovered on his lips — "Father, spare her!"

And that long winter — how had it passed to one whom we left with her proud suffering heart — Orah Howland? Even as months — nay, years — have passed for others who, like her, have suffered, — in struggles, unceasing struggles, not *to forget*, but *to conquer*!

In after life, the memory of that winter was very grateful to her. For she did not sit down, idly moaning and hugging her disappointment to her heart — but, by vigorous, healthy action, strove to dispel it.

"God has given me wealth," she said to herself, "and there are hundreds in the shadow of my father's mansion, unhappy, poor, and suffering!" — and so she carried forth consolation.

Into the crowded, stifling dens of the great city she found her way, banishing Want and hollow-eyed Hunger — laying her white hands on the brow of the suffering, and putting the cooling draught to fever-stricken lips — leading innocent little children from the homes of the wretched poor — pointing repentant Magdalens to One who said of such, "Neither do I condemn thee! Go and sin no more!"

There was little excitement about the life she led then, but *toil* — incessant toil. She allowed herself no time for weakening reveries or fashionable complaint of *ennui* or *blues*.

The world of Fashion looked on in wonder. Some sneeringly voted Miss Howland as "turning Methodist," — but, walking her own path, she gave no heed to wonder or sneer.

"Verily, I believe the girl is bewitched! Why, if she had not a cent in the world, she could not toil harder — what with her charity schools, and making up garments for beggars, and her thousand and one ways of employing herself — I expect every day to find my library converted into a hospital ward or nursery, and little foundling orphans playing hide and seek among my largest editions of Blackstone, or pelting one another in their

games with my briefs. Louis, we must get her a husband who'll reclaim her from this erratic life!" and old Judge Howland rubbed his hands in high glee, nodding playfully toward Orah one day at dinner. But Louis only smiled quietly.

And so it was a twofold life that she led—her physical nature demanding incessant action as the outlet of strong feelings, and her heart gradually working out its own cure; and thus she wrought on, and the impulsive, original elements of her character settled back into quiet, the waves closed over the spot where her barque of love had gone down, and out of her great struggle came peace for Orah Howland.

To the gambler merchant in the days at his counting-room, or the nights in his secluded haunts, that winter had been a level lapse of time, stirred only by some occasional depression of fear when he lost, or some swell of exultation when the turn of Fortune's wheel brought him the golden winnings that served to hold him above ruin.

And, to the poor inmate of the mad-house, how had those months fled? Alas, despite the hopes of physicians, no gleam of returning Reason had yet lighted the deep midnight of her brain! Not an emotion stirred the stagnant, passionless calm of her existence. Neither Hope, Fear, Love or Hate, went groping through her mind's thick darkness. Life was a dull, dead blank to Julie Revere.

But to other characters connected with our tale, time had not elapsed unimproved. Florence Delano had been busy at the task she had set herself—bringing every energy of her mind to bear on the one purpose of winning Lucien Palfrey. No artifice was unused. She denied herself balls, parties, and gayeties for which she pined—fondled the little Cora—wore the colors

he loved best, read the books he preferred, and sung his favorite songs—yielded her opinions to his deferentially and sweetly—and when they went abroad occasionally to Concert or Opera, leaned confidently upon his arm, called him "Cousin Lucien" in the most musical of voices—in short, strove unceasingly to fascinate him into becoming what, as yet, he was not, though half the circle in which they moved had long ago voted him as such—her *affiancée*.

And so the delighted Mrs. Delano came to regard the thing as settled; and "when you are Lucien's wife" was uttered often at her daughter's toilet, and duly reported by the abigail; and chambermaid, cook, and porter, talked it over in the kitchen, until, lastly, it reached the ears of old nurse Allen.

"Only to think of such a thing!" exclaimed the old lady, walking into the school-room one evening and sitting down beside Peace, for whom, latterly, she had conceived a strong liking—"Only to think of it, Miss Peace!" and her very cap strings quivered with indignation," here's Mr. Lucien—him that I rocked to sleep when he was a little baby in my arms—ago in' to up and marry that proud, flirtin' Miss Florence! And she's been playin' saint and angel all winter, a purpose to get him—a wheedlin' and fondlin' round little Cora enough to make a body sick, and stayin' at home from all the parties to read to him and sich like, jest to blind his eyes, because she knows he don't like gadabout women. Dear knows he suffered enough with Miss Jenny, without gettin' another just like her, only wuss;—though I do suppose he loved *her*—at any rate, he took on terribly when she died."

"Was little Cora's mother very young, and did she die suddenly?" asked Peace with interest.

"La, child—don't you know? But of course you don't, though, 'cause Mr. Lucien never wanted the thing talked about

much, and Mis. Delano ain't the woman that would be likely to speak of it. You see, dear—" and she drew her chair closer and laid her wrinkled hand on the young girl's.—"It's my 'pinion that Mr. Lucien never took much comfort with his wife. I always said these sudden love-matches never turned out well; and he fell in love with Miss Jenny at first sight—she was visitin' at old General Richmond's at Springdale—and before a month, they were married. Well, the new wife was handsome as a picter, with eyes and hair black as a sloe, but she had a dreadful temper, as Mr. Lucien soon found out. After a while, she wouldn't stay out there at the old Hall, though he'd had lots of workmen there, a paintin' and alterin', and bought new furniture, and fixed it up nice enough for a queen—but nothin' would do but she must have her house in town; and so Mr. Lucien had to give in, and leave all his patients and poor people,—and we all—he and Miss Jenny, baby and I, and lots of servants—came here to York, to the nicest house love and money would buy. Then there were high doings—lots of parties, and theatre-goings, and gay times—and Miss Jenny had it all her own way, sometimes draggin' her husband round after her, but oftener goin' with gay women like herself. One night, when Cora was most a year old, she wanted to go to hear a great Italian singer, or somethin', at the theatre, but Mr. Lucien had jest got back from buryin' an uncle he loved like an own father, and didn't think it jest right to go; but Miss Jenny, she'd had an invitation from some gay man or other, and set up her high temper,—and go she would. I s'pose they'd had high words—for Mr. Lucien shut himself up in his library—and when the carriage drove up, she jest went off without him, all dressed in her satins and jewels. I remember, she come into the nursery where I was rockin' little Cora, and said with a gay laugh, standin' before the mirror, 'Well, Auntie Allen, don't I look well to-night?' I

s'pose I was wicked then—but I couldn't help wishin', when I heard her laughin' and talkin' so happy like to the gentleman that helped her into the carriage—I couldn't help wishin' that Mr. Lucien had never laid eyes on her. But, poor creetur! when I saw her next, I was sorry enough for my harsh thoughts. When, a few hours later, they brought her home—Oh, *that* was dreadful!"—and the old lady shuddered.

"What was it? Was she *dead*?" asked Peace, quite pale.

"No, dear, but the same as dead—*dyin'*," replied the old nurse in lower tones. "You see, somehow, there was a great fire broke out in the theatre, and everybody pushed for the doors, great strong men never carin' who got knocked down and trampled on; and though they said the gentleman she was with tried his best to save Miss Jenny and hold her back, she jest got pushed amongst the thickest—and they brought her home almost killed, white as death, and all scarred and bruised—"

"Dreadful!" shuddered Peace, covering her eyes with her hand to shut out the terrible vision the old lady's recital had conjured up.

"Yes, dear, so it was! It seemed as if Mr. Lucien would go crazy—the whole house was raised, but he wouldn't let anybody in her room except the doctor and me; and all the three days she lived, he shut himself up there, neither eatin' or sleepin', and kept sayin' over as he laid his head on her pillow, 'It is a judgment! It is a judgment!' I s'pose he meant somethin' about their quarrel, for Miss Jenny would answer, 'No, no! don't think so, Lucien. I brought it upon myself. I was sorry I went, before I'd been there ten minutes!' Well, dear, the last thing she ever said, after kissing her baby and husband, was to beg his forgiveness; and so, meek and humble like, with her head in his arms, she died. And then, after the funeral—they

had carried her out to Springdale to bury her — he shut himself up for weeks in his library; till, all of a sudden, he sent off everybody but the housekeeper and her husband, shut up the old Hall except their rooms, sold his house in town, sent little Cora and me to Miss Jenny's sister, Mis. Livingston, where we staid till she shut up her house to go South last fall, when we come here — and, after bidding us all good bye, went off to furrin parts. Dear knows, that when he come back from his long journey, nobody was gladder to see him than I — and nobody'd rejoice more to see him married again to some good, smart, amiable girl, who'd make him jest such a wife as he's worthy of and *ought* to have; but it's too much, to think he's so blinded as to fall into that artful Miss Florence's trap!" — and her trembling hand tightened over Peace's.

"What kind of a wife'll *she* make him, I want to know? — that cold-hearted, proud Miss, with her fine dresses, and rings and fans, and pink cheeks and doll-baby face! What kind of a mother-in-law to little Cora? — a lollin' in her arm-chairs all the mornin' over her novels, or waltzing and *poking* at balls and parties, or showing herself off at the theatre! — for she's jest one of that sort, and Mr. Lucien'll find his eyes opened purty sudden after the knot's tied. I'd a good deal rather he'd staid in furrin parts till he's gray, than come home to marry her — *that* I would! Poor Cora! — precious little she shall have to do with my darling, while old Nurse Allen lives — *that's all!*" — and the indignant old lady rose and went out into the nursery to watch the peaceful slumbers of her beloved charge.

"And *this* is the end of it all! — to come here evening after evening — declaim against fashion and frivolity, talk earnestly about domestic peace, sing songs and read poems in his beautiful voice, reveal the depths of his strong rich heart, and then go

away and take to his heart such a woman as Florence Delano! It is the way with them all! Talk as they may about quiet homes, and congenial hearts, and an appreciation of domestic happiness, they straightway forget it all, and pay their court to beauty, position, wealth! 'Oh, Frailty, thy name is — *man!*'" — and with a quick scornful gesture, Peace went to the window, and, flinging up the sash, leaned out into the night.

Gradually a softer expression overspread her features; and sinking wearily down into a chair, she leaned her head upon the window-sill.

"Why should I care? — what is he to me?" she murmured huskily. "I will not wrong him — he is good and noble — and he cannot help it, if he loves her. It was *kindness* only — pity for my loneliness — that sent him here. He never bestowed a thought upon me, save of friendship. It is hard! hard! But I could bear it, did I know she returned a tithe of the tenderness he must lavish on the woman he again calls wife! But it cannot be, that she will go to his arms with a falsehood on her lips! It cannot be, that, sitting by his side, listening to his voice, she will not grow better, nobler! Oh, Father, grant *that!* Make *her worthy of him* — and give *me* strength!"

Long after, while the sighing winds of a May night dashed up the leafy spray of an acacia tree wet with dew against her bowed forehead, and the holy stars leaned down from heaven with tender pitying eyes, Peace Wedgewood stood beside that window with pale and tear-stained face, resolutely looking into her darkened future with holy trust. For she had cast her burden on the Comforter. The faith learned beside Uncle Reuben's knee and at Aunt Patience's death-bed did not fail her then!

CHAPTER XXIX.

Why did she love him? Curious fool! — be still —
Is human love the growth of human will?
To her he might be gentleness.

BYRON'S LARA.

A LITTLE quaint, vine-embowered cottage, nestling in a hill-side hollow under the shadow of overhanging cliffs, like a nest beneath the eaves!

It must have been an artist's eye that selected that nook for a home — where all the long summer day the heaviest shadows hung and the most exquisite bits of blue broke through the rifted clouds — where the plummy pines and dusky firs tossed up their arms, and the mountain ash and silver larch whispered together — where sparkling brooks broke in a thousand shivering diamonds over the rocks, then, gathering into their quieter beds, leaped gladly down the hillsides, wound through the valley below among low grassy meadows, until they poured their silvery tribute into the bosom of the blue Hudson.

And it was an artist's hand, too, beautifying everything with its touch, that trained the vines about the casement and the twining Indian Creeper about the western Gothic window, laid out the tiny flower-bed in a small plateau before the cottage, or adorned the interior of that quiet retreat — disposed the snowy lace-curtains over the windows, hung the pictures on the walls, and heaped brightest flowers into the delicate porcelain vases.

Leafy Earle, whose days were spent alone with her beautiful Art — in sketching the light and shade where they blended in some deep ravine among the hills, some bright bit of waterfall,

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or tiny lake set in its frame of dark evergreen and mirroring the cloud-rifted sky, or the white-winged shallops lying motionless for hours on the distant blue river — whose evenings fled like dreams, sitting beside one who listened to her songs while her white fingers swept the strings of her guitar, and the moonlight, sifting down through the larches at the cottage door, softened into beauty every feature of the dark face that bent above her — sweet Leafy Earle, what good angel guided thee to such a fairy home?

Alas, not so! for, in the tall dark man who every twilight guided his horse up the mountain path, and, tethering him to the young saplings at the little wicket-gate, sat evening after evening at her side watching the play of the artist-girl's speaking features with a devouring, passionate gaze — in that man, we recognize one who, wherever his footsteps had hitherto trod, had left but blight and desolation.

Strange that the tender vine should weave its drapery about the rough, blackened, distorted tree — that beautiful flowers should unfold their petals on the crater's brink, where, beneath, the volcano's heart lies bound in its nightmare sleep — that whitest lilies yield their fragrance amid bogs and marshes where stagnates foulest uncleanness!

But so it has been ever — and so with human hearts.

Who can explain that strange magnetism which often attracts those whose characters, dispositions, pursuits, loves, hopes and joys, are antipodean, into that conjunction which merges both hearts into one? — which brings lovely women, with aspirations after the good and pure and beautiful, to immolate their rich natures on an altar whose presiding priest is but little removed from the demons that sit in the shadow of darkness?

High, moral natures do not yield easily. She who acknowledges the law of her Maker as the standard whereby to regulate

her passions, struggles long, and, though the battle go hard, conquers — casting out this blind idol-worship; but yielding, trusting little Leafy Earle — though her every thought was an inspiration of purity — alas! the weak, clinging girl had no talisman beyond her own pure heart-impulses, to guard and keep her from evil.

What wonder, then, that, when the kind friend who had so generously purchased her paintings in the picture-gallery sought her soon under the pretext of ordering others — when he kindly took away the rapid creations of her brush and pencil, and brought her their proceeds which purchased her invalid mother many luxuries — what wonder that, from gratitude sprang regard, and from regard love, and from love the intensest adoration?

And when the fond widowed mother saw how this new feeling was swaying her child's life, lending her power and vigor to excel in her Art, causing her hand to work rapidly with brush and crayon — her lips overflowing with heart-songs, and her hazel eyes growing dreamier and tenderer, because of the great joy flooding her whole being — why should she bid her put this new happiness beyond her grasp?

Besides, Mrs. Earle had never known much of the great world — its wickedness or its sin. She, whose tide of life had always flown peacefully in its calm channel, could know nothing of those wild outer seas whose waves dash high, bearing on their turbid bosoms pale broken flowers — ruined hopes, desolated hearts, lost souls, — or of that seething, foaming, boiling Maelstrom — Passion — wherein white-winged pleasure-barques, circling nearer and nearer on the dancing waters, are engulfed forever!

Such tales of shipwrecked lives, of course had sometimes been repeated to her; Leafy had heard such, and shuddered; but no

poor Magdalens had crossed the fair girl's path — and how could she become like them? Impossible!

One day in April, when the sun stood warm and bright above the great city, and already the artist-girl longed for the birds and flowers in Nature's quiet domains, Hugh Golding entered her little studio.

"My child," he said with a fascinating smile, "yesterday, rambling among some rugged hills that form a lower chain of the Highlands, I came across a charming untenanted cottage half-hidden among trees. 'It is the very spot for my artist-girl's home!' I involuntarily said. There are light and shade, birds and flowers, and a Gothic window facing the west where you can sit at your easel and watch the sun go down. What says my pet? Her mother shall be queen of housewives in that charming nook, getting well and strong in the invigorating mountain air, and I will go there often and bring her pictures into town for sale, and she shall lead a happy, careless life. Leafy, will you go to this hill-side home, for the summer?"

The girl blushed. The thought of receiving a home at his hands, though she felt sure of his love, was instinctively revolting to her delicacy.

"Oh Mr. Golding, I thank you — but, indeed, I ought not to go there!" she replied hesitatingly.

"Ought not? Leafy, dear Leafy, you refuse me, then! I *had* hoped that one day the right to protect you would have been mine, but now —" and he turned away, apparently with wounded feelings.

It was enough. "The right to protect her" — did not that mean to become his wife? And now she had grieved him — her best friend! It was very ungrateful of her! And going up close to his side, she placed her little white hand in his, and said,

"Forgive me, Mr. Golding!"

"And you will go to this highland cottage?" he asked, bending down till his dark flashing eyes had called up waves of crimson to her transparent cheek.

"Yes, yes — my mother and I!" she murmured, shrinking away from the arm that would have encircled her.

Ah! the raven was poising his wings for his devouring swoop. Heaven save thee, innocent dove!

It was a June night, and intensely warm even on those breezy upland heights whither Leafy Earle had made her home.

The moon was near its full, and stood high and fair above the hills. Every cliff and tree was lighted up with wonderful fidelity, casting long shadows down the slope; stretching away to the northeast, a black pine forest lay sombre and heavy against the evening sky; southward and westward flowed the Hudson, describing a sudden bend at the foot of the hill; while noisy little brooklets leaping down their rocky heights and winding through the valley glittered like so many threads of steel binding the landscape.

"The Nest," as Leafy had poetically and appropriately termed the cottage, stood in a little hollow on the southern hill-slope.

The cottage itself was of stone, old, and quaint, and falling into decay, but so sheltered that storms and winds had passed it lightly; within, the tasteful, even elegant articles of furniture which Golding had caused to be conveyed there, gave it a pleasant, cheery look — and without, the luxuriant vines so draped the casements and faded gray walls that the ravages of time were scarcely perceptible.

Under the southern and western windows where the sun lay nearly all day white roses bloomed in the greatest profusion, and

the glossy-leaved, scarlet blooming Indian Creeper grew thick and luxuriant. At a distance of a few rods from the western Gothic window where Leafy had placed her easel, stood a tall white-wood tree flinging gigantic shadows down the hill-slope, and close by, on a level spot of grassy ground, bloomed a thicket of wild red roses. Beneath this stately white-wood tree was a rude stone seat, where often at sunset Leafy Earle came to sketch cloud or shadow, valley or river; and here, on that moonlight June evening, she sat beside Hugh Golding.

Her head rested against the polished trunk of the tree; and the moonlight, sifting down through its boughs, bathed her whole person in a flood of quivering light and shade.

And, as yet, the heart beating beside Hugh Golding's was pure as the sleeping moonlight. Her childlike, trusting innocence had been her shield; and even that bold bad man hesitated for means whereby to undermine it.

Of neither love or marriage had he ever spoken since the day when she consented to seek this secluded home. Leafy asked no vow. "By and by," she whispered to her heart, "he will ask me to become his child-wife. Meantime, he is good and tender, and loves me. I am content to bide my time."

Oh rare faith, which builds a fair structure on the foundation of a word, a smile, a kiss! — oh rich heart, that loves because it is a necessity of its very being! — oh beautiful trust, which sends out the affections, placing them beyond future recall in the keeping of another!

So it has been ever — so will it be, on through time — that woman's heart is sent forth, like the weary, storm-bound dove, to bring back some green olive-leaf from the surging waters of Life.

"Leafy, darling!"

The young girl started from her resting-place, and all the

blood of her heart seemed to rush in crimson waves over her face.

"You are as silent as the canary in yonder cage," said Golding, pointing to the little porch. "Does my pet bird rebel at the solitude of her Nest? Is the loneliness of this mountain region irksome to you, my child?"—and he smoothed out her floating hair with a caressing touch.

"Irksome! Oh, no indeed—anything but *that!*" was her enthusiastic reply.

"I have no lonely hours here. It was in the great busy city, among the thousands who care only for greed and gain—it was *there*, I was alone! But here—where the birds sing and the flowers grow—where the brooks laugh all day and whisper all night—where the sun goes down his pathway of gold and fire, and the moon sails her white boat through a sea of blue—where I hear the mighty anthems of the pine woods, and the sweet call of the west wind—Oh, how *could* I be lonely *here*! I could never feel alone with dear mother Nature! Mr. Golding,"—and her dreamy eyes kindled like stars,— "I don't think I could ever make another picture in the city. I might *copy*—but I could never *create*. I wonder how artists work there! It always cramped—stifled me!—and I know the reason now; I never *half* lived there! Blue skies and sunshine, rock and water, birds and flowers, are necessary to the artist's perfect life. I cannot help working here, with the light and shade playing over these hills, and the clouds for my neighbors—so far from the eager, busy world—so near heaven! Oh, I thank you for bringing me here!"—and she drew in her breath with a sudden inspiration.

"Enthusiast!"—and Golding imprisoned her hands; then he said in a low clear voice, "But, my pet, is it wholly this keen enjoyment of Nature's beautiful things, I wonder, that

makes your heart thrill with such fulness of life?"—and he drew her face forward into the full moonlight.

Leafy blushed. But half-comprehending him at first, she did not reply; then in an instant it flashed over her.

When did woman ever fill her heart with the love of birds and flowers, and Nature's inanimate things, or even that noble Art whose beauties dowered that young girl's life—and rest content? Nor did Leafy Earle.

"Leafy,"—and she was drawn close to a beating heart—"there is *another* love, than that of Nature or your Art, which has crept into your heart!—and to-night will you not confess it? Leafy, darling, tell me that you love me?"

The girl trembled, and covered her face with her hands. She could not speak for the great happiness at its spring-tide in her heart; she could not lift her eyes.

"Leafy—little one!"—and his voice softened to that indescribably fascinating tone he knew so well how to assume—"then, since you will not answer me, may I not regard as a faithful transcript of your feelings these "Dreamings," which a blessed chance wind blew to my hand to-night from your studio table?"—and leaning forward into the full moonlight, he read from a delicately perfumed sheet a tender heart-poem;—

All the morning melts away,
Gliding onward into noon,—
Trembling, dies the fainting day,
Still I dream the hours away
Underneath the skies of June.

Pencil, easel, lie forgot!
All uncaught, stray visions wild
Idly flit my brain athwart;
I am wrapped in happier thought—
I am dreaming like a child!

PEACE: OR THE STOLEN WILL.

What, to me, the voice of Fame?
 I have won a *dearer* boon!
 Tender lips speak o'er my name—
 Tender eyes burn brighter flame—
 Love hath waked my heart to bloom!

Care I not for *others'* praise!
 Care I not for *others'* sighs!
 I am well content to gaze—
 Seeking only for *my* praise
 In the clear wells of his eyes.

So the mornings melt away,
 Gliding onward into noon;
 So still dieth day by day,
 While I dream the hours away
 Underneath the skies of June.

With a sudden gush of tears, when Golding turned from the written sheet with eager eyes, Leafy Earle buried her face in her hands.

CHAPTER XXX.

Or perchance the continual dropping of the venomous words of spite,
 Insult and injury and scorn, have galled and pierced his heart.

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

It was a bright June sunset at the Ridge Farm. The poplars in front of the old house were all ablaze—their long arms casting flickering shadows athwart the brown, weather-beaten roof—and the slanting sunbeam flinging a shower of reddened light against the little-paned windows.

Fields of wheat and rye waved in the soft west wind; the glossy green maize had thrust its stalks upward through the rocky soil; tall grass surged to and fro in billowy richness; and patches of red and white clover grew rank and thick in the fields.

Along the road leading down to Red Brook, two rows of old gnarled willows, with drooping, melancholy looking foliage, guarded the way, like sad-hearted, weary old men; on the uplands surrounding the village, groves of beech and maple were luxuriant in their glossy greenery; and on Wood Hill, the dark pines and firs kept guard over the little graveyard where quiet sleepers rested.

The old farm-house at the Ridge was little changed since it had passed into the hands of Hannah Ward. The old well-sweep still swung aloft its long arm with the wooden bucket dangling from the end—tufts of white clover, mustard, and plantain-leaves, grew thick about the well-curb, almost overtopping the long watering-trough sunken in the grass.

But there seemed a change about the premises. Not that anything had fallen into decay; on the contrary, the domains looked neat and thrifty, the out-buildings were well kept and tidy, the crops well up, and weeds a tabooed product of the soil. But it was that very air of rigid thrift, cultivation, and utilitarianism, that impressed one painfully.

Through all Meadow Brook it had become a common saying, "As smart a manager as Hannah Ward;" and under her "smart" economy not an inch of arable land ran to waste. Even the green before the farm-house door had been ploughed up and converted into a vegetable garden, and the adjoining flower-beds had fallen a prey to the same Vandalism. There grew cabbages, parsnips, blood beets, asparagus, climbing beans, and early peas, for the market—replacing the smoothly kept turf and flowers that had once been Aunt Patience's pride and care.

Old maids' pinks and coquettish jonquils no longer nodded defiance, or got up flirtations with jaunty bachelor's buttons; delicate lilies of the valley, four-o'clocks, and mignonette, no longer bloomed under the valiant protection of royal prince's feather; the morning-glories had died out along the garden-wall; and the creeping jenny with its spiral curling tendrils, and trumpet honey-suckle, had been torn away from the west room windows, because the spinster, in whose hard gray eyes there was no beauty in vines or blossoms, declared, in a passion of neatness and thrift, that "they rotted the clapboards and brought bugs into the house."

Within the farm-house prevailed a rigid parsimony, amounting to niggardness, even. The passion for Gain which had prompted the avaricious woman to wrong the lonely Peace, had recoiled upon herself. By the glitter of her little gray eyes, and the clutch of her horny hand as she converted the products of the

dairy, and yarn spun from lambs' wool, into money, eagerly adding each newly-earned dollar to its fellows—by the increasing scantiness of their daily board, and the pinched, shrunken form of the bound boy, Hannah Ward was fast becoming that most miserable, contemptible being on earth—a miser.

Poor Chip Weed! The veriest slave that ever handled a hoe or guided the plough in the soil of the Granite State—overworked, neglected, ill-fed—his had been a hard lot since Reuben died. Not a neighbor but said so.

"She tasks the lad almost to death on that great farm," said Farmer Sanders. "If she only done something that I could *get hold of*, I'd complain to the overseers of the poor over to Elton to-morrow—but she's too cunning for that! There was Peace, turned out of house and home, as a body might say. In my opinion, Hannah Ward never treated *her* jest right; and now she's got the property, and slaves poor Chip beyond his strength."

This was too true. Since Reuben's death, the life of the poor witless bound boy had been a constant series of hardships; but it was not solely the unresting toil which wore upon him, but the absence of all kindliness, or care; and the gruff orders and rebukes of the exacting spinster kept him in a state of nervous dread and terror. Starting, affrighted, at his task-mistress's shrill call—going about his toil, in scant tattered garments, and with pinched, elfish features—he looked the picture of a cowed, neglected, half-starved lad.

Hannah Ward was a work-house surveyor on a small scale—a miserly, grinding woman, who did not hesitate to stint the hard-working, hungry bound boy, when he sometimes ventured to put forth the cry of Oliver Twist, for "more!"

A year and a half had gone by since Reuben Wedgewood's death. Two long winters, tedious and dreary to Chip, when

after a day's chopping in the woods he crouched down by the evening fire-light in the chimney-corner carding wool for the spinning, or crept away to his garret-bed — two springs, with their ploughing and planting and hoeing — and now the second summer had come round.

At the sunset of the day when our chapter commences, the lad had stretched his tall gaunt form under the stone-wall by the roadside, glad to steal a little rest after a hard day's hoeing in the corn-field. The milking was over — the last foaming pail carried up to the house — and the cows stood lazily chewing their cuds in the barn-yard.

An old gray cat, tempted doubtless by the twitter of the home-returning swallows, came out and danced a minuet on the door-step, wishfully eyeing the nests beneath the eaves; old Bruno, following the frisky example of his feline neighbor, seemed to have forgotten his rheumatic old age, and whirled about in a most fantastic and *doggedly* persevering manner, after his tail — then relapsed into his wonted gravity, and lay down close beside Chip, rubbing his smooth nose into the lad's tanned, hardened hand.

As Chip lay there, he heard the steady tramp, tramp, of Hannah's thick shoes through the long kitchen and up and down the cellar-dairy stairs, mingled with the clatter of milk-pans and pails. Presently she made her appearance in the old shed-door, in a short gown, checked linsey-woolsey apron, sleeves tucked up above her sharp, skinny elbows, and her coarse, wiry black hair streaked with gray, fastened by a high horn comb.

"Chip, you vagabond! be in here in jest three minutes, I tell you! Here's all the hogs to feed, and the cheeses to turn in the press — and you lazin' there!" she screamed shrilly, placing the milk-pan she held down by the door-step on a smooth strip of board to "scald" in the next morning's sun.

The bound boy rose wearily from his reclining posture, picking up his tattered, sunburnt straw hat.

Just then little Tommy Sanders, a bright lad of ten, came whistling along the road on his return from "the village."

"Tired — aren't you, Chip?" he asked compassionately, pausing to lean over the stone wall.

"Yes," answered Chip with a sullen look. "It's dig, dig all the time, jest like a nigger. It's 'Chip, here!' and 'Chip, do this!' and 'Chip, do that, you vagabond!' No rest or comfort since *she* come — the old dragon! I jest won't hurry in *one step*," and he settled himself resolutely against a post at "the bars" close by. "The darned old hogs! — no use feedin' on 'em — not a mite! — they don't grow an atom — jest stopped a growin' out o' spite, I reckon — to bother her! *Nothin'* wouldn't grow, when *she's* round lookin' at 'em. — I hate her!" he cried energetically.

"So does *everybody*, Chip!" said little Tommy sympathizingly, picking out a small smooth stone from the wall and hurling it with unerring precision at a turkey strutting past the shed-door. "There, I wish that had hit her old gobble — don't you? — Father, and Mr. Green, and Capt. Andrews were talking about her t'other day in Deacon Hawkins's store — and they said she treated you shamefully, and hadn't no business here, either. I heard the deacon whisper, says he, kind o' low, 'Depend upon't, she never come by that property honestly — for I remember old Squire Barton told me one day, in this very store not six months before he died, says he, 'I've jest been making Farmer Wedgewood's will — and depend upon't, his farm won't go to any of his blood relations!'" Yes, Chip, that's what I *heard*," continued the boy breathlessly, lowering his voice to a whisper — "and then Deacon Hawkins told how, when Uncle Reuben died, the will couldn't be found — and Peace was turned out of

house and home. Now you see, Chip," whispered Tommy, "I'll bet *anything*, that Hannah knew where that will was, and went and *stole* it! By George! She *knows* how all our speckled hens lay in her barn, and she gets their eggs and sells 'em. Aint *that* stealing? — and if she'd steal *eggs*, wouldn't she a got *the will* if she could a *found* it?" and this argument, which the boy seemed to regard as a poser, was clinched by another missile at the before-mentioned venerable turkey.

Chip's sullen face relaxed when Peace's name had been spoken; and as the boy went on, his little faded blue eyes brightened.

"What *is* a will, Tommy?" he asked sharply.

"Why don't you know, Chip?" and the boy looked at his "lacking" neighbor with an air of immense superiority. "Why it's a paper that folks get a lawyer to write for 'em, to tell who's going to have their property and things after they're dead. Now you see, if I'd a died with them plaguy measles I had last winter, I should a had my will made, and left Ned my yoke of steers, Frank my sled, and some o' the rest o' the boys my new boots, and kite, and lots o' things — but I got well. But then they said Uncle Reuben *made* his will, and give away everything to Peace. She's gone away off to New York to be a great teacher now."

"New York," said Chip, after a few moments — "ain't that a good many hundred miles off, Tommy?" and a singular look of cunning crept into his eyes.

"It's over four hundred, — I heard the master say so at school yesterday. But you ain't going to run away and find Peace, and tell her about old Hannah — are you, Chip?"

"He, he, he! Guess not! Better find the *will* first — hadn't I, Tommy? — he, he, he!" and again that look of cunning stole over his face.

"By George! *I* wouldn't stay here, *I'll* bet!" said Tommy stoutly. "Tell you what *I'd* do," and he whispered confidentially, his bright eyes sparkling — "I'd jest run away in the night. — Catch *me* staying with the ugly old thing! — I'll bet I wouldn't! But look here, Chip — don't you whisper what I said about the will — 'cause father'd lick me *like sixty* if he knew I told of it. He tells mother 'Little pitchers have long ears' — s'pose he means me. But you won't tell — will you, Chip?"

"No!" was the satisfactory answer.

"There she is now! Run, Chip, or she'll be mad as a hornet!" and little Tommy hurried down the road with a parting stone flung at the turkey.

"Here, you Chip! didn't I call you half an hour ago?" screamed Hannah. "For my part, I wish neighbors would keep their young ones at home — and not always have 'em hanging round other folks' houses. I should like to catch that saucy Tom Sanders and give him a right smart shaking! Step yourself, Chip, and do up the chores afore bed-time — and see that you're up bright and airy for the churning!"

And while little happy, care-free Tommy Sanders sauntered down the road, whistling blithely and making tracks with his bare feet in the warm sandy highway, then frolicked gayly with his brothers in the yard before his father's house, the spiritless bound boy — with a new, strange resolve in his brain — performed his evening tasks, then crept up to his garret bed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"This is my home again! Once more I hail
The dear old gables and the creaking vanes.
It stands all flecked with shadows in the moon,
Patient, and white, and woeful. 'Tis so still,
It seems to brood upon its youthful years,
When children sported on its ringing floors,
And music trembled through its happy rooms."

It was July, and intensely warm. Mrs. Delano's town mansion was closed — the satin brocatelle upholstered furniture in brown Holland covers; her two "darlings," the governess, little Cora and Nurse Allen, installed for the summer at Lucien Palfrey's old country house at Springdale; and the lady herself with Florence, and Palfrey as escort, had sought that resort of the fashionable world — Saratoga.

The tide of gayety, at its flood when, with her stylish equipage — an emblazoned carriage, pair of bays, and liveried footman — her beautiful daughter, and their elegant cavalier, Mrs. Delano made her appearance; and the party were duly installed in their sumptuous suite of rooms at the 'United States,' the sleek bays in the stables, and the waves of fashionable life rolled on as before their advent.

It may seem strange to our readers who have obtained glimpses of Lucien Palfrey's character and tastes, that he should so readily become the dupe of an artful designing woman like Florence Delano; but at this period of his life there was nothing easier. Returning, as he had, from the unsatisfying life of a wanderer, sighing more than ever for the repose of a home and

some heart whereon he might cast down his burden — remembering this cousin only as a pretty school-girl who had often visited Jenny in his brief married life, and finding her now transformed into an elegant woman, well fitted to be the nucleus of a swarm of admirers, yet turning from all to devote herself to him — paying him a hundred little grateful attentions, seeming always so gentle, sweet and womanly, so exactly the counterpart of his *beau ideal* of a true woman — what wonder that he fell into the snare?

It was a politic move on the part of Mrs. Delano — who, from afar off, stood watching her daughter's operations with a keen eye, much as a stout general would have reviewed the tactics of some detachment sent out to surprise the enemy — to bring Palfrey as their escort to Saratoga.

"Florence, you cannot remain unsought there; admirers must flock about you; and Lucien will see that, if he would secure you, it must be done at once. You will return his engaged wife."

The next day the manoeuvring mamma quietly informed Palfrey that Florence's health was failing, and the physician advised the mineral springs. Would he forego his dislike of crowds and gayeties, and accompany them — or was it asking too much?

The result has been seen. They went to Saratoga.

It was a rare old place — that country seat at Springdale.

The Hall had been built by Palfrey's paternal ancestors, and was full two centuries old — a curious mixture of various kinds of architecture both ancient and modern — the low sloping gable roofs and little-paned windows betraying its Dutch origin, but new wings, and other improvements made by successive owners, imparting to it quite a modernized air.

To Peace there was a charm about it. She never wearied

of stealing at twilight into the long drawing-room with its rich furniture and darkened windows, where no sun-ray ever entered to gild the massive picture-frames or chase lurking shadows from the corners, save once or twice a year, when the old housekeeper, Dame Winslow, threw open the blinds and disturbed the heavy curtain-folds, wiped the dust from the polished mahogany, then closed the apartment to its wonted darkness and stillness. And, creeping into the little boudoir with its hangings of pale green and gold which Lucien Palfrey had fitted up for the use of his beautiful bride — standing before a portrait of a brilliant, youthful face with crimson lips and bands of raven hair, before which old Nurse Allen one day held up the little Cora, saying, "There, dear, that beautiful lady was your mamma!" — musing over the story the old lady had repeated in the school-room, Peace would softly sigh, and murmur, "Here *she* lived — and here *he* was unhappy!"

Then there were little chambers with low dormer windows; old, rambling, shadowy passages and winding stair-cases; a long hall leading quite through the mansion from front to rear, where all day the wind blew cool; but she loved best the old housekeeper's room with its wainscoted walls, polished oaken floors, windows facing the west and shaded by tall laburnum trees, and spruce boughs and asparagus plumes in the open fire-place — for there was a home air about it, bringing to mind the little west room at the Ridge. And afternoons, when the lessons were over and the children played in the garden, and old Nurse Allen sat and crouched with the housekeeper about "young Mr. Lucien," sitting there, with the waning sunlight slanting in, listening to the old women's mumbling voices, she would close her eyes and dream of Aunt Patience, and fancy herself a child again.

Then there were such deep woods close by; and scarce fifty rods distant, loomed a pine forest heavily against the sky, where

all the air was aromatic with the fragrant piney odor, and the paths underneath were soft-as velvet to the tread, hollowed with little marshy dells where sprang pale woodland flowers and the fresh, glossy "standing evergreen."

What a joy it was to the girl born and bred in the cool, still, green country, to sit for hours in the heart of the forest and feel the fresh breathings of Nature, after that wearying, stifling city life! Despite her loneliness, the memory of her mother's wrongs, her own heritage of shame and mystery, and her later trials, Peace was calmly happy there.

And yet, it must not be inferred that Peace's life during the past winter had been wholly cheerless. Of her experience as governess, the first day in Mrs. Delano's house was a fair sample. That lady's "darlings" were in no wise calculated to render their teacher's task a peculiarly pleasant one, although she had succeeded, by uniform and gentle firmness, in winning them over to a degree of tractableness. But there were a few pleasant things mingled with the bitter, — her increasing fondness for the winning Cora, and Palfrey's frequent visits to the school-room. Happily for the governess, neither Mrs. Delano nor her daughter imagined that evenings they supposed devoted to his child in the nursery, were invariably spent in the school-room. And, as Palfrey never encountered her in presence of the family, and old Nurse Allen wisely kept her own counsel — and, latterly, the young man, yielding to the charming toils of his beautiful cousin, gradually came to omit his visits to the school-room, so it happened that Florence Delano deemed herself secure of her admirer.

There had, however, been a firm friend to the lonely girl in that great city — Orah Howland. When they parted at school — Orah for her year's sojourn in Europe, and Peace for another year's study ere her graduation, their friendship was firmly

cemented; and when, on a bright winter's morning, they met again on the crowded pave of New York's great thoroughfare, the stately city belle bestowed a warm recognition upon the humble governess. A few days afterward found Judge Howland's carriage drawn up at Mrs. Delano's mansion, and its occupant inquiring for Miss Wedgewood; and the fact of her possessing such a friend as the aristocratic Miss Howland was, of itself, quite sufficient to ensure Peace more cordial treatment at the hands of her gold-loving, station-worshipping employer. So that winter had passed, brightened by the friendship of the noble girl.

One day, in a longer than her wonted stroll among the hills, Peace gained a view of the gray stone cottage near the angle of the cliff, and paused to catch the flutter of white drapery under the whitewood tree ere she went back to the Hall.

"Is it inhabited?" she asked the old housekeeper on her return. "I mean that little stone cottage away up on yonder mountain."

"No indeed,—it must be going to ruin now," was Dame Winslow's reply.

"But I thought—nay, I am sure—I saw a moving form there this morning, and the flutter of a woman's garments. I could not have been mistaken!" persisted Peace.

"Well, maybe, child; but John would have heard at the village if anybody lived there, I reckon—and he never breathed such a thing. Let me see—it must be nigh about eighteen year ago"—and the old lady put her hands over her eyes, to conjure up old memories—"yes, it is eighteen year ago this comin' September—I remember my nephew Horace, him that's got to be a minister now, he was about ten year old then—well, 'twas about that time, that a purty young creetur as you ever sot

your eyes on went away from the old stone cottage so sudden-like. She'd lived there three year or upwards—but dreadful shy-like—never comin' down to the village, nor nobody ever goin' up there, till after her little boy died—he was drowned in the lake back of the mountain, they said—and then the men all turned out to hunt for the body, but 'twas never found. Well, you see after this little boy died, she seemed lonesomer and shyer than ever—and never made talk with folks if they went up there; and in September, all of a sudden she disappeared, and never come back."

"Who was she? and why did she live there?" asked Peace, breathlessly, with strange interest.

"Well, dear, I reckon she stayed alone for the most part—she and her little boy. I've seen 'em, summer afternoons, walkin' down the hill-path to the valley—and once, I went out a purpose to see her close to, though I pretended to be a pickin' berries that grew thick at the foot of the hill. Let me see—she was handsome as a picter, though she looked sad and pitiful-like. She had bright shiny hair, and sad-lookin' eyes, though they were blue as the flax flower, like yours—yes! I declare, jest *like yours*, for the world!"—and the old dame threw up her hands. "There! I *told* Aunt Allen," she went on, "I told her all along, how you looked nateral-like—and I *do* say now, you're the very picter o' *her*!"—and she attentively regarded her listener. "But, poor creetur!"—and she resumed her story with a sigh—"poor creetur! that's neither here nor there—I never saw her agin! After the boy was drowned, she never come down to the valley; and all of a sudden they said the cottage was empty."

"And the child was drowned?—and the woman went away?—and was there nobody else who ever lived there?" asked Peace slowly, as though articulation were painful.

"Yes—seems to me, child—yes, I do remember now," mused the old lady, "how old Mr. Palfrey—young Mr. Lucien's father—come home from the city one night, and said how a fine young city buck come into these parts in the same stage with him; and that very evening, when the moonlight was bright as day, he sat on the back piazza and saw somebody goin' up the hill-path; and when he'd taken a look through the old spy-glass he told John to fetch out, I heard him telling Mrs. Palfrey, sez he, 'That's the same young man that rode up to Springdale with me!'"

"But did anybody ever hear his name?" asked the young girl in a strange husky voice. "Who *was* he, Mrs. Winslow?"

"Laws, child! dear knows—I don't! There are allers enough bad men in the world to shut up their poor mistresses in sich out-o'-the-way places—most likely she was his! But, poor thing! I couldn't help pityin' her as she stood there on the hill that afternoon, holdin' her little boy in her arms, lookin' so pale and disconsolate-like! Poor young creetur! she looked as pure and innocent as an angel, only so sorrowful! But bless me, child! you're white as a sheet! Are you sick? You'd better go right to bed, dear—and I'll bring you up a cup of nice warm tea. That long walk was too much for you!"

"And you never heard anything more after she left? Did the man ever come again?" persisted Peace.

"La, child, what makes you so curious? Poor creetur! I should like to know what become of her—but never shall, now; As for him, I've told you all I know. Most likely the Lord has rewarded him for his mistreatment of that poor young woman long before this. 'Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord.' But, dear child, you look tired. Do go up stairs!"

When good Mrs. Winslow brought up a cup of smoking tea to Peace, she said:

"I believe the old spy-glass is up garret somewhere, and I'll hunt it up to-morrow; then you can watch the old cottage on the mountain all day, if you want to, from your window, and find out purty quick if anybody goes in or out. Now drink your tea, dear—and go to sleep!"

But little sleep came to Peace's eyes. In a corner of her trunk lay an old bead bag which had belonged to Patience. She took thence a bit of folded linen in which was carefully wrapped a piece of faded, age-stained paper—evidently the back of a note or letter, on which was superscribed, in a manly hand, the two words "Augustus Revere;" and now, alternately gazing from that name to the miniature she held open, and musing over the old housekeeper's recital, surely it was not her imagination that converted that recital into a startling revelation. That paper had been found in the pocket of Mary Halpine's dress; and now, the lapse of time—nearly eighteen years,—the memory of Uncle Reuben's words, "Peace, you are the image of your mother,"—and the story of a baby-brother's death by drowning, for Mary Halpine's dying words had been repeated to her child,—one and all, were they not links in the chain which drew her nearer the knowledge of her parentage?

And yet, all seemed a mockery! Years not only had fled; but Death might divide her from that father for whom her heart yearned. Or, if living, how, in the wide, wide world, could she hope to encounter him? Or, if that might be, would he *acknowledge* her—the child of shame? Uncle Reuben's words at Patience's death-bed, "For thirteen years you have been our child, and he never came to claim you," swept across her memory like a funeral knell.

Long after midnight, while the moon came up and silvered

the hill-side cliffs, she sat gazing at the stone cottage with tearful eyes.

"There, my mother lived and suffered," she murmured with pale, quivering lips. But ah! her heart did not whisper how near to her that night dwelt her beloved school-time companion — sweet Leafy Earle!

CHAPTER XXXII.

Merciful God!

It comes — that face again, that white, white face,
Set in a night of hair; reproachful eyes,
That make me mad.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

THE morrow came — a pleasant day with a soft west wind; and when Peace awoke, her first glance was toward the hill-side cottage.

On going down to breakfast she found the old housekeeper in "a heap of trouble," as the good dame expressed it. The village dressmaker, Miss Goodfit, had just brought up to the Hall a nice new black silk — a present to Dame Winslow from "young Mr. Lucien," in which the old lady, with pardonable vanity, had designed to appear at Springdale church on the approaching Sabbath, in honor of a favorite nephew who was to preach for the first time in his native village.

"Dear knows," said the old lady, holding up the nearly completed dress as Peace entered the breakfast room, "dear knows I don't want to be a bit proud, but when a body's own nephew — him that I eddicated ever since he was a lad — comes home from the University a fine minister, seems to me that a body might be pardoned for wantin' to spruce up a little extra. You see, Miss Peace, young Master Lucien brought me home this gown from foreign parts — 'twas real kind and thoughtful-like in him — and sez he, 'Here, Mother Winslow' — he always calls me mother — 'here's a little present for you.' And thinks I, after I'd unrolled the parcel, I'll jist carry this over to Miss

Hepsy Goodfit and have it made up to wear when my nephew Horace visits Springdale, and I'll have it made up with a cape, and great sleeves, like the Squire's wife's watered silk. Well, t'other day when I was at the village, I carried it in to the manty-makers, and she measured off the skirt and cut the body and cape — I was dreadful partic'lar about the *cape*, you see — that's what's done the mischief — and then, some folks comin' in all in a hurry, I come off, and we both forgot all about the sleeves. Now here's Miss Goodfit, been up here bright and arly this mornin', and says it don't hold out, and I must pattern the silk — and it can't be done short of York, and she ain't goin' down till next week — so I'll have to give up the gown for next Sunday's wearin'. — Well, I s'pose it's all for the best! Old women like me shouldn't get vain, even if their relations do happen to get to be fine ministers," and the good dame began refolding the dress.

"Why, Mrs. Winslow, let me go into town and match your silk for you! You know the boat comes along at eight, and it is now only six," exclaimed Peace, glancing at the clock.

"La, no, dear — I couldn't think o' such a thing! It's going to be a dreadful hot day — and the jaunt would be too much for you after your long walk yesterday!"

"Oh, that was nothing! I am perfectly well this morning — and should enjoy it much. Please let me go, dear Mrs. Winslow," persisted Peace.

"Well, child — if you insist upon't," and the old lady wavered — "for I *do* want the gown sadly. And John shall harness up and carry you down to the landing. You're a dear good child, to humor an old woman's whims so; but depend upon't, you sha'n't be the loser by it, either."

Half an hour after — breakfast over, and her pupils delighted at the prospect of a holiday — Peace, neatly attired in a mourn-

ing muslin and cottage hat, with a huge pattern of Dame Winslow's silk safely stowed away by that careful lady in her reticule, was seated in a low carriage beside old John, ready to drive to the village steamboat-landing. And the old lady stood on the broad piazza, where she had reiterated her charges "to be sure and not walk about them hot city streets," "and go down to Mrs. Delano's house to dinner." "She's a purty creetur — so young and modest, yet womanly-like!" said the dame to Aunt Allen as the carriage wound along the valley road. "Somehow, the more I think on't, the more she does look like that poor young woman that lived up in the cottage there so many year ago. There! that puts me in mind that I'll go straight up garret and hunt up that old spy-glass.

"I wish it might be nephew Horace's good fortin' to get such a good wife as Peace'll make!" she added, pausing and looking back at the old nurse. "Such a *minister's* wife as she'd make, Aunt Allen!"

"For *my* part, I don't see where young Mr. Lucien's eyes are, to take that proud, flirtin' Miss Florence before *her*. It 'pears to me his journey to furrin parts warn't all for the best, if he's goin' to marry her, as they say. But there, Mrs. Winslow — 'tain't no sort of airthly use for you or I to plan! These men *will* do as they've a mind to, spite of us; and I've about settled down into the belief it's best to let 'em take their own way. Experience's the best master, I reckon, for *some* of 'em!" and the indignant old lady followed Cora into the hall. "If they *will* walk right into the fire with their eyes wide open, I can't help it!"

In a short time after Peace was set down at the landing, the little steamer came down river — its paddle-wheels leaving a

long white foamy wake on the water, and puffs of wreathing smoke flecking the blue air.

Daily the boat made the trip downward to the city, returning at nightfall — and as the plank was withdrawn, and Peace lingered on deck, watching the green, wooded banks, she felt a novel delight at the prospect of her little journey. True, the memory of the preceding night's revelation clung to her then; but the freshness and sunlight exerted a wonderful cheery and strengthening influence, infusing the subtle alchemy of hope into her heart.

Blessed sunlight! reviver and strengthener! folding back the shadows that shroud our spirits in the brooding night-time — bringing light and hope with the day! — type of that greater, more blessed sunlight — the true God-ray — vivifying our lives when densest earth-sorrows sit around the hearthstones of our hearts!

The wooded banks flung down giant shadows in the river — wild geranium-blossoms trailed down to the water's edge — white villas gleamed out from shady glens, or reared their fronts, rich in architectural adornments, on commanding eminences — and, from some bold projecting promontory, gnarled and gloomy firs deeply rooted in the earthly interstices of the ledgy soil, leaned riverward, flinging distorted shadows into the blue mirror below.

Now and then little pleasure-boats darted out from some dark wooded cove, skimming along neck and neck with the swift steamer, while the passengers watched the chase with animated interest; flocks of birds, upspringing from some topmost tree-branch, circled round and round in their flight, following the vessel — at times sinking almost to the deck, then rapidly whirling away as if in fear of the great fiery-breathed monster ploughing the calm waters of the river. And Peace watched,

with especial interest, one great dusky-winged bird circling high above the vessel's track, — then, wheeling suddenly on his course, beating the air with heavy strokes of his great wings, he poised above the chain of hills around Springdale, and with a rapid swoop fell downward, settling on the cliff overhanging the stone cottage.

The girl shuddered, as the ill-omened, boding raven settled down. The old housekeeper's recital rushed across her mind.

"My poor, poor mother!" she murmured, with tearful eyes.

At length the roar of the city smote on her ears — the steady rumbling of drays and carriages rolling along toward the wharves, the shouts of drivers and porters, and cries of newsboys, mingling with a thousand other city sounds; and amid the deepening din the little river steamer worked her way toward the wharf among the countless craft of every description, and with a few heavy puffs of smoke and a slow measured beat of the engine, came up to her station.

Peace quickly and somewhat timidly threaded her way among the crowd; and, walking rapidly, soon found herself in that portion of the city with which she was familiar. Taking a carriage, she soon gained Mrs. Delano's house. Going round to the basement entrance, her ring was answered by Mrs. Warren, in whose charge the house was left, and who heartily welcomed her visitor. After mutual inquiries, dinner, and an hour's rest in her own chamber, Peace started forth again.

At a later hour, her purchases over, she walked slowly out on the Battery, enjoying keenly the fresh sea-air and lingering under the grateful shade-trees. Suddenly a thought occurred — "Perhaps Orah Howland is in town!" — and she soon stood before Judge Howland's mansion, in a retired quarter of the city,

and shaded by a few magnificent trees rooted when New York was a full century younger.

Her visit was a successful one; and in a few moments she found herself seated in the long, cool, darkened drawing-room, and welcomed with the warmest expressions of regard.

"You naughty girl!" said Orah in playful earnestness, "I have the best mind to scold you for going off into the country without apprizing me of your intention! Why did you not come to bid me good bye?"

Peace smiled.

"Because I supposed that, like all the rest of the fashionable world, you were too busily occupied with dress-makers and milliners in preparation for your summer's flitting to some watering-place, to spare many precious minutes for your poor friend, the governess. Even now, my call was an experiment; for I scarce *expected* to find you still in town."

"Unkind Peace! when was Orah Howland so immersed in fashionable frivolities as to deny herself to her dearest school-time friend? As for crowded watering-places," she added with a change of manner, "I detest them! Latterly, as perhaps you may know, I have gained the reputation of being "odd," "eccentric," — and I choose to prove it, by preferring the comfort of our cool, airy house, to imprisonment in little seven-by-nine sleeping apartments, dancing till daylight in crowded halls, or sitting over interminable dinners at the hotels of Newport or Saratoga. Such martyrs to Fashion have my supremest pity! By and by, I may visit a pleasant country town in Massachusetts, where I passed the most of my school-vacations, or I may remain here. But what sort of a place are you staying at?" she resumed. "A real *bona fide* old country house? Then I must drive out there some day; Louis would like no better office than *chaperone*, provided a certain young

friend of mine would grant him a warm welcome!" — and she glanced archly toward her companion.

A slight blush dyed Peace's cheek.

"Certainly, I should indeed be most happy to see Mr. Howland there," she said in a slightly constrained voice; "but oh, if you would come there, Orah, and spend a week with me, it would seem quite like the old school-days again. There are such grand old woods! such sunsets! such flower-scented winds! You know nothing about it here in your great city! You *will* come!

"Thank you! yes indeed, my dear!" — and Orah clasped the hand that lay like a little snow-flake on the arm of the crimson damask chair. "I should be delighted — for I do love the country right well! But is it true, Peace, that Dr. Palfrey is shortly to marry that heartless, soulless Florence Delano? I hope not, for his sake, — for, though I do not know much of the man, I should judge him to possess a fine, sensitive nature, which certainly cannot be similar to *hers*. Is it so?"

"They all say so," answered Peace.

Her reply was uttered in a low tone, and Orah Howland felt the hand clasped in hers tremble; and she looked searchingly from under her jetty eye-lashes into a face which she fancied grew pale, despite the warming tint of the heavy crimson brocated curtains. A sudden light flashed on her brain; and at that moment, Orah dimly guessed what caused that quivering hand and paling cheek. Like shafts had pierced both their hearts, and the calm, proud, elegant woman, and the quiet, shrinking, humble governess, alike suffered. Instinctively her hand tightened over Peace's.

The little silence that followed was broken by Orah.

"Peace, do you know anything of Leafy Earle these days?"

The girl drew a long breath of relief. The silence was stifling.

"I have heard from her but once since I left Northfield. She wrote me then from her country home, saying that she should go to some city — perhaps this — where the sale of her paintings would support her mother and herself. I wrote immediately in return, but no reply ever reached me. Perhaps she is here."

"That accounts for it, then!" — and Orah's eye brightened. "A few weeks ago, in a picture-store, I purchased two miniature landscapes — perfect gems of Art — and on close inspection a few days since, discovered two tiny initials, 'L. E.,' in the corner. Let us go up and see them — they are in my dressing-room. They must be *hers*! To-morrow I will visit the store and inquire where the proprietor procured them — thus, if Leafy be in the city, we can obtain a clue to her."

Time passed rapidly to the two girls in the dressing-room, until, as the clock on the mantel chimed five, Peace rose to depart.

"The boat leaves at six," she said. "I shall have scarce time for my walk."

"No, no! — let it go!" pleaded Orah. "Pass the night with me, and in the morning Louis shall drive us out to Springdale in an open carriage. It will be delightful!"

Peace wavered for a moment; but, remembering the anxiety that Dame Winslow must feel if the evening boat came without her, and old John's promise to be in waiting at the landing, she decided to return.

After Orah Howland had kissed Peace at the hall-door and put her from her with a quick movement at parting, she went hastily into the drawing-room.

"Why is that girl so dear to me?" she said, vehemently

pacing up and down the velvet carpet with its rich Sorrento roses. "Why — but because she is so much like *him*! — the same eyes, the same smile, the same high, proud nature softened and tempered into womanhood! It was *that* which first drew me to her in the old school-days — she was so like *him*! Oh, Jasper, Jasper! Can it be, that I have not conquered myself yet? *Heart*, are you not yet laid to sleep?" — and she clasped her fingers tightly over it — "that a word, a tone, a smile so like his, has power to make me grow faint! When I thought every memory had been steeped in the Lethean tide of forgetfulness — now, hydra-headed, they rise to haunt me! Oh, I, who have so counted upon my strength — who have thought to pluck up every memory of that past, and cast it from me — Oh, I am weaker, weaker than a very reed in the gale!" — and she flung herself passionately on a couch, heavy tears forcing their way through her jewelled fingers.

After many minutes of painful, passionate weeping, she again stemmed back the turbulent tide of Feeling and shut the iron gate of Resolve against it.

"This is not well! *Others* have suffered, and conquered — why not *I*? Henceforth I am strong!"

A rapid walk soon brought Peace to the crowded business thoroughfares of the city. The pavements were thronged, carriages obstructed the crossings, and it was with difficulty that she threaded her way. At length, in endeavoring to cross a wide street whence she could emerge into another where a narrow alley cut off a portion of the distance to the wharf, she was forced to a stand by an unbroken file of vehicles. A crowd had collected about the crossing, for the most part, business men — judging from their keen, eager countenances, and evident impatience at the detention; and close beside her, chafing at the

delay, and awaiting the first opening among the carriages, stood a man who at once attracted Peace's attention.

His haughty personal beauty first arrested her eye. He had reached—certainly not exceeded—the prime of life, for there were but few silver threads in his luxuriant curls; his teeth were white and perfect, gleaming through heavy but well-cut lips; his hands white as a lady's; but his countenance had a pale, almost haggard look, and the eyebrows were contracted, as if with anxious thought. As he stood there, nervously grinding his heel into the pavement, Peace's gaze, as by some strange fascination, was rivetted upon him; nor could she withdraw it.

Suddenly a change of position by the pressure of the crowd brought them face to face. Such a change as passed over his features then! He had been pale before—now, a marble hue settled on them; and surprise, wonder, almost terror, alternated on that face.

Peace dropped her eyes, half-terrified, and with trembling feet crept away. But the gaze of those eyes—every feature of that face—was daguerreotyped upon her brain. Somewhere, had she seen them before—but when, or where, she knew not. She grew bewildered, confused, and so glided away.

When the crowd had separated and the street was clear, still that man stood where she had left him—white, immovable as a statue. People jostled him in passing—merchants of note touched their hats to him—friends went by with a greeting; but he stirred not for many moments. At length, passing his hand over his forehead like one awakening from a dream, he murmured hollowly, "Good God! was it a spirit? Can the *dead* come back to haunt me?"—and dropping his white hands nervously, he bent his haughty head as though age had suddenly stricken him, and moved on.

On the deck of the little river steamer ploughing her homeward way—unmindful of the sunset glories playing over sky, earth, and water, tinting the clouds piled above Weehawken's summit with streaks of crimson and gold, flashing with long lance-like rays through wooded steeps and over grassy slopes, then cresting the noble river with a thousand flashing jewels—unmindful of the soft west wind playing on her brow and bringing flower-scents from villa-gardens along the banks, sat Peace, her every thought given to that haunting face.

When the evening shadows had deepened, and the starlight shone overhead, the boat stopped at a little landing a few miles below Springdale. Two gentlemen passed her seat; and in the confusion, a few words reached her ear.

"Yes sir," said a tall man, pausing a moment as the plank was thrown ashore, "I tell you there'll be a crash soon, and he *must* go down! I saw him to-day, dodging in and out the brokers' offices on Wall Street, looking like a hunted man; and I stood close beside him at the corner of C—— Street, this afternoon, on my way to the boat—and, be assured, he never wears that anxious look for nothing. Mark it, sir,—in less than a fortnight, the name of Augustus Revere will be cashiered, disgraced among the merchants of New York! But I go ashore here—Good night, sir!"

With a wild cry, Peace sprang up and caught a man's arm.

"Did you speak, miss?" asked one of the boatmen.

"Oh, sir—tell me—Mr. Revere—" but, weary, confused, and finding her mistake, she sank back to her seat. Meantime the boat pushed from shore, the speaker's companion was lost in the crowd on deck, and again they were on their way up the river.

But the key was furnished! "Augustus Revere"—those

spoken words had cleared the mists from her brain. Yes!—those features—those eyes—thousands of times had she gazed upon them; and Peace's hand convulsively grasped the miniature she wore. She had stood that day *beside her father!*

"Oh, for the morrow! *the morrow!*" she murmured with dilated eyes, as the steamer rounded to the landing at Springdale. "And, with the morrow, I will find *him!*"

As good old John handed her to the carriage, and they rode home by the light of the rising moon, she gazed long and earnestly to where the little stone cottage perched on the cliff like an eagle's eyrie.

No dusky raven sat brooding on the crags; but, unseen in the evening, Hugh Golding—he who had left the steamer two miles down the river, and hastened to the stable of a little country inn where he bestrode his horse—was dashing up the hillside path; and Leafy Earle awaited his coming.

Was not the bird of prey there, still?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Seal up your lips, and give no word but — mum!

The business asketh silent secrecy.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE bound boy, Chip, went slowly up the dark stair-cases until he gained his garret-chamber. There was but one window, small and uncurtained, through which the yellow moonlight shone, lighting up with faithful distinctness the slanting ceiling and rough, unplastered walls—the bed with its faded blue and white coverlet—a broken chair, a pine table propped up in a corner, and an old red wooden trunk upon which the boy sat down.

This low stifling room which Hannah had allotted him for a sleeping apartment had been partitioned from one extremity of the long garret, years before, as a kind of store-room. In Patience's day it had been filled with the useless articles that accumulate in old houses—old chairs, one or two dilapidated spinning-wheels, a wooden cradle, and the little trundle-bed that had been used in the family for a generation, but had been put away unoccupied after poor lame Katy died; and the walls were hung with bags of herbs, dried apples, festoons of traced corn and scarlet bell-peppers.

Little Peace, in rummaging about the old house, discovered what a nice "play-room" the old attic would make; so Aunt Patience brushed away the cobwebs from the window, swept up the loose-boarded floor, and the child brought up her rag dolls and arranged bits of broken china, and acorn cups and saucers,

on an old box in the corner, — and on rainy days, joined by a few playmates, there were such “grand times” as you and I, reader, have had in our childhood, playing hide-and-seek in the garrets of old country houses, or “keeping house” on a miniature scale, and receiving guests with a brace of dolls in bright pink frocks and embroidered pantalettes sitting bolstered against the wall to assist us in doing “the honors.” We have a most vivid memory of these “receptions,” where the juvenile aristocracy of our neighborhood was fully represented. Little Hattie Dean was favored with a most urgent invitation, because her new linen apron, with ruffled pockets, was our especial envy, and we had resolved upon teasing *our* mother for a similar one; Lottie Gordon was the admired owner of a new blue bead chain; Georgy Temple — a juvenile Adonis with red cheeks, curly hair, bright buttons, and the snowiest of turned-down linen collars — had been our favored “beau” at school, bringing us ‘early apples’ to eat at recess, and throwing little billet doux across the aisle when “the master’s” eye was not upon him; Ned Chandler was the best speller of his class, and policy taught us to secure the good opinion of our rival; and then, little, white, chubby Mabel Wynn, with dimpled shoulders, hands like soft tiny snow-flakes, under whose round chin we used to hold the yellow king’s cup to see “if she liked butter” — one and all, they came to our attic “drawing rooms.”

But this has little to do with our poor Chip. Back from the digression.

When Hannah Ward became mistress of the Ridge farm, the house, from garret to cellar, underwent a thorough process of “cleaning up.” Then she discovered that the garret chamber was quite good enough for “a pauper,” and accordingly removed him thither; and, after a long day’s scrubbing in the little room he had always occupied, shut it up like every other chamber of

the farm-house, to the cobwebs and darkness. And it was to this stifling garret that Chip ascended that warm June night, seating himself wearily on the old trunk that contained all his worldly treasures, — a suit of homespun stuff Patience had spun and woven, a straw hat, and thick shoes kept for Sunday wear.

Reuben’s and Patience’s management of the boy had been most judicious. Appealing to his heart — for, though his mental capacities were of the lowest order, he possessed warm impulses and strong capabilities of attachment — they had brought out the good of his nature, and, by uniformly mild treatment, had prevented ebullitions of a naturally violent will, and rendered unnecessary those wiles of cunning and stratagem which characterize those hapless ones to whom their Creator has denied the higher gifts of intellectual power. Patiently bearing with his stupidity in some pursuits, and encouraging his aptness in others — giving him the privilege of the winter’s schooling, where he slowly acquired a knowledge of reading and the rudiments of arithmetic and geography — teaching him to repeat passages of Scripture as they sat by the evening fire, and, above all, by the silent influence of example teaching him the beauties of truth and kindness — under such monitions, Chip gradually became something better than the poor, half-witted pauper boy, who first sought their protection.

If God has seen proper to withhold from some of his children those gifts that go to make up strong and noble intellectual capacities, has He not in a measure compensated by dowering such with exquisitely keen perceptions of the Beautiful — whether manifested in a love for Nature’s wonderful creations, or forms of living, breathing loveliness? — thus rendering this intuition a fine golden thread which permeates the warp and woof of their being, and brightens the life otherwise dim in shadows?

Chip's passion for flowers — arranging them, as he would, into bouquets, with an exquisite regard to harmony of color and shade — was one manifestation of this love for the Beautiful; and the proximity of the lovely child, Peace, whose blue eyes and golden curls made the sunshine of the old farm-house, gave him strange delight.

Thus a species of wild, romantic, reverential worship sprang up, and aroused germs of thought in his torpid mind. Love is not only an *Awakener*, but a *Beautifier*. No sluggard loves truly: no dolt possesses such a capacity. The man whose intellectual and social dowries are right royal, cannot lay down the treasures of a strong, rich love at the shrine of a kindred heart without an irradiation from his inner to his outward being; poorer natures, too, have their share in this gift, down to the lowest churl; and so, in this strange worship which the bound boy paid to Peace — “the angel” of his vision — new thoughts were born in his stagnant brain, and from his outward physical being uncouthness had in a measure departed.

But the vision faded — “the angel” went away — and Hannah Ward, with her harsh voice, cold eye and horny hands, shut down a great black wall before him. No kindness — no cheering words of praise — no beautiful face, flitting in and out the old farm-house — no flowers in the garden — no chapters read from the great Bible at nightfall; only the unvarying routine of daily toil and daily censure! Chip was fast retracing his steps into that world of dull, blank ignorance, out of which he had been emerging.

That night, however, as he sat on the old wooden trunk in his garret-room, an idea which little Tommy Sanders's words had awakened took entire possession of his mind; and for the first time since Reuben's death, Chip thought long and earnestly. A link of Memory's rusted chain had been polished anew by the

friction of that thought. It flashed over him — what he had seen in passing the kitchen-window the night of Reuben's death — Hannah Ward's gaunt figure bending over the table, intently scanning an unfolded paper by the candle-light; and, linking that memory with Tommy's revelation of *the will*, Chip came to the conclusion that his hard task-mistress had then, and there, committed the theft, while Reuben lay dead before her.

Then a sudden decision was born in his brain! He would straightway find Peace — recount the whole story of her wrongs — bring her back, to depose the usurper of her rightful home at the Ridge; and, so pleased was he with this plan, that the bound boy began leaping about the floor with extravagant gestures of delight.

But all the cunning of his nature returned. He checked himself — cautiously lifted the lid of his trunk, and removed the homespun suit in which he arrayed himself — laid out on the bed a straw hat fantastically draped with a band of rusty crape worn as ‘mourning’ for Reuben, and put an artificial rose, which had once adorned Peace's Sunday bonnet, in a button-hole of his short jacket — tied up a pair of yarn socks and thick shoes in his bright silk kerchief — waited till the tramp of Hannah Ward's thick shoes had long ceased from the kitchen — and when the house was still, crept softly down the stairway.

Lingering in the lower entry until satisfied that Hannah had sought her bed, he softly opened the kitchen door. Stepping with a cat-like tread across the floor in the bright moonlight, he was suddenly arrested by a clinking sound from the bed-room. Curiosity was fully aroused. Cautiously lifting the latch of the outer door and laying his bundle out on the step, he crept back and crouched stealthily down, applying his eyes to the crack behind the door.

Not five paces distant, in a low chair before the bureau on

which a candle was burning, sat Hannah with a small trunk in her lap. She held a stocking into which she dropped coin after coin with the clinking sound that had arrested Chip; a gloating, greedy look in her twinkling black eyes.

Chip crouched down in fascination, breathlessly peering through the aperture. Then, looking upon the shining dollars, and the miserly woman with that hungry gaze in her cold eyes, an emotion of hate passed through his mind.

"It isn't hers—it all belongs to Peace!—she *stole* it!" he muttered softly between his clenched teeth. A wild, desperate idea gleamed through his brain. His hand clutched a new, sharp jack-knife in the depths of his pocket. "I *hate* her! I might *kill* her! I would take all that money and carry it to Peace!"—and his eyes glittered with a fierce, almost insane light. His lips closed tightly—his tanned hand brought up the knife, and with his forefinger upon the blade-spring, he gathered himself to his feet and prepared to spring into the bed-room.

But the touch of a cold hand seemed to fall upon his head—a murmuring sound rang through his ears—he heard Patience reading from the old Bible—and the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," clove like lightning into his excited brain. The gleam of hard, cunning desperation faded from his eyes—his fingers relaxed their hold upon the knife, which fell back into his pocket again—and the bound boy sunk down upon his knees once more.

And Hannah went on counting the money; and, at length, the last dollar deposited in the stocking, she tied it up securely and laid it back into the trunk. Pausing a moment, with the upraised lid in her hand, she muttered something which Chip held his breath to hear.

"Mine! yes, all mine!" she said exultingly. "Nobody to touch a dollar on't but me! And why shouldn't I take comfort

in countin' it over? It's no more'n right—it *belongs* to me! Peace come into the family, and had her bringin' up, and schoolin'—and that's what Mary Halpine's child never ought to a' had! Reub.—poor fool! to go nigh about crazy after such a huzzy! He meant to leave every cent o' property and inch o' land to Peace!—but—ha, ha, ha!—Hannah Ward was a little too sharp for him there! *This*, tells the story—ha, ha!"—and with a low chuckling, exulting laugh, she laid back the lid of the trunk and took up a folded paper.

Chip started up, then sunk down again.

"Yes, *this* tells the story! Nobody saw me—nobody knows it to this day—not a soul!"—but, spite of her security, she gave a furtive glance around, peering into the dark corners. "Nobody knows it—old Squire Barton died years ago—the witnesses are dead, too—and the will never had a copy—nobody knows it. I might burn it,"—and for a moment she glanced toward the candle. "I might a' done it *then*—but I won't, because I can say with a clear conscience, I never *destroyed* the will—ha, ha!—I never *destroyed* it!"—and again her low laugh rang through the room. "But I can lock it up here—and now let anybody find it, if they can, that's all!"—and the lid was closed, the trunk locked with a hard, vigorous snap of the key, which she dropped into the depths of the capacious pocket she always wore over her short gown; and noiselessly and swiftly Chip crept across the kitchen-floor and stole out into the open air.

An hour after, he rose from the dark shadows of a large lilac tree near the garden fence, and crept toward the house. Climbing in at an open window of the shed—for Hannah had come out and barred the kitchen door—he stole into the kitchen and approached the bed-room, from whence a deep, regular breathing told that Hannah slept soundly.

Three minutes after, as Chip emerged from the shed-window, pausing a moment to gather up his bundle from the foot of the lilac tree, Bruno came sleepily from the yard, rubbing his nose against his master's hand. "Go lay down, sir!" said the lad in a whisper; and the dog obeyed. Chip leaped the road wall, and as he ran rapidly down the highway, a laugh of wild glee broke on the night air.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Ever circling higher,
Coil the red flames—the maddened, hungry fire!"

It was late at night ere Peace laid her head on her pillow. She was not physically weary. The events of that day, creating the wildest mental excitement, banished sleep from her eyelids.

Sitting in the silence of her chamber while the night lay fair over the earth without, with prophet eyes she sought to read her future. Oh, could she but dash aside the blinding veil, and know if indeed she were to be clasped in a parent's arms! Was the mystery that enshrouded her indeed to be made plain, and she no more to grope blindly in the chill darkness of her lonely, unloved life? Oh, if such happiness *should* be for her!—and with eager parted lips, and crimsoned cheeks, she suffered her thoughts to stray at their own sweet will.

Then her mood changed.

"Oh, if it be all a mistake! If he, whose presence I must seek to-morrow, be *not* my father!—but no! Nature's instincts are too strong!—my heart tells me that, at last, I have found him! But there is another fear still!"—and a dark dread stole athwart her mind,—"*he may deny me!* Rich, haughty, elevated in social rank, perhaps with wife and children around him, will he own the child of his passionate youth? Alas! alas! he may send me from his door, a very outcast—for, oh, if he so wronged my gentle, beautiful mother, how can he care for the child? God help me! Peace, *Peace*,—why did they call me *that*? Why did they not, instead, name me *Marah*—bitter—

ness? Alas! it was not enough that *one* hoarded hope should die!"—and her hands were locked tighter over her heart—"but now come these maddening forebodings! I am fated! fated to disgrace, to misery!"—and in despair she sank sobbing to her knees.

The old Dutch clock on the staircase chimed twelve.

"Only midnight! Will the morrow *never* come? It seems a century since I met him!" moaned the kneeler. "To-morrow! to-morrow! it bears my fate in its bosom!"

After a little she grew calmer. Robing herself for the night, she knelt again and murmured a calmer prayer, whose burthen was, "Let me no more go lonely in this cold, cold world! Heavenly Parent, grant me my earthly father!"—and then she lay down on the cool white pillows; and the sweet eyes grew misty with sleep, and the angel who keeps watch and ward over the blessed realms of Dreamland sent a messenger to guide her over its portals.

And walking there—where you and I, reader mine, have wandered oft in slumber, living such brief golden lives—where moments seem lengthened years, enriched with glorious visions and experiences of exquisite happiness—where we gather up again every joy that has faded from our waking lives, and bathe anew in the splendor of their ineffable glory—where we meet the loved and lost, not as we saw them last, with dulled eye and sharpened features under the coffin-lid, but in all the lusty prime and delicate loveliness of vigor and youth—there, in that wondrous Dreamland—alas! that its visions are but mirages, and its forms but impalpable shadows!—there came, to Peace, a shadowy form, laying white spirit-hands on the lone wanderer's brow, and whispering, with the soft mother-tone in her voice, "Peace is for thee, my daughter!"

From the exceeding bliss of such a realm, how tame and

prosaic the return to waking life! The splendid visions fade into nothingness; the dark mists of Actuality enfold us again, through which, like ships meeting on a twilight sea, Life, with its forms of approaching reality, looms up hugely—and we shrink, lest we go down in the shock of the contact. Ah, yes! Very painful is the transition from the fairy land of dreams to our dull, cold earth again!

It was in the thick darkness of those hours immediately preceding the dawn, that Peace turned drowsily upon her pillow with a suffocating sensation in her throat. There was a moaning, rushing sound, like a strong wind; and a dashing and crackling, as of rain or hailstones against the windows.

A few moments passed, then came once more that suffocation—hot gusty breaths of air, and a louder rushing, moaning, crackling! Peace awoke—gasped for breath—sprang upright on her pillow—and leaped with a loud shriek to the floor. Red tongues were hissing through the open windows—the room was lurid with flame!

The thought of self-preservation came uppermost. Hastily flinging a garment about her, she fled toward the door. In the gallery which led circuitously toward the old-fashioned winding staircase, the smoke was thick and stifling; but she held her breath, feeling her way along the walls, until her hand was on the banister and her foot on the stair. A turn in the winding flight brought up to her an intolerably stifling heat, and rolling out from the rear portion of the lower hall came heavy masses of smoke—dull red tongues of flame cleaving their murky folds. The fire had evidently originated in the rear of the house, and was on its onward march; and with a sudden leap, Peace drew her garments about her and bounded down the staircase. With giant strength she lifted the ponderous iron bar from the oaken door, and flung it wide open.

Half-stified, she sank upon the threshold; but when the pure night air had revived her and the confusion floated from her brain, Peace started up. The flames leaped and crackled behind — far and wide the red glare gleamed over the valley — but not a voice, save hissing, crackling tongues of fire, clove the stillness of the night.

She, alone, was safe! The sleepers there — the aged man, the helpless women, the children, little Cora — where were they? Good God! must they perish, and never a finger be lifted to save them? She turned back.

But the way was cut off. With lightning rapidity the flames had overspread the oaken panelling of the hall, and now coiled through and around the carved banisters of the staircase.

"Oh, will no one come to help me save them? Will no one ever come?" and she uttered shriek after shriek of frenzied agony, then cowered down on the threshold — driven further and further down the broad steps by the stifling heat.

At that moment a cry came up from the valley. "*Fire! fire! FIRE!*" echoed on the night — coming nearer and nearer; then mingled the feebler shouts of John Winslow, dragging his terrified wife through the blinding smoke.

"God help us!" exclaimed the old housekeeper, pale with terror, sinking down beside Peace — "Oh, why can't people come faster?"

Peace started up. She would go to meet them — she would urge them onward — and she staggered forward with outstretched hands; but, overcome by exhaustion, fell prone in the gravelled walk before the mansion. When she recovered her consciousness, she gazed dimly, as one in a dream, on a scene of terror. A dense crowd were flitting to and fro, removing furniture from the burning house; firemen were adjusting hose and commencing to play; while the mad flames, leaping high to the clouds, cast their red light far and wide over the country.

Then she faintly turned her head. She lay on a smooth, grassy lawn whither some one had borne her; while close beside her, speechless and palsied with fear, sat old Dame Winslow; and Alexis and Victorine huddled close, grasping her gown and crying with affright. Half-comprehending this scene of confusion, Peace languidly rose to her feet. The first object on which her eye fell, was the portrait of the once mistress of these domains, lying topmost on a heap of carpets, sofas, antique cabinets, chairs, silver ware and pictures, thrown pell-mell together.

In an instant Peace comprehended all. They had rescued the pictured face of Lucien Palfrey's dead wife; — had they saved *his child*?

"Where is *Cora*?" she cried wildly.

But the old housekeeper, mute with fear, only sat swaying herself to and fro; and the children answered but with fresh sobs.

In an instant Peace stood among the crowd. "Go — some of you — go!" and she grasped men's arms — "Save them — Mr. Palfrey's child, and old Nurse Allen! Go!"

"Where are they?" asked several voices.

"In the western wing — the rear chamber. Oh hasten!" and she knelt, with clasped hands.

There was a pause — it seemed a century to the excited girl. Men gazed into one another's faces, then upon the pile enveloped in flame; they trembled; but not a foot stirred.

"Why do you wait? You have old mothers — some of you — and little ones. If you are *men*, save them!" and rising to her feet, standing there in the red glare, the folds of her white robe draping her slender form, and waves of rippling hair sweeping her shoulders, she seemed some vestal priestess urging her votaries to the sacrifice.

Men's cheeks grew paler yet — but no foot stirred. The love

of life was strong, and it seemed certain death to rush into the jaws of the hungry fire.

"Cowards! cravens! all! Cora, I will save, or perish with you!" and with a sudden bound Peace dashed up the broad steps and disappeared amid the blinding smoke.

"Good God! she will never come out again! We *were* cowards! Let us try to save her!" said a stout young farmer from the crowd, and instantly three or four dashed over the threshold.

How Peace gained the room occupied by Nurse Allen and her charge she never knew; it was enough that, unscathed, unharmed by the terrible fire, she was there. Closing the door behind her, she sunk down. The flames had not yet penetrated the chamber; but she heard a crackling along the panelled passages, — and the room was lurid with light streaming in through the diamond-paned windows.

"Aunt Allen! Cora!" she cried faintly.

A low moan was the only reply from the old lady with head bowed on the crib-side. A shake aroused Nurse Allen.

"Oh, Miss Peace! — but the fire, the terrible fire! I couldn't take my darling through it, and so we must all die here! Nobody will come!" and she covered her face with her hands.

"No! no! we must escape! — we *can*! Come, come! I will open the windows, and shout. They can raise a ladder!" and Peace flung up the sash.

With a groan she shrank back. That avenue was cut off! A pile of lumber that lay under the window, gathered for future repairs on the mansion, had been fired by cinders whirled from the flames; and along a grape-vine embowering the whole western side of the wing red tongues coiled rapidly. With a groan, Peace dropped the sash; while the fire leaped upward till the glass crackled and snapped, then, enwreathing the

heavily carved window-mullions, hissed aloud as if in token of their victory.

Beset on every side by the fierce fire-fiend, at the windows, at the door, the brave girl's heart failed; — they must perish, — but they would die together; — and creeping close to the crib where the sleeping child lay, she slid her scorched and blistered hands into Nurse Allen's withered ones, and, bowing her head on her shoulder, burst into tears.

That very appeal — so mute, so helpless, aroused the old lady.

"Poor young thing!" and she pressed her lips to Peace's forehead — "poor dear girl! You *can't* save us, then! Oh, if Mr. Lucien was only here! But there, don't take on so, dear! Perhaps we can get out. Come, come! we mustn't stay here to die! Do you hear, child?"

"No — no!" groaned Peace. "We *cannot* escape! Don't you see — the terrible fire? — everywhere, everywhere! Aunt Allen, we *must* perish here!" and convulsive shudders ran through her frame.

"*Die* here! *perish* here!" repeated the old lady mechanically — "No! no! child, so young, so beautiful! and my darling? See, how like an angel *she* sleeps — and not a soul comes to save her! — Oh, Peace — don't stay for a poor old woman like me, but try to get Cora away! Oh, you are young and strong — save my baby, for her father's sake!" and she shook Peace's arm frantically.

That appeal roused the despairing girl. For *his* sake — for Lucien Palfrey's sake, she would save his child, or perish; and then came a thought of her *own* father. That was the most powerful stimulus. In an instant she was calm; and with most admirable prudence calculated her chances of escape. The flooring had not yet fallen, nor the staircase, though the walls

were burning. She must brave it. Seizing a couple of towels, she dipped them into the water-ewer and wrung them slightly. "Bind one about your mouth," she said to Nurse Allen, "it will prevent suffocation," then, wrapping Cora in a blanket, cried, "Now! now! here! your hand!" and threw open the door.

But the old lady sank down. "No — no! I'm a poor useless old creetur — and shall only be a drag on you." Maybe the good Lord'll send somebody after me — if He don't, I can die here. I'm almost worn out — and it don't matter much. — You are young and strong — you stand a chance to get out. There, let me kiss my baby once more" — and she bent her withered lips to the soft coral mouth of the sleeper, then folded the blanket over her head — "there, go now! The Lord'll help you! Tell Mr. Lucien —"

"Aunt Allen, God can save us *all*!" said Peace with sudden inspiration. "I will not stir one step without you. Shall we stay here and burn to death — or will you come? There — that is right — hold fast — don't let go my arm — remember!" and she crossed the threshold; and, clasping little Cora to her breast with one arm, with her free hand felt her way along the galleries, while Nurse Allen's clutch was firm about her waist.

On, on, she hastened, the flames close at her side, their hot tongues licking her outstretched hands. At last Cora awoke, and struggled to free herself from the smothering folds of the blanket. Withdrawing her outstretched hands from the contact of the wall to clasp the child closer, and still keeping on her perilous way, Peace suddenly encountered an open door swung outward into the gallery. Confused and almost stunned by the blow, and murmuring faintly, "God help us! I can go no further!" she sank, with a rushing, roaring sound, as of a thousand waters, in her ears.

In her last moment of consciousness one palpable idea stirred the surface of her darkening brain — "I am dying!" — and three faces, slowly revolving and blending like the wreathing smoke-folds, floated mistily before her vision — two, the pictured countenances on the miniature, and Lucien Palfrey's.

Shifting, wreathing, twining, blending, they flitted athwart her vision; then a dark, blank, black wall shut down before her. All senses were submerged into that of hearing; she listened to many voices — even a great multitude; again that wild rush, as of a mighty waterfall, rose louder and higher, then died into faintest rippling cadences; and, while softest music-strains — the chiming of silver bells, and the notes of fairy horns, blended in mellowest waves of sound, she seemed sinking, sinking, into grateful, cooling waters, fathoms deep away!

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Secure in undiscovered crime,
The callous soul grows bold at length.
Stern Justice sometimes bides her time,
But strikes at last with double strength."

It was a wild, wet, starless night — the last of the dying month of June. For three days the rain had been incessant — one of those chill storms that sometimes seem to blow from out the departed spring, bringing their cold winds and sullen rains into the heart of the summer. In the country, the earth was water-soaked, and vegetation grew rank and luxuriant; grass waved in tangled, sodden masses; clover-blossoms were matted together; white rose-petals lay limp and torn on the earth; birds huddled together, shivering; kine stood knee-deep in the marshes; tall elms swayed their dripping branches to and fro; melancholy, ancient willows drooped their ragged foliage all along the country roadsides; children waded through pools in the highway; and the farmers came out, and, looking anxiously toward the sullen west, wondered when it would "fair off."

City dwellers, too, wearied of the long rain. For three days the streets had been untrodden save by eager business men, or that strata of city population, the children of poverty, who seem oblivious to change of wind or weather. By night, the glare of gas only lighted black, slimy pavements, almost deserted save by the watchmen on their rounds.

At midnight, alone in his room, at a small table drawn up before the coal fire which the dampness of the atmosphere rendered grateful, sat the man of evil — Hugh Golding. An air

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of the greatest seclusion and quiet pervaded the apartment. Heavy curtains fell over the windows; the thick carpet gave no echo; the door was double locked; and, save a slight metallic ring, as of the rasping or filing of steel, from the table where Golding sat, no sound broke the stillness. Upon the table where a large lamp with three burners shed down a strong glare, lay a buckskin case and several tiny instruments of steel, an impression of a key in wax, a bunch of keys, and a small, crumpled bit of paper — evidently a portion of a receipt or bill of sale, with the signature torn across.

Golding was busily at work upon a small key — alternately filing it with the greatest nicety of touch, then fitting it to the wax impression, and holding it up between his eyes and the strong light, as if to detect the slightest flaw in his workmanship. For half an hour he sat thus at his task; and then, applying it once again to the wax, an exultant exclamation proclaimed his success. Then, placing the key and the bit of torn paper in his pocket-book, returning the tiny files and saws to their case, bringing a cloak from the closet in the pocket of which he laid the bunch of keys with the buckskin pouch, throwing the wax impression into the burning grate, and carefully brushing every particle of steel-dust from the table, he turned down the lamp-shade, then rapidly walked the floor. A smile of triumph sat on his curling lip.

In his life, Hugh Golding had wrought much evil, and always with the impunity of success. The code of the world's laws had not reached him yet.

"There is no such word as *fail!*" he cried exultingly, pacing the carpet. "Hugh Golding has not lived forty years, to plot any undertaking without the certainty of success!"

And this was, in a measure, true. Long journeys in the paths of evil had made him bold, but they had rendered him

none the less cautious. Cunning, fiendish cunning, was the true exponent of his nature.

"Triumph at last!" he whispered exultingly — "a royal triumph! — at one dash to free myself from this cursed beggary — for it is little better, these uncertain winnings at the gaming table — then, gaining a princely fortune, slip the halter from my own neck to fasten it around Revere's! . Yes, Revere! when Julie Courtney became your wife, I vowed revenge — and now *the hour has come!* No man steps between me and my purposes, and escapes me. But I have no time to idle here. Half-past twelve!" — and he drew forth his jewelled lever, then put aside the heavy curtain and glanced down into the street — "and it is dark as Erebus, too! Just the night — everything conspires to favor me — the Charlies will be snugly boxed in this storm! Now, Hugh Golding," — and he paused before a mirror — "now, nerves of iron and a will of steel, and three hours hence you hold your fortune in your own hand; and the man you hate is doomed!"

Then he brought out a dark slouched hat from an inner dressing closet. This, with the ample cloak under which he concealed a small dark lantern, completed his disguise; and noiselessly unlocking his door and re-locking it on the outside, he glided along the quiet, dimly lighted galleries of the hotel, and slipped stealthily out, unencountered, into the dark, rainy night.

When the city clocks struck three, the merchant Revere stole like a guilty man into the hall of his mansion. All was dark, for the gas had been turned down and the porter had sought his bed long before; and, amid the thick gloom and the noise of plashing rain upon the marble steps, the merchant heard not the stealthy tread of feet close behind his own, nor saw the form that followed him over the threshold and into the dimly lighted

library, secreting itself among the voluminous curtains of a deep bay window. Lighting a waxen taper in the mantel candelabra, Revere threw his cloak dripping with rain, on a sofa, drew on a rich dressing-gown, then flung himself into a large arm-chair before the grate, whence the fire smouldered.

His face was fearfully wild and haggard; dark circles rimmed his eyes; Despair was gnawing at his heart-strings. The precipice on which for the past few months he had stood, was crumbling beneath his feet; in vain he stretched out his hands for a shrub whereat he might grasp to stay his fall — for, that night, he had thrown his last dollar at the gaming table. He was ruined! and the morrow would behold him disgraced! Men would point at him and say, "Behold the gambler! Behold the bankrupt!" Such a morrow was in store for him; and the good name which no man resigns without a pang, and which in that hour seemed far more precious to the ruined merchant than aught else on earth — that name must go down forever!

"Ruined! ruined!" — and he smote his forehead. "It has come to *this* at last! I have battled the tide like a drowning man, but must sink! Oh, Gaming! Gaming! Fiend that sat there night after night, tempting me with blood-red wine, and beckoning me on with golden fingers to my ruin! Oh, devil, are you satisfied *now*? Can wine drown memory? — can it bring forgetfulness?" — and pouring a brimming goblet, he drank it off in great gulps. Then he leaned his elbows on the table, and buried his face in his hands.

"To-morrow! to-morrow!" he shuddered; then, after a long pause, he lifted his countenance, deadly pale, and said slowly, "But why *need* that morrow ever dawn for me? *This* will free me!" — and he drew forth a dark substance from his vest pocket. "It has brought me forgetfulness — it can bring me a longer, an eternal sleep! *Eternal*? — do I *believe* that? But

pshaw!—if there is a future, can it be worse for me than the fate buried in the coming morrow? I would dare death—but I will not meet any man's scorn! (They shall not throw my disgrace in my teeth! *This* will forestall my fate! A double dose—a benumbing torpor—a deathly lethargy—and it is over! No disgrace—no scorn—no pity! By Heaven! I could not bear *that*—I will have no man's d—d pity! Death—death!—it is at best but a leap in the dark, and he is a coward who hesitates to take it! Why should I?—what matters it, a few years sooner or later? I shall break no heart; not an eye will weep for me; and, if Julie ever comes forth again into the world, she can but rejoice that I have freed her from my disagreeable presence. Poor Julie!”—and a quiver of tenderness broke up the iron sternness of his voice—“poor Julie! she will be better off without me—I, who have so crushed life's roses from her pathway! And yet, how she loved me!—how she loved me!”—and he rose and leaned his forehead against the mantel.

His vest was open; and, as he rose, the cord from his dressing-gown loosened, and something fell upon the hearth with a sharp metallic ring. He started as if an adder had stung him, stooped to recover it, and carried a small miniature set in a golden casing to his lips; while the form behind the window-hangings glided forth.

Gazing a moment upon the locket, Revere covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears. Not wilder was the elemental strife without than the burst of emotion that shook that strong man's frame. Weak as a very child, he sank back into his chair; while the form glided back into the muffling shadows of the curtain.

“No, no! I cannot!” murmured the ruined man in a hoarse voice. “The dead forbid it!”—and he shuddered. “*Dead*—

dead—but how do I know *that*? Yesterday, in her bloom and beauty she stood before me!”—and a superstitious thrill ran through his frame—“and now, her pictured face, so sweet, so young, so reproachful, forbids this deed!”

“Mary—Mary—I obey! Come ruin—come disgrace—I will not add to my sins and weaknesses the crime of a suicide!”—and he flung the deadly drug into the grate; returned the locket to his bosom; and, taking up a light, went into an adjoining chamber whose door stood ajar and threw himself upon a bed,—and the figure in the muffling shadows still kept its station.

The morning broke bright and beautiful, and the city was early astir. At every corner groups were collected; and men talked in low tones of a bold and successful burglary committed the previous night. Newsboys hawked their wares in shrill voices morning papers were at a premium, for the following startling development greeted every peruser:—

GREAT ROBBERY!

“*Five Thousand Dollars Reward!*—Last night the ——— Bank was broken open, and a most daring burglary successfully perpetrated in our midst. The following amount was taken: Twelve square boxes of silver, \$500 each; six bags of silver, \$300 to \$400 each; package, or bag of gold, \$4,500; package of sovereigns, \$5,000; package of foreign bills (amount unknown) directed to ———, from ——— Bank.

For the detection or apprehension of the burglar, the President of the Bank offers a reward of Five Thousand Dollars.

The ——— Bank is situated in the basement of the new hotel, which forms a part of the block recently erected on C—— Street. The block is unfinished and unoccupied; and the vault of the Bank adjoins one of the lower rooms of the hotel, only separated from it by a brick wall one foot thick. The mortar used in the construction of this wall is comparatively

fresh; and the burglar must have first entered the room adjoining the vault, and with a small crow-bar forced away the bricks sufficiently to afford an entrance.

The plundered property was secured in a safe of the most approved construction, fastened by Hall's celebrated patent gun-powder lock, which was opened by a key that must have been prepared before the safe was put into the vault. When the booty had been removed, the safe was coolly locked again."

That afternoon, upon a minute inspection of the vault by the Chief of the Police, accompanied by the Bank officers, a bit of folded paper, half-worn and trampled, was picked up from the earth. But few words, torn and half-erased, were inscribed thereon — but those words, that name, were sufficiently plain to the Argus eyes of the officer.

Half an hour after, a carriage stopped before the mercantile house of Augustus Revere; and, as he sat in his inner counting-room, a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Mr. Revere, I arrest you on charge of the —— Bank robbery! You are my prisoner!"

"Good God! am I going mad?" groaned the unhappy man, as, without a show of resistance, he suffered himself to be led passively to the door.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

What deep wounds ever closed without a scar?
The heart's bleed longest, and but heal to wear
That which disfigures it.

CHILDE HAROLD.

LUCIEN PALFREY! one whose character I shall find it difficult to describe, — a compound of contrarieties, — apparently a cold, polished, brilliant man of the world, — omitting in his daily intercourse with that world, yet inwardly despising, the thousand thousand forms and shows that go to make up what is called "Society" — those shallow, heartless conventionalities, that are but masks for our feelings, or, rather, ignore all feeling, making life cold, hollow, measured, artificial!

In old Nurse Allen's revelation to Peace, we have a knowledge of what sent him — a saddened, remorseful man, self-exiled from his home; let us explore his past life more minutely.

It had been his misfortune to be the only child of parents, whose thoughts, pursuits, and dispositions were antagonistic to his own. His father was a merchant whose whole soul was absorbed in the acquirement of wealth, whose life a daily routine from his palatial mansion on Fifth Avenue to his counting-house, and from his counting-house to his mansion again. His mother was one of those women so commonly met with — naturally a sweet, dependent, lovable being, whose fitting sphere is in the home circle — but, from being a millionaire's wife, had got out of that sphere, and, in the world of splendor and fashionable gayety, had forgotten her mother-cares and wasted her life.

The wealthy merchant's wife had a position to maintain. John Palfrey could not spare time from bale and invoice and shipping lists to frequent routs and balls; but Mrs. Palfrey had an elegant equipage, splendid mansion, and she must, perforce, be the representative of the moneyed man.

Had Lucy Palfrey possessed more strength of character, she would have put off the fetters that, though gilded, galled her none the less, and found her happiness, as every true woman should, beside her own hearthstone; but, enervated by the luxuries and lured by the temptations of her position, she resigned herself to the tide of fashionable dissipation.

With her great wealth, it might have been her privilege to carry happiness into the homes of the many poor — to banish Want and Hunger and Suffering from countless humble hearthstones in the great city; but the delicate lady could not be shocked by contact with misery — and, from never visiting, she gradually ignored the existence of that great class whose lives were not cast in earth's "pleasant places." Nor was this, that she was avaricious — that beautiful lady — oh no! If a street beggar caught her silken robes as she descended from her elegant carriage, imploring charity, she unloosed her purse and bestowed its contents bounteously on the "shocking creature;" her name stood first on the list of foreign mission endowments and charity fairs; she read prayers every Sabbath in a stately frescoed church from a jewelled prayer-book — and, kneeling on a velvet hassock, made audible responses; alas, that within a stone's throw of her mansion wandered the poor and starving, — and Want and hollow-eyed Hunger kept grim guard in many miserable homes where her charity had never penetrated!

And so her days went by; and Lucien grew into youth with very few demonstrations that he had a mother, save remembrances of her daily visits to the nursery, where Aunt Allen —

a hale, hearty woman — tended him when a child, and of her pettings and praises as he grew into beautiful boyhood and spent his school vacations at home; and, when he had attained his eighteenth year, that mother, who, in the prime of her years, should have been also in the prime of her strength and vigor, summoned her son to the bed where she lay, wasted, wan, exhausted by her mistaken life — exhausted, and dying!

Oh woman, woman! why will you lie prostrate under the crushing wheels of that modern Juggernaut — the gilded car of Fashion?

Such lives to live! — such deaths to die!

Endowed by your Maker with tender hearts laden with all sweet, womanly impulses, dowered with physical health and mental vigor — why, because the boon of Wealth is added to other gifts, will you sit idly down with listless folded hands, ignoring alike hand labor, brain labor, and heart-impulses, and sink at last — puny, exhausted, half-developed beings — into early graves?

Women, who transform yourselves into mere puppet-shows of capricious Fashion — lounging away the days in luxurious drawing-rooms or in softly-cushioned carriages, and whirling in demoralizing, but *fashionable* dances, the hours of the night — mothers, who give over into careless hands precious children with tender, plastic minds wherein shall be sown the seeds of good or evil for future reaping — was it for *this*, the Creator made tender hearts, and beautiful physical endowments, and rich mental gifts?

Oh shame, shame, that, in these days of coveted "women's rights" and immunities — in these days of hollow, gilded pomp and show — too many forget that the public arena, the fashionable promenade, the applause of the multitude, bring never to

woman's ear music so sweet or praise so grateful as the tender voices and loving glances of the "world of love at home!"

Blessed — thrice "blessed, are the beloved!"

Lucien Palfrey left his mother's death-bed a sad-hearted dreamer of eighteen. A *dreamer*? — no! — he had been such since his earliest boyhood, but he *awoke* then! He had dearly loved his mother; and in her last hours, awakening to a keenest sense of her wasted life, she strove to compensate for her neglect; then the fountain was unsealed, and the strong mother-love overflowed.

But she died — and suddenly! — stricken down, as she had lived, in the whirl of gayety, the jewels scarce removed from her white fingers, and the hectic flush still crimson on her cheek; and, in that death-hour, a startling revelation — gathered from her incoherent murmurings, and an old faded miniature which she drew from its long-concealed resting-place over her heart and pressed passionately to her lips in the ravings of delirium, with vehement calls for "dear, dear William" — told Lucien Palfrey the secret of his mother's wasted life.

It was the old story over again. Lucy Darrah had loved a poor student youth of her native village, but her beauty and ambition were her bane. The rich man came and won her; for a splendid home she bartered herself, crushed her heart's pleadings, and gave back her betrothal ring. But in her dying hour, when all life's gauds and tinsels fled, she was true to her first faith. Ever, in *Death*, as in *dreams*, the heart returns to its first, purest love.

"Alas, for Love, if *thou* wert all,
And nought beyond, oh Earth!"

And when Lucien Palfrey kissed his mother's pale, sharpened features in her coffin, and turned away to brood over her wrecked,

wasted life, he said, shuddering, "Gold won her. Let me be loved for *myself*, solely — never for my *wealth*!"

But, in his first love-dream, the dreamer was destined to find unhappiness. Eight years from the period of his mother's death, his collegiate education and profession gained, he established himself at the old family mansion at Springdale; not that application to the duties of his profession was necessary as a means of livelihood — for his father, dying three years previous, bequeathed his only son a fortune almost princely, — but to a mind constituted like Lucien Palfrey's — a sensitive and finely-wrought organization, that preyed upon itself if unoccupied — the cares and duties of the life he had chosen were a healthy stimulant. Then and there, amid a bevy of gay young creatures assembled to pass a few summer weeks at the country seat of a neighbor, the young physician met her whose bright jetty eyes and braids of raven hair wove a dangerous snare about his heart. Jenny Ogden was unmistakably a belle and a beauty — a dazzling, brilliant, piquant brunette; Rumor also had voted her a flirt; and it was scarcely strange that — from his first interview, where, radiant with graceful animation, she successfully parried the shafts of wit, ensnaring men's hearts the while by flashing glance and brilliant repartee — Lucien Palfrey went away, irrecoverably her victim.

Jenny Ogden was the daughter of a widowed mother — one of those manoeuvring mammas who, without the *substance* of wealth, contrive to preserve its *semblance*, and whose management had procured "eligible" matches for two married daughters; now, it remained but to "settle" Jenny as mistress of a wealthy husband's establishment, and then the adroit mamma would retire on her laurels. Nor was the ambitious daughter averse to her parent's plan; for Jenny knew — as what woman, dowried like her, does not? — that she was beautiful, — and

from her earliest girlhood one preëminent lesson had been impressed upon her mind — "Your face must make your fortune."

Here then, when, in a few weeks from their meeting, Lucien Palfrey was at her feet — here, then, was the goal for which she had striven. A young, elegant and refined lover, possessing every advantage of wealth and station, tremblingly awaited the affirmative decision that would render him the "happiest of men," — which decision was blushing given, after a deal of affected tearful regrets at the prospect of a separation from "mamma," who, meantime, was secretly congratulating herself at this *chef d'œuvre* of maternal "management."

After a brief engagement, a brilliant wedding followed; and the papers chronicled the departure of the happy couple to a fashionable watering place, where the remnant of the season was whirled away in a round of gayety quite consonant to the mercurial temperament of the young bride. Then came a winter of dissipation in town, for Jenny had no idea of immuring her beautiful face in the seclusion of Springdale; but the spring months found them installed in their country home, Palfrey eagerly lapsing into his more congenial professional career.

Then — the excitements of gay society removed, and Jenny as mistress of a quiet country mansion — the young husband was not long in awakening to a full sense of the aims and tastes of her he had taken to his heart as his life-long companion. I need not quote here the hackneyed, but none the less truthful adage, "Marry in haste, and repent at leisure," — which perhaps the reader begins to imagine was fully appreciated by Dr. Palfrey — for in truth this was not so. Even with the knowledge of Jenny's superficial, heartless nature daily growing upon him, he did not repent his marriage — for he had loved with all the depth of his tender, sensitive nature, and could not easily recall or smother those affections; yet it pained him inexpressibly that

the beautiful fabric of domestic happiness he had builded was fast crumbling into dust.

In the days of his courtship, Lucien Palfrey had mistaken Jenny's gayety and sparkling brilliancy for true womanly vivacity and amiability; he did not ask himself, "Will she gladly resign a skirmish at wit with her gallant admirers for a cozy fire-side *tete-a-tete* with her husband, or the crowded saloon for her own hearthstone?" But now he was not long in discovering that Jenny Palfrey — she who had reigned belle of the ball-room, the cynosure of all eyes whether at rout, theatre, dinner party, or promenade, the past winter — was transformed into a very different being in her quiet country home.

"Would she read?" — and he brought her the treasures of old poets or the lighter publications of the day. She only pouted, "Oh dear, reading is so stupid!" "Would she sing?" — and he opened the massive piano, or led her to her harp. "No — she had a stupid headache; besides, there was *nobody but Lucien* to hear her!" "Would she stroll in the old forests where the spring flowers bloomed and velvet, emerald mosses carpeted the long aisles?" "Dear, no! what did Lucien think she cared for the woods, where she always encountered snakes and frightful things?" — "She should die — she knew she should — imprisoned in that lonesome old place! If Lucien had ever loved her, as he professed, he would never have brought her out there! Nobody had left the city — nor would they, for two months to come! She should perish of the blues, before then!"

Lucien sighed, and turned away.

Summer came — a portion of which was made endurable, even pleasant to Jenny, by filling the old mansion with invited guests, and the Hall was alive with gayety; a bevy of young creatures, foremost among whom was the volatile hostess, ran-

sacking old wardrobes for masquerades and tableaux costumes — ornamenting the garden for *fêtes champêtres* — or planning pic-nics and fishing excursions. But guests could not remain always; and when they left for the watering-places, and Jenny's poutings and yawns could not persuade Palfrey into following them, then she relapsed into her old habits, and the great house became duller than ever. Moping about the deserted rooms, — or, wrapped in a great shawl, lying on the sofa for hours together, she dozed time away; and if Lucien ventured to remonstrate against her course, urging her to accompany him on his rides or interest herself in some pursuit or study, her only reply was a burst of childish tears, varied by sullen pouting or, worse still, chilling indifference.

Where now the fine visions of domestic felicity "the dreamer" had woven? Coming day after day wearied from his round of visits — for a wide circuit of country was unusually sickly, and Dr. Palfrey, like many another conscientious physician, too Christian and humane to deny a *poor* man's call — coming home to a darkened, close drawing-room, or going up stairs to find Jenny on a lounge in her boudoir dozing over old novels from the library, with scarce a kindly greeting for her husband — it was perfectly disheartening. Expostulation had failed — the kindest attentions won but the poorest acknowledgment, often none — and Dr. Palfrey had too much dignity and self-respect to answer her with reproaches. Heart-sick, he was forced to the admission that the wife of his bosom was one of those beings who cannot be said to exist save under excitement — one of those fire-flies in fashionable life, who dazzle and lure by night, but become the merest insect by the light of common day.

Then came a maddening thought, which, spite of his strict resolve to "love and cherish," would intrude upon his brain.

"Did not Jenny wed me for *my wealth*?" With bitter groans he strove to pluck it out, and trample it into annihilation.

When little Cora's blue eyes first opened to light in the sweet May-time while the violet and star-flower were blossoming in the woodland haunts about their pleasant country home, the happy father, kissing Jenny's pale cheek, exclaimed fervently, "God has bestowed upon us a precious gift. For *her* sake, let us dedicate ourselves to a nobler, better life!" — and the young mother seemed gentler, tender, more womanly.

City friends drove out to Springdale in their elegant barouches to see the beautiful babe that lay in state in old Nurse Allen's arms, enveloped in the daintiest of embroidered slips and silken flannels — kissed its tiny red mouth, and pulled open its rose-leaf eyelids "just to see if it had mother's eyes," — then, nibbling their rich cake and sipping their wines, recounted this or that event in the past fashionable season — Madame Ton's charming fancy ball, the *debüt* of some new actress, or the engagement of some *prima donna*; and while this lasted, and Jenny, with the faintest rose-tinge on her rounded cheek, and in the prettiest of silken wrappers, received their praises of "baby," — and then, in August, Lucien took them — herself, baby, nurse and all, to a fashionable resort, and baby proved "good," and the blooming mother was a belle, taking the palm from her unmarried rivals — months glided pleasantly.

But the cold weather brought them home again; and November, with its dreary winds, bleak skies, and sere woods, had few attractions for country visitors, and the little Cora few admirers save old Nurse Allen and the equally venerable housekeeper — and began to show unequivocal symptoms of being "cross," as babies have doubtless done, and will do, through all time — then, the cares of motherhood did not sit so lightly on the giddy Jenny. She longed to mingle once again in that great world whose

echoes, only, reached her in her seclusion. "She would not remain buried all winter in that old mansion! Lucien must take a house in town!"

In vain Dr. Palfrey remonstrated; well foreseeing that, if they again went forth into a city life, he must, perforce, resign his new-found lease of tranquillity.

"Little Cora is too young; besides, I cannot leave my patients," were some among his objections.

"Nonsense!" urged Jenny. "Do you think I shall neglect my child? As for your patients, you can ride down to Springdale once or twice every week. Of course you cannot expect to visit every old woman who has the rheumatism, or every child who chances to be attacked with the measles or croup. Better leave *that* field to your rival — Dr. Dinsmore! The idea of a man of *your* wealth tying himself down to a profession! It is perfectly absurd! I am resolved upon going into town this winter!" — and so Jenny gained her point.

An elegant house was taken in a fashionable square. By day, Jenny's carriage stood oftenest before Stewart's, or Ball and Black's, while the obsequious clerks displayed their choicest fabrics or costliest jewels; and by night, after a flying visit to the nursery, she was borne away to rout or theatre, or received in her own drawing-rooms her dear five hundred friends.

Ladies envied and emulated her; gentlemen paid their compliments to the sparkling Mrs. Palfrey, and 'vowed the doctor a lucky dog.' For a season he submitted, with "From her seclusion, Jenny enjoys society with a double zest;" but after a period it became annoying, galling even, to be forced to attend her into scenes so uncongenial. Then he remonstrated.

"If not to gratify your husband, at least in consideration of your own health, Jenny, and for the sake of our child, withdraw in a measure from this excessive dissipation."

"Nonsense, Lucien! 'Excessive dissipation?' You magnify everything! Little Cora is doing well enough — only cutting her teeth, that's all! As for myself, I was never better; but I do believe you're getting to be a perfect Grand Turk — and, did I choose to humor your whims, I should deny myself every gratification of society. Now, if you don't wish to accompany me abroad, I shall go alone; then, everybody will *know* what a Bluebeard I have for a husband!"

In such a fashion, remonstrances were usually received.

In February the Italian Opera was to open with the advent of a famed *cantatrice*; and not only in musical circles was the excitement intense, but the world of fashion eagerly anticipated the brilliance and display of the operatic season; Jenny Palfrey, among others of "her set," impatiently awaiting the opening night.

Three days previous, a letter was handed to Dr. Palfrey at dinner.

"It is from Uncle Ben's physician," he said after a perusal. "The old gentleman is just alive. I must leave in the next train, and possibly may reach Hartford before it is too late!" — and ringing for his man, Lucien ordered his valise to be packed — and in a half-hour, kissing his wife and child, was borne to the depot.

"Dear me, how vexing!" exclaimed Jenny as she went up to the nursery. "I'll warrant every ticket'll be taken up before his return! Lucien is so negligent! Uncle Ben dying? I don't believe a word of it! Only a fit of the gout — and Lucien must needs post off to Hartford! For my part, I believe he thinks more of Uncle Ben than he did of his own father! Dear me! I'm fated not to hear *Zada* sing!"

This was on Saturday. Three days passed; and not until five o'clock of Tuesday afternoon did Dr. Palfrey again enter

his home. Then his saddened countenance told the loss of his dearly-loved old uncle — his last maternal relative.

Looking into the drawing-room, Jenny was not there, and he quickly ascended to the nursery.

"Good evening, wife! — and how is little Cora?" was his first exclamation, as he drew aside the lace curtains from the cradle where the babe slept sweetly. "I did not think to be absent so long; but, poor Uncle Ben!" — and he sighed. "I found him very low — and he lingered along till Sunday night. The funeral was this morning. But what is the matter, Jenny?" — and his eye fell upon the dishevelled hair and disorderly wrapper of his pouting wife. "Are you ill, dear?"

"Matter enough!" she exclaimed pettishly. "I declare, it is enough to provoke a saint! — here every Opera ticket is taken up, and —" she tapped her slippered foot angrily.

"The *Opera*!" — and Dr. Palfrey opened his dark eyes in surprise, then exclaimed in a severe voice, "Mrs. Palfrey, are you in your senses? I thought I informed you that Uncle Ben — do you understand? — my only relative — was buried this morning; and since when, I would inquire, has it been customary, or in consonance with common feeling, even, for people to frequent places of amusement when a death is of recent occurrence in their families? Jenny, I am grieved and astonished!"

"Mr. Palfrey," — and Jenny's passion carried her beyond the bounds of prudence, and her tone was bitterly sarcastic, "please not elevate your voice beyond its accustomed key. I am not conscious of suddenly losing my sense of hearing; nor do I see why the death of your uncle, whom I never saw — and whose character, so far as I may judge by his nephew's representations, was that of a whimsical, eccentric old misanthrope — need plunge me into mourning all the rest of my days! As for the mourning part, though — I can't imagine, for my life, how lis-

tening to an Italian Opera for a few hours could transform me into the heartless wretch your words seem to imply me as being! It isn't *that*! I believe it is solely because you like to exert your masculine prerogative of *power*, that you are thus constantly thwarting my wishes! Lucien Palfrey, it has been so ever since I became your wife! You have invariably kept up this system of conjugal tyranny — objected to every reasonable pleasure! I had better entered a convent than married you — for I believe nuns *are* allowed the privilege of attending prayers and mass!" — and she angrily sent the footstool spinning across the room.

Dr. Palfrey was shocked. Never before had he witnessed such an ebullition of passion, nor heard words so devoid of all womanly delicacy or feeling from her lips. And she who had uttered them now, with angry eye and flushed cheek — that speaker was one he had so loved, so trusted — *his wife*!

"*Jenny!*" — but, pale as death with suppressed indignation and wounded feeling, he checked the words hovering on his lips. He durst not trust himself. Had he uttered what rushed to his tongue, he could never have forgiven himself afterwards; and he turned and was quietly leaving the apartment.

As he crossed the threshold, a light ring came at the bell; and the porter admitted a young married lady who lived next door — an intimate associate of Jenny — who familiarly ascended the staircase.

"Ah, good evening, Dr. Palfrey!" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent in a lively voice. "Now do you know that I'm sorry you've returned? — for I had *such* a pleasant surprise for your wife! I knew how she had counted on this Opera, and had actually promised her to a gentleman friend for the evening, knowing that you would be too late in procuring tickets. You see, Belle Doane — the young lady who's been visiting me, you know —

had accepted an invitation, and our party was made up, when what should come but a telegraphic despatch that took her off to Albany not a half-hour ago — a brother's wife or child, I believe it is, lies very ill — and so I took the liberty of saying that, as Dr. Palfrey was absent, I would ask his wife to make one of our party. But — I forgot — you left town to visit a sick friend, I believe. Did he recover?" she asked, observing for the first time his saddened, pale features.

"It was my uncle, madam. He is *dead!*" replied Palfrey sternly.

"Dear me — I did not suppose — I beg pardon," said the gay woman in subdued tones. "Then Jenny would not —"

"Ah, Mrs. Vincent, is that you? And what were you saying about the Opera? Come for me to join the party? — Certainly, I should be delighted! Come in here!" and Jenny appeared in the nursery door that had stood slightly ajar.

The lady looked hesitatingly toward Dr. Palfrey, who stood at the head of the staircase where they had met. There was an expression on his face she could not fathom. "Please walk in, Mrs. Vincent," and he waved her courteously toward the open door. "Mrs. Palfrey knows my wishes!" he added briefly, with his foot on the first stair.

Jenny's face flushed. Her angry, fiery blood was up in her veins. "How freezing his voice was," she thought. "'She knows my wishes' means that she shall *obey* them. *I will not!*" and her decision was taken. A few moments afterward, as the two ladies paused at the foot of the stairs whither Jenny accompanied her guest, a few words reached Dr. Palfrey in his library.

"O, by-the-way, my dear Mrs. Vincent, I have a love of an opera cloak you will see to-night. — But I am detaining you. — Be sure and send Mr. Golding round in season!" then Jenny bounded up lightly to her dressing-room.

In a few moments her husband came in, looking pale and stern.

"Mrs. Palfrey," he said freezingly, "a few words reached my ear, *accidentally*, doubtless, as you accompanied your friend down stairs. Did I understand you to mention *Mr. Golding* as your proposed escort to the Opera to-night?"

"You did," replied Jenny laconically.

"And you, knowing my wishes, have accepted *his* invitation through Mrs. Vincent?"

"Knowing your wishes, I have!" was the answer in the same impassive tone.

"Mrs. Palfrey," and his voice trembled, "you are my wife — and for that reason, and because you are the mother of my child, your reputation is dear to me. We will let alone the death of my uncle; — you must know that the man in whose company you would appear to-night is a *roue* and a gambler — one, who, though invited to the drawing-rooms of lax and unthinking women like Mrs. Vincent whose companionship you are well aware I have repeatedly desired you to forego — has never, nor shall, with my permission, ever set foot within this house! And with *this* man, you would be seen at a public assembly! Jenny, you are mad! You shall countermand this acceptance at once!"

"*'Shall'?*" and her black eyes flashed. "'Shall'? Lucien Palfrey, if you choose to play the tyrant, I have not the slightest objection, provided *I* am not the recipient of your jealous care. I am no child, to come and go at your beck and call: — as for my good name, of which you seem so particularly watchful, fear not but I am sufficient guardian of it. But, upon *one* point, I am resolved — to submit no longer to your jealous restrictions. This invitation I shall *not* countermand!" and the beautiful eyes of that angry woman blazed defiance and exultation.

"Jane Palfrey," and his face was deadly pale, and every word, measured in its calmness, dropped distinctly into the silence, "Jane Palfrey, I scorn to withhold you, by more direct commands, from the accomplishment of your insane purpose. The woman who forgets her self-respect is unworthy mine. I have only this to add — if you accompany Hugh Golding to the Opera this night, *twenty-four hours hence you are no wife of mine!*" and turning abruptly, he left her.

A light, silvery, contemptuous laugh floated down the staircase as Dr. Palfrey sought his library; then a vigorous pull of the bell-cord summoned Jenny's maid to her dressing-room. When the tea-bell rang, she did not go down; and Lucien also sent away the servant who knocked twice at his library door; and when the mantel clock chimed seven, the misguided young wife, radiant in jewels and with the glowing tint of her satin opera cloak lending a brighter hue to her flushed cheek, was handed to a carriage where sat a gay and fashionable party, by Hugh Golding — and whirled away to be the cynosure of a thousand *lorgnettes* in the crowded Opera House.

Ten, eleven, twelve, the clocks chimed forth; and still in his library sat Lucien Palfrey. What purposes flitted through his mind, he hardly knew — so had this daring, unwifely act stunned him. The morrow's sun should behold him far from her side — he would not deprive her of his name, or the gold for which she married him, but he would never trouble her more — he would place miles, leagues, seas, between them — such were the resolves that swayed him.

Suddenly his maddening reverie was broken by the stopping of a carriage at the door. She had returned, then? — he would not see her — he turned the key in the lock.

But why those trampling feet upon the marble steps? — the sudden ejaculation of the porter who opened the door? — the

tread of men's feet in the hall? — those whispers? With a thrill of undefinable dread, he flung wide his door. A slender, limp form, with dishevelled hair and ghastly face, was in the arms of two gentlemen; and like one in a dream he followed them up the staircase whither the porter preceded them, to Jenny's dressing-room. Then he became conscious that others stood there beside him — Mrs. Vincent, and two or three ladies who were weeping violently.

"*What is it?*" he asked huskily — "what has happened? Jenny, Jenny! for God's sake speak to me, darling!" and he bent over the bed whereon they laid her. Then, as he gazed long upon the white crushed forehead from whence he brushed back the long streaming masses of dishevelled hair, with an agonized groan he sank down upon the pillow beside her.

Mrs. Vincent was sobbing aloud, "Don't! don't, Dr. Palfrey! Poor, dear Jenny!" when her husband — one of those who had borne Mrs. Palfrey up stairs — said with an effort at self-command, "Harriette, calm yourself while I speak to him." Then going up to the agonized man, he took his hand, saying huskily, while shudders of horror ran through his frame and broke up his words,

"Dr. Palfrey — this is awful! There was a fire at the theatre. — The dress of a ballet-dancer was in flames — they communicated to the curtains — from thence to the side-boxes — and in the rush for the doors —" here he ceased; but it needed only one glance at the scarred, disfigured face on the pillows to complete the tale.

Mr. Golding now came forward with visible agitation on his dark face.

"Dr. Palfrey," and his voice shook, "I tried to save her — so help me Heaven, I did my best — but the press was so great — we were thrown from our feet —"

"Oh, I have no doubt! I thank you gentlemen!" and Palfrey's lip curled in bitterness as he staggered to his feet — "but go! — leave me! My dear Mrs. Vincent, this agitating scene is too much for you!" and he quietly bowed them from the room; then, with a stony gaze in his eyes, said firmly, "Thomas, go now for Dr. Felton."

Alone with Jenny, until Aunt Allen came in trembling with fear, all the passionate love of Lucien Palfrey's nature broke forth. Their parting — his harshness — his after resolves — all rose before him; and remorse almost maddened him. Kissing her pallid cheeks, pressing his own to her cold lips, laying his temples against the fair white bosom that had so often pillowed his head, he forgot everything but his own accusing, remorseful thoughts, and moaned repeatedly, "*It is a judgment! it is a judgment!*"

"She is not dead!" said Dr. Felton, placing a mirror to her lips.

"Oh, save her — save her! Doctor, I am unmanned — I can do nothing — but you *must* not let her die!" and his haggard face was scarcely less white than hers upon the pillow.

"My dear young friend, whatever man can do shall be done; but I fear the decree has gone forth!" was the reply of the sympathizing physician, who saw with a practised eye that medical skill was set at naught.

And so, ere the sun had sunk again in the west — unclosing her eyes to murmur a faint petition for forgiveness and look her last upon the baby Cora whom old Nurse Allen had brought to the bed-side — laying her head nearer against the agonized heart to which it had been drawn — so poor, repentant Jenny Palfrey breathed out her life.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"The star of the unconquered Will
Still rose within her breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm and self-possessed."

THREE weeks had passed since the fire, and then Peace awoke as from a long, blank dream. Weak as an infant, she lay on her pillows. There was a gentle stirring of the air — a delicious fragrance stole over her senses; and she heard softest whispers. Where was she? Did angels' wings fan her brow? — that delicious fragrance — was it from the celestial asphodels?

She lay long in a silent, dreamy state. Again those whispering tones; — she turned slightly on her pillow, and, unclosing her eyes, lifted her hands to her head. With a weak cry of pain like the plaint of a wounded bird, they fell back. The sight of those bandaged hands recalled the incidents of that terrible fire. All was plain then. She looked wonderingly through the parted bed-curtains upon the form dimly outlined in the shadows.

"The crisis has passed. She will live!" said a man's voice, as a finger was gently laid upon her wrist.

"Thank God!" fervently uttered Orah Howland, coming out from the shadows and pressing her lips to the blue-veined forehead on the pillow, while a few tears dropped on Peace's face.

"Yes, thank God!" again said the voice that had first fallen on Peace's ear — a voice that quivered her weak frame with a thrill of strange delight.

"Orah!" she feebly whispered.

"Hush, my dear!" and a finger was laid on Peace's lips. "Not a word! You have been very ill — you must not talk."

"Tell me — who was it? — who went out?" whispered the sick girl, withdrawing her feeble gaze from the door where a tall form had just disappeared.

"It was Dr. Palfrey! There, hush now!"

A faint rose-tint crept over the thin white cheeks on the pillows — a smile, soft, loving, and tender as a child's, rippled about her lips — and she turned her face toward the wall. Tears were crushed under her drooping eyelids.

Orah's quick woman-heart divined her thoughts. A brilliant smile brightened her features, and she laid her hand softly on Peace's forehead.

"Listen, but be very quiet, little one!" she said gently. "Peace, I have not read the depths of *your* heart, but I think I know Lucien Palfrey's — betrayed during these last three weeks' anxiety — for, darling, you have been very, very ill! — and the hand upon her brow trembled. "These are *his* gifts!" and Orah lifted a vase of superb flowers from the table, "Lucien Palfrey loves you! There, not a word now — I shall regret having opened my lips if I get you ill again, and call down the doctor's anathemas on my devoted head. You must sleep — and I shall leave you now."

"Stay!" whispered Peace, "one moment! — That night — the fire — *Cora*?"

"Cora and Aunt Allen were saved. Your noble daring shamed those strong men. — These poor hands," and she laid them softly on a little hair pillow — "they were the agents of a strong heart. Lucien Palfrey may well love the brave girl who saved his child from a terrible death!"

Peace lay meek and passive as a child, while Orah looped aside the bed-curtains that the cool, perfumed air might play

over her — drew closer the dark window-drapery — then flung herself down into an easy chair. And the two were alone with their thoughts — the girl of noble beauty, with her superb physique, proud midnight eyes, and strong conquered heart, and the weak invalid who lay very quiet, with grateful tears dropping softly from eyes that closed at length in long, refreshing slumber.

In two weeks, so rapid was her recovery, Peace made her appearance below, her feeble steps supported by kind old Judge Howland — for it was to his mansion that she had been conveyed in an easy carriage on the day succeeding the fire, and where she had lain for three weeks in the delirium of brain fever, while Orah alternated the days and nights of watching with an experienced nurse.

When the despatch had reached Saratoga informing Dr. Palfrey of the casualty at his country seat, he forgot instantly his syren dreams of pleasure; unmindful of every thought, save that his darling child had been rescued unharmed from a terrible death. And when he turned from the blackened, smouldering pile, to clasp anew his little one, and listened to Aunt Allen's pathetic recital of "Miss Peace's" intrepidity, then went to Judge Howland's mansion to look upon the girl lying apparently at Death's door — then, a wish, so strong and imperious that he felt his Maker would deal unmercifully should he call that sufferer home, prompted the prayers he uttered for her recovery.

Not a thought of Florence Delano disturbed those hours. He had awakened from his dream. Like a mirage, her image faded; as the dipping wing of a bird, or a leaf fluttering down to the surface of a still lake, so had his heart been only slightly ruffled. His beautiful cousin had never stirred the deep waters beneath. Recalling every past interview with the gentle gov-

erness — her quiet dignity, unobtrusive worth, and pure womanly sentiments expressed in conversation — and lastly, dwelling on this deed by which she had perilled her life for his child — it was not strange that a species of fervid, intense devotion sprang up, increasing daily, for the sufferer. So the long days and nights of those three weeks were devoted to her care; and the words which echoed Orah Howland's "Thank God!" were a true expression of his joy at her anticipated recovery.

Mrs. Delano and Florence returned to New York with Palfrey — the former half-frantic with terror for the safety of her "darlings," and her daughter piqued that she had not brought her admirer to a declaration. And when, day after day, he hovered about Judge Howland's mansion — and, in his calls at Mrs. Delano's, where his child and Nurse Allen were installed as of old, looked pale and care-worn — talking only of the suffering Peace — then the indignation of the mother, and the discomfiture of the daughter, were with difficulty repressed.

"The artful creature!" said Mrs. Delano after one of these visits, — "she could well afford a few burns to win him! — and if it goes on long in this way, with that Orah Howland as her aid, making Lucien believe her the paragon of amiability and meekness, she will succeed. Florence, by the terms of her agreement, she was to remain here one year; and I will claim her. Once in her station again, the danger is over. We must call upon her to-morrow!"

The ensuing day found Mrs. Delano's carriage before Judge Howland's house; and that lady and her daughter, wreathed in deceitful smiles, sent up their inquiry for Miss Wedgewood. They were met in the drawing-room by Orah Howland; and presently Peace made her appearance with the faint hue of returning health on her cheek. Both visitors were profuse in

their expressions of delight at her rapid recovery, and saluted her with a kiss.

"Dr. Palfrey owes you a debt he can never repay," exclaimed Mrs. Delano. "Nor can my daughter or myself fitly express our obligation — for, as you must well suppose, little Cora is very dear to us!" — and she glanced meaningly toward Florence.

Peace received their expressions with quiet thanks. Intuitively she read that some motive, other than their suddenly conceived regard, had sent there that supercilious woman and her haughty daughter; but, in the honesty of her own nature, she did not quite fathom it.

"My dear Miss Howland, you have quite forestalled us in your appropriation of Peace," said Mrs. Delano in a flattering tone. "I perceive you have almost worn yourself out in the sick room. Dr. Palfrey says you are a very Sister of Mercy. It is quite time we should relieve you. I came to take our dear girl home; where, I assure you, she shall remain on the invalid list as long as she chooses before entering the school-room again, though my darlings clamor loudly for the return of their beloved teacher."

Orah Howland's keen perceptions of human nature pierced the wily woman's artifice; and her reply, in her own decided, haughty, yet courteous way, forestalled the answer on Peace's lips.

"Mrs. Delano, for your proffered hospitality I am sure Miss Wedgewood is duly grateful; but at present she is located in a home where, if there be any claim in the strongest friendship and sisterly love, Orah Howland designs to urge her longer presence. Nay, Peace — don't rebel! You are *my* prisoner!" — and she laid her hand playfully yet decidedly on the young girl's lips.

"Really, Miss Howland," said Mrs. Delano with reddened cheek, "this is not quite what I expected. But it is to *you*, Miss Wedgewood, I made my request. You remember, doubtless, that your engagement as governess in my family has not yet expired?"

"I am aware of it, madam!" replied Peace quietly, sustained by Orah's firm, reassuring glance, and reading Mrs. Delano's motive for her return.

"And I require the fulfilment of that obligation!" said that lady, whose exasperation got the better of her tact. "Upon your restoration to health, I mean, of course," she added, in a mollified voice.

Orah could no longer restrain herself.

"Madam," she commenced in her own haughty tone, "your disinterested *kindness* entitles you to our combined thanks. Perhaps this matter had better be referred to Miss Wedgewood's physician; as Dr. Palfrey is doubtless the best judge whether his patient's health is sufficiently restored to withstand the *seduction* of a school-room."

That shaft went home. Mrs. Delano absolutely quivered with suppressed rage; and a quick concentrated gleam of hate sparkled in Florence's eyes, as, white and cold as marble, she swept the folds of her lace shawl about her statuesque form, and closed her jewelled fingers so tightly over her fan that the delicate ivory sticks shivered in her grasp.

"Mamma, you forgot that we purposed driving down town," she said in a chill, indifferent tone, rising, drawing forth her tiny jewelled watch as she spoke; while Orah Howland rose also, coldly courteous in manner.

"Such insufferable insolence!" exclaimed the indignant girl, imperiously pacing the carpet after Mrs. Delano's carriage had rolled away. "Such arrogance!—to come here with their

offered *hospitality*!—their protestations of *friendship*! Why, Florence Delano, with her soulless lips—I'd as lief an *icicle* would touch *mine*!—actually *kissed you*! Peace, Peace, what are you crying for? Because I dared answer that supercilious woman after her own fashion? I can see now what you must have suffered with them; and can't I fathom now, also, their motive? Yes! I tell you, Peace, they meant to carry you back to the worse than nunnery confinement of their school-room, in order that Florence Delano might win back her truant lover. *Truant*? No! I wrong him *there*! He *never loved* such a heartless, soulless piece of human mechanism! It was her beauty and deceit that enthralled him; but Peace, darling, he is *your captive* now—and when he asks you, as he will soon, to become his wife, I can wish you no happier lot!"—and with a kiss Orah Howland left her.

"He loves me!—he will ask me to become his wife!" she murmured. "But *can* I?—*dare* I?—*ought* I?"—and she sat long with bowed head and folded hands.

"Capital! capital!" exclaimed old Judge Howland, rubbing his hands in high glee as Orah recounted the unsuccessful termination of Mrs. Delano's visit. "What a lawyer you'd made, pet, if you'd been a man!—speaker of the Senate, by this time!—who knows?"—and he pinched her cheek. "But seriously, daughter, that wasn't bad—to bring down that *parvenue* Mrs. Delano! Take *our* Peace away from us? indeed! Have her turn *governess* again? Well, really! that was a hair's stroke too much! Why, the girl ought to have a pension settled on her for the rest of her natural life!—and to my thinking, Dr. Palfrey's the fellow to propose it—said pension to consist of an offer of his hand and heart. Faith! if he *don't* do it quickly, I'll go down on my rheumatic old knees to her myself! Eh!

that I will, pet! — and bring you a mother-in-law worth having!" — and, rubbing his hands together, the old gentleman took down his gold-headed cane and went down town.

But there was another member of that household not insensible to the merits of our gentle Peace; for that evening — a soft, moonlight evening, while Orah entertained a few guests in the drawing-room, and the invalid lingered in the cool, dimly lighted conservatory — Louis Howland sat by her side, and in a frank, manly voice besought her to become his wife.

"Peace, Miss Wedgewood, I have nothing to hope for," he said in a voice that trembled slightly, "I have little foundation for the beautiful dream I have reared — and yet I have ventured to ask you to become my wife. Peace, have I asked too much?" and his hand closed tightly over hers.

Peace was much affected. She trembled violently. How painful to reply, as she must, to that manly avowal of earnest love! and many minutes elapsed before she found calmness to express, in delicately chosen words, her appreciation of the honor and kindness she could never accept.

"Miss Wedgewood," and his hand grew cold, "this is not what I could have *wished* — although what I should have *expected*! But you are not to blame. Had you bestowed upon me this hand, with the accompanying treasure of your heart, it would have rendered me a happy man. I shall suffer — but I shall try to conquer. Though lost as a lover, keep me always among your friends, Peace — I would not like to be banished there; and he who is fortunate enough to win you shall have my warmest friendship, too. God bless you, Peace!" and so he left her.

Peace went hastily to her room. She felt weak and weary, and sank into a chair. The evening paper lay upon her table; and mechanically her eye glanced down its columns. A few

words arrested her attention, and brought a deadly pallor to her cheek. The sheet fell from her hand, and she sunk down in a long swoon.

The next morning, still pale and weak, she sat in Orah's dressing-room. "Peace, what ails you? You have looked ill all the morning. I must send directly for a certain physician whose prescriptions will doubtless bring balm and healing," and Orah glanced archly from her sewing into her companion's dull, leaden eyes.

"I slept but little last night," replied Peace evasively.

Just then, a servant tapped at the door. "Dr. Palfrey is below."

"For whom did he inquire, John?" asked Orah.

"For Miss Wedgewood."

"There, little one — go down! I was sure he would come to-day. Hasten, dear — men never like to be kept in waiting, you know. And do try and get a little color into those pale cheeks, else I shall forfeit my reputation as a famous nurse."

With a trembling step, Peace crossed the threshold of the drawing-room. Lucien Palfrey rose from the piano where he sat humming, in a subdued rich tenor voice, that sweet old Scottish ballad — "Annie Lawrie;" and as he came forward to lead her to the sofa a smile brightened his face and he murmured tenderly the refrain —

"Her voice is low and sweet,
And she's all the world to me, —
And for bonnie Annie Lawrie
I'd lay me down and dee!"

"Peace, Peace," he whispered, still retaining her hand as he seated himself beside her, "you must know my mission here

to-day. Be very merciful to your suppliant, beloved one: let your name be symbolical of the happiness you can award me — give me perfect *peace* and joy."

With a face colorless as marble, Peace shrank away. Drooping like a broken lily, she covered her face with her hands — every throb of her heart answering to his pleadings, but every sentiment of honor forbidding her to become his.

"Peace, dear child, you are ill. You are not strong yet. Tell me nothing until you are calmer."

"No, it was not *that*. I am strong — see, *how* strong!" and she sprang up, waves of crimson flooding her cheek — "it is not *that*! — but, Dr. Palfrey, do not ask me *what* separates us! — I cannot become your wife!"

"Peace," and he caught her hand, "Peace, tell me! I will know! There shall be nothing on earth strong enough to divide us. So long as you are the noble girl who perilled her precious life at the dictate of her own generous, self-sacrificing heart — so long am I your slave! — But ah! I have it now!" and he struck his forehead with a trembling hand — "fool, that in my presumption I did not think of it before! Your rich love is given to another. Louis Howland has won you. This is an obstacle, in truth — oh, Peace, I understand you now!" and he released her hand.

"No! no! as Heaven is my witness, you wrong me now — for, Lucien Palfrey, save yours there is no proffered love grateful to my lonely heart. And, could I accept it — could I —" and her head sank in momentary weakness on his shoulder, while the clasp of his arms tightened — "I would ask no dearer boon. But it cannot be. Let me go from your presence before you thrust me away — out of your heart, — for, Lucien Palfrey, the woman whom you would make your wife should bring you a stainless name — while I, alas! I am the child of shame!

There, let me go *now*!" and meekly, humbly, she turned away.

"*Peace!*"

Was it an exclamation of reproach, or pity, that fell from Dr. Palfrey's lips? Reproach or pity — the excited girl could bear neither then. Her brain seemed on fire.

"Lucien Palfrey," and a deadly paleness usurped the crimson flush on her brow, "no tongue can tell the mental sufferings I have endured for the past three weeks; — yet, last night, a greater misery came — a stunning blow fell on heart and brain, and left me wounded, humiliated, crushed. One week hence, the merchant, Augustus Revere, will be brought forth from the felon's cell to his trial. *That man is my father!*"

"But, Peace, I cannot comprehend. — It is a dream — some wild chimera of your brain — you are ill, my poor child!" said Palfrey in astonishment.

"No, would to Heaven it were!" replied Peace faintly. "It is not *much* to learn," she added bitterly — "only the old story of man's wickedness and woman's frailty. My gentle mother!" and she wept unrestrainedly. — "But, Dr. Palfrey, I must visit the Prison to-morrow. You will assist me to go there — he is my parent; and, innocent or guilty, my place is at his side. You will not refuse me? If you have any regard for me, prove it by *this*!" and she clung imploringly to his arm.

"Peace," and he drew her toward him. "If this sad revelation be true, whose arms shall shelter you? Give *me* that right — a *husband's* right to protect you."

"No! no! I will not take advantage of your noble impulses. No man shall have cause to blush for me as his wife — you, of all others, so generous, so good! It would kill me — that stifling load of shame. — It cannot be! — But let us talk no more

of this! You will get me admitted to — to the Prison — to-morrow?"

"Yes — but I shall not thus resign you. Now go to your room, and try to sleep. I must not allow my little one to get ill again!" and touching his lips to her forehead, he led her to the door.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

These strange and sudden injuries have fallen
So thick upon me, that I lose all sense
Of what they are. Methinks I am not wronged;
Nor is it aught, if from the censuring world
I can but hide it. * * * Reputation!
Thou art a word no more!

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

AN abler pen than mine has written, "Perhaps in the whole world there is not a building where all the horror, the wild poetry of sin and grief, is so forcibly written out in black shadows and hard stone, as in the city prison of New York."

And it was before this huge structure, with its heavy Egyptian architecture, its solid, windowless walls and massive columns, — before this monster crouching down in the city's heart like a wild beast in its wilderness jungle — the teeming, crowded growth of civilization pressing on every side like the rank luxuriance of tropic forests, — before this prison house, baptized by sin and suffering with a fearfully significant name, "The Tombs," — that a close carriage drew up on a sultry August morning.

Supported by the strong arm of her companion, a slight, delicate girl, closely veiled, alighted and walked feebly toward the prison; while the driver reined his horses among the heavy shadows to await their return.

Into that atmosphere so redolent of human crime and suffer-

ing—toward that ponderous pile against whose hard walls so many cries have beaten unheeded but to be dashed back to hopeless lips—into that haunt of the great city where crime is ever stealthily lurking, and the face of a fair, refined woman is seldom seen save she goes thither at the dictate of philanthropy, or—Heaven bless her!—to carry consolation to some being inside those black prison walls unto whom she is allied by ties of kindred or affection—into such a region, why had that fair girl, who strove vainly to repress the chill shudders that shook her frame as she passed underneath the frowning portals of the ponderous door-way, penetrated?

Ah, that delicate girl was on a holy mission; her feet trode on their Mecca pilgrimage, but her heart was sent before! Peace was seeking her father.

After a short consultation with the Warden in an outer office, an officer opened a heavy door on its iron hinges, and Lucien Palfrey led his trembling companion forward into an open court surrounded by high stone buildings whose black walls frowned gloomily on every side. Following their guide across this court, they ascended two flights of massive broad stone stairs; then traversed a long corridor, at the extremity of which the officer paused and unlocked a door. Flinging it wide open, he said,

“This is the cell, sir!”

Peace shrank back momentarily, and whispered, catching at Palfrey's arm, “Must I go in *alone*?” Now that her journey's end was gained, her heart failed her.

“Be calm, Peace,”—and he held both her hands in his for a moment, gently reassuring her. “I shall remain here, awaiting you. Be calm and brave—and remember, that, whatever may come of this interview, nothing can change my affection. Go in now!”—and Peace crossed the threshold, and the great door swung slowly to behind her.

The officer was retiring, and Dr. Palfrey walked beside him the length of the corridor.

“How will it go with the prisoner, think you?”

“Hard, I fear,” was the reply. Nothing in his favor turned up at the examination. The money—or a portion of it—the marked bills—were found in his possession, secreted in a cabinet at his house; and that'll be pretty conclusive evidence. No doubt but he'll go up to Sing Sing! When your rich men go down, they make a clean sweep of it! He was on the eve of bankruptcy, they say. Who is the lady just gone in there?—his daughter?—Poor thing! Sad affair for his friends!”

“Yes, sad affair, truly!” replied Palfrey, evading the query; then, while the officer descended the staircase, he retraced his steps to the vicinity of the cell.

Meantime, what was passing inside that heavy door whose clang, as it shut behind her, smote Peace's heart with a sudden thrill of terror?

The prisoner sat on the side of his low iron pallet, with his elbows on his knees, and his head bowed listlessly on his thin white hands. Thus had he sat day after day since his committal, in the dull apathy of despair—heeding not the lapse of time, and making no preparation for the approaching trial. Peace saw the outline of a thin wasted figure in the dim light—and, forgetful of her fear, swayed only by the wild rushing tide of emotion that surged upon her heart, she sprang forward and sank before him.

Revere had not looked up when the cell-door opened, supposing his visitor to be the keeper; but now he rose to his feet, shaded his eyes a moment with his hands, then sank nervelessly back. A sudden faintness seized him—his lips moved, but could utter no sound. Peace hastily detached the miniature from her neck, and placed it in his shaking hand.

"Good God! who are you?" at length groaned the unhappy man. "Have you come from the dead? Did *she* send you?"—and a superstitious thrill ran through his frame. "And *this*—her face, and mine!"—and the miniature slipped from his fingers and dropped down among the folds of Peace's dress, while large beaded drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. "*Her* face, and *mine*! Mary! Mary! why do you haunt me thus? Go away!"

Peace clasped his hands between hers.

"No, no! Send me not from your side!—you must not send me away! The dead cannot return—but the living kneel to claim your love!"

"She *is* dead, then? *Mary is dead*?" moaned Revere in a hollow tone.

"Yes, she is dead," replied Peace sadly. "Seventeen years ago, on a dreary winter's night, she sought the dwelling of one whose life she had made desolate. She died there, and they wept over her, and followed her to her grave on Wood Hill—and cherished tenderly her dying legacy—a poor, tiny, fatherless child."

Revere had risen to his feet; his grasp on Peace's hands was tight, to painfulness even; his breath came in hurried gasps; two dusky circles rimmed his eyes.

"And that child?—*that child*?" he gasped in a thick tone. "Before Heaven, I did not know of this until this hour! That child—*is it*, as my heart forebodes—*is it you*?"

"*My father*!"

There are joys and sorrows that no pen can portray—words that no pen should transcribe; nor shall mine endeavor to depict that interview. But memory, and a fearful remorse, held sway in that hour.

The paths of yesterday can never be trodden again—how much less those that stretch away dimly through the long lapse of vanished years.

Bordered by ruined hopes and wasted opportunities—marked by dried channels wherein once flowed Love's sweet waters—here a sunken mound where we buried a perished joy and planted the white roses of Memory over the head-stone—there a way-side tree of Friendship, under whose cooling, grateful shade we lingered when the sun of Disappointment beat fiercely down, a tuft of snowy blossoms we plucked in innocent childhood, or the broken toys we threw from us when the paths of life grew steep and rugged and our hands were outstretched to cope with coming dangers and life's stern realities—such the paths our feet have climbed. Alas! that we can never traverse them again!

Treading down the sunset slopes of life, our shadows lengthening day by day, only in Thought can we retrace the travelled way once more. Well for us, if the trees and flowers and cooling streams live longest in our hearts! Well for us, if Regret walk not hand in hand with Memory! For

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: '*It might have been*!'"

Thus, in that hour, it was doubly bitter to the remorse-stricken man who bowed his tearful face on the golden curls oversweeping his breast, to reflect that Mary Halpine had never known, on earth, that which would have given her profoundest happiness—the knowledge that she was indeed a true, lawful wife.

"You will come again to-morrow?" asked the trembling

man, clinging tightly to his child, as the keeper turned the key in the cell-door when the half-hour had expired.

"Yes, my father! to-morrow, and next day, and every day, until —"

"Until they lead me forth to my condemnation!" interrupted the despairing man. "My daughter, I have been base and wicked—but, before God, I declare to you that I am innocent of this crime! It is a cursed conspiracy! God!—that it should have come to *this*—bolts and bars, and a prison-cell, for Augustus Revere!"—and with a dash of passionate pride, he struck the hard stone walls with his clenched hands. "I, who have waded in luxury for years—I, who have looked on the felon as a Pariah from the world—I, to descend to the level of thieves, drunkards, murderers!—to feel the disgrace scorching in my blood! I tell you, *it is hard!*"—and he strode the narrow limits of his cell.

"Yes, *it is hard!*" said Peace mournfully. "I believe you are innocent—and I feel that you will be saved!"—and a flush of prophetic inspiration kindled her features, as she imprinted a kiss on Revere's haggard forehead, then glided away.

As Lucien Palfrey led Peace to the carriage, his eye fell on a tall female form closely muffled in a rich shawl and heavy veil, leaning against a column of the vestibule. Her attitude betokened weariness.

"My good woman," said Palfrey, returning, "can I do anything for you?—procure you admission to any one within?—or, perhaps you are ill?"

The woman started, and drew her veil closer with an emaciated hand.

"No, no! I want nothing!—I am not ill! Go away and leave me!" she exclaimed in a sharp, querulous voice. "Go away—Go!"—and two luminous eyes glittered through the folds of her heavy veil.

"Pardon me!—I thought I might be of service!"—and Palfrey turned away.

"Yet stay!" she cried. "They call this terrible place 'The Tombs,'"—gazing up at the frowning structure, and pointing one long slender finger whereon flashed a blood red ruby stone. "They call this 'The Tombs!'"—Ha, ha! They named it rightly!—ha, ha, ha!"—and her laugh was short, almost maniacal. "'The Tombs!'" she continued in a low, hollow, musing tone—"no sunlight, no flowers, no joy, enters here—only black shadows! There are *hearts* like this prison-house, too—where the great black door of Sin shuts out the music and sunlight—Hope, Joy, Love—everything, but *life!* We cannot kill *Memory*, you know!"—and she shuddered. "But what is *she* here for?"—and she pointed to the carriage. "Why did you bring *her* here? This is no place for the young, and beautiful, and beloved. Take *her* away, where all is bright and sunny, and these great black shadows cannot make a tomb of her young heart!"—and she turned abruptly and glided past him.

"Some poor, half-crazed woman!" said Palfrey compassionately, as he entered the carriage. "Oh, Peace, how true that one-half the world knows not how the other half live!"

"True," echoed Peace; but in her great happiness she had little heed for the woes of others then.

"Such a revelation! Oh, Dr. Palfrey, *such* a revelation!" she exclaimed excitedly, her flushed cheeks bathed in tears like rose-leaves in dew. "A *brother!*—Somewhere

I have *a brother!* — and my father, too — he is my *own lawful father!* I thank God that I am not the child of shame!" — and a passion of tears relieved her overcharged heart.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The hope is crushed
That lit my life, the voice within me hushed
That spoke sweet oracles.

BYRON.

A THUNDER tempest hung aloft with threatening aspect. The sun had died in a bank of dull, lurid fire, and a great black pall was spread over his death couch.

Not the slightest sound broke a calm as profound as that preceding the hurricane of eastern tropics — not the faintest chirp of a bird, or the whirr of an insect; all Nature lay cowed, frightened, at the betokened elemental strife.

No sound upon the earth; but from one room of the little "Nest" — from out that studio, at whose western window Leafy Earle had sat before her easel, or sketched the valley, river, or sunset sky — from that room, on the still air of that hushed August night, came stifling sobs laden with the burthen of suffering. Some fearful grief must have steeped her young heart in bitterness, for the girl lay prone upon a couch with her face buried in the cushions and her hands locked tightly over her heart. She was not weeping — for tears never come when the heart and brain are seared; thus every sob, coming up chokingly, gaspingly, was no relief to her agony. White and heart-crushed, she lay — a lily broken in a storm — a singing bird motionless in its cage.

The little studio was a perfect gem. The floor was covered with a tufted carpet where the roses of Cashmere lay imbedded

in a ground of purest white; oval pictures leaned down from the walls; sofas and tabourets, a carved table strewn with portfolios and elegantly bound books, a small stand at the south window on which stood a vase of rare flowers and a little inlaid writing-desk, and the easel at the western casement, completed its furnishing.

A waxen taper burned dimly on the mantel, shedding a faint glow down upon the easel where lay an unfinished picture — the portrait of Hugh Golding. Leafy Earle's *heart* had painted that likeness, infusing beauty and tenderness and goodness into the dark face. It was the embodiment of her ideal, not the real, Hugh Golding.

Mrs. Earle crossed the narrow hall and looked into the apartment. "Why, Leafy, you have come, then? I was so frightened lest the shower should overtake you. But I did not hear you enter! How tired you are, my child!" and she picked up a hat and mantle from the carpet. "Poor child! I knew it would be too much for you — such a long walk from the landing, after a day in the hot city. But come, dear, I have kept your tea nice and hot. Dear! the shower will break before long — come now, child!"

"Please don't, mother!" she said in a hollow voice without raising her head.

"Dear child, you are sick! I will bring you a glass of wine," and the anxious mother returned shortly. "Here, darling, you must take it!"

Leafy rose faintly; but waived the glass from her white lips.

"Why, daughter, how pale you are! What is it? Speak, Leafy! What means this? Your torn dress — your feet so wet? — You did not miss the path, and cross the swamp?" and she removed the tiny shoes and saturated silken hose from feet

polished and cold as marble, chafing them vigorously with her hands. "How did you come, Leafy?"

"I don't know, mother — I hurried and hurried on — for I only wanted to feel your arms about me once more. — *You* never will cast me out? A mother's love will never fail her child!" and she hid her face in her mother's lap.

"Leafy — Leafy — don't, darling! You are ill! The day's journey has been too much for you!" and she drew the bowed head nearer her heart. The girl stirred not, but lay in a heavy stupor.

"Leafy, rouse up! don't sleep now!" said the alarmed mother. "Tell me of your visit. Did you sell the pictures? and did you meet Hugh — Mr. Golding? He cannot get here to-night in the storm. Come, rouse up, darling!"

"Mother," and the girl raised her head suddenly, two bright blood-red spots burning on her cheeks, "Mother, you are killing me! I have heard words to-day that almost drove me mad. I stood in the picture-gallery — I heard him speak my name — with laugh, and sneer, and careless jest. He is *false*, mother — *false, false!*" and her head drooped lower on the tender maternal bosom.

Meantime a sudden wind went sighing through the trees — herald of the coming tempest; and a heavy burst of thunder smote the silence with prolonged reverberations that seemed to cleave the hills to their bases; then, with a sudden rush, the gates of the heavens were unloosed, and down came the torrent. — Shrieking through the ravines, among the sturdy pines, dashing the boughs of the mountain ash together and tearing the clinging drapery of vines from the rocks, went the hurricane wind; while the loosened torrent fell in a whirling mass — now trampling full upon the window-panes, now striking sharp and slant like an army of descending arrows, now dying into

momentary lulls, the booming thunder chorus filling in the pauses.

"Come, Leafy, you must go to bed," said Mrs. Earle at length; and she lifted the slight form and bore it into an adjoining bed-chamber, and, gently disrobing her, laid her down upon the cool white pillows.

"My poor, poor darling!" she whispered, binding up the long, dishevelled masses of hair and laving her burning forehead, "try and forget it all. Sleep will bring calmness. You are not afraid of the tempest? I will close the door, and leave you to quiet."

"Mother," and Leafy started up, bright crimson spots burning on her cheeks, and dusky circles rimming her unnaturally brilliant eyes — "Mother, I cannot forget! Do not think this a light thing! it is killing me! — I have loved *him* better than my mother — better than my Maker — and what I heard this day has broken my heart. Yes, it is killing me! — and, mother dear, if I should die to-night" — and she tightly held her hands and drew her down to the pillows — "if God should send His messenger and take away my breath, thank Him that He *saved* your child. For mother, mother," and a scarlet blush dyed her blue-veined temples, and she hid her face in her hands, "I thank God I have withstood temptation! — bless Him for *that*! — and, should I die to-night, be thankful that your child goes down to her grave as pure and stainless as you clasped her, a baby, to your bosom! — There, kiss me, mother — and go now, — for my head is burning, and oh, so tired! — I shall sleep, perhaps! good night!" — and, awed into obedience, Mrs. Earle pressed her lips to the flushed forehead and glided from the room.

All that livelong night the thunder tempest deepened, and lurid lightning flashes alternated with the thick, inky darkness;

but darker folds than veiled the heavens shrouded the soul of that poor girl, alone with her desolation, — for Despair sat crouching in her heart, and Madness came, with long, spectral fingers clutching at her weary brain. Alas, poor Leafy Earle!

CHAPTER XL.

"Little do we know of fate;
Perhaps our fortune is not in our power.
We are the sport and plaything of high heaven."

IN the court-room of the City Hall the trial of Augustus Revere was going on. It was crowded almost to suffocation; for the name and station of the prisoner alone, had he been arraigned for a lesser crime than that with which he stood charged, would have brought thither men who rarely left their mercantile sphere to enter the halls of Justice. The jury were empanelled — the judges on the bench — the lawyers in their seats — and the reporters at their desks with ready pens awaited the opening of the case.

"It will go hard with the prisoner!"

Everybody said so; not only the rabble, who clustered about the steps of the building to obtain a look at the "bank robber" as he descended the carriage, and pressed close upon the officers when they led him into the court-room, but the dense crowd within, and the group of merchants among whom that pale, haggard man in the prisoner's box had mingled for years; and when the District Attorney rose and opened the case — bringing all the keenness and power of his acknowledged forensic ability to bear upon it, touching briefly upon the strong web of circumstantial evidence he proposed shortly to present before the Court — a web, from whose meshes the prisoner could not hope for extrication — then closed with a short, but effective peroration on the magnitude of the crime, and the necessity that the high

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station of the accused should avail nothing with the honorable jurors whose office was to weigh alike high and low, rich and poor, in the scales of impartial Law — then, as the Attorney sat down, scarce a soul in that vast auditory but unhesitatingly whispered "Revere is guilty! Let him suffer the penalty of the law!"

The first witness brought to the stand was Revere's in-door man; and after being duly sworn, the prosecuting attorney put to him a few queries.

"Was your employer, the man in the prisoner's box, absent from his home on the night of June thirtieth?" he asked.

"He was."

"Do you know the hour of his return?"

"I did not go to bed until twelve. — Mr. Revere was not in then. Was never in the habit of sitting up for him, as he always used a night key."

"Was he often from home nights — and do you know where his evenings were spent?"

"He was away a good deal. We always thought him at the store. I have heard him say business was bad," replied the honest man, striving to shield the master whom he felt that his words were used to condemn.

"Was there any window, or door, left unfastened, whereby, if the prisoner had enemies, they might have entered and deposited the bills found in his desk?"

The man hesitated. The temptation was strong; but his lips could not frame a lie.

"There was not," he answered. "It was my duty to attend to the house. That night I fastened up before I went to bed — I remember it stormed fast."

"Had your employer ever, in your hearing, exchanged hard words with any visitor? Do you know of any enemies, who would have been likely to injure him?"

"No sir! Lately, nobody ever came to the house. He sat alone, in the library, when at home."

"Had you perceived, on the day of the robbery, or at any time previous, any unusual anxiety, or agitation, in the manner of the prisoner?"

"No sir."

"That will do," said the attorney.

Several other witnesses, who had been hunted up by the indefatigable lawyer, were then produced; one, a hackman who testified that he had taken up the prisoner in the vicinity of his residence early on the evening in question, and left him at his store; — another, who swore to having often seen Revere play deeply — had seen him lose five hundred dollars at Delmonte's on the night of the burglary, followed by the stake of his gold watch and chain — then he had rushed abruptly from the saloon.

Then came one or two merchants, who gave evidence that the signature on the torn paper found in the vault of the Bank was in the accused's handwriting; followed by the testimony of the police who found the secreted bills in Revere's mansion, and that of the Bank officers, proving the identity of the marked bills.

Then the Attorney closed the prosecution in behalf of the State. Basing his inference of the prisoner's guilt on the strong chain of circumstantial evidence presented; — adducing his absence from home on the night of the robbery, his frenzied rush from the gaming-table where he had vainly endeavored to retrieve his fallen fortune, and the fact of his being on the verge of bankruptcy, which was confirmed by his strenuous efforts, for several days previous, to obtain money from the brokers at enormous percentages; — proceeding to show that the scheme of the burglary had been calculated upon, from the certainty that the

key of the safe must have been obtained before the occupation of the vault — and how, in a moment of desperation, favored by the darkness of a stormy night, he had rushed from dissipation to the committal of crime; — dwelling on each and every circumstance, linking them into a subtle chain whose every fold gathered closer about the unhappy Revere; — no wonder that a hush settled down on the crowd, and, looking into each other's faces, they whispered "He is guilty!"

The counsel for the prisoner arose.

He was a young man; but, though his name had not long been recorded on the roll of admitted practitioners, he had already made his mark, — for he was no other than the son of a judge upon the bench — Louis Howland. But as he stood up before the dense assemblage who had already passed the silent sentence of condemnation upon the prisoner — with pale face, earnest, anxious eye, and tightly compressed lips — he had more of the air of a desperate man, about to battle a desperate cause, than one in a secure and tenable position. And this was so.

"It is an almost hopeless case," said Louis Howland, after his first interview with the prisoner in the Tombs, "but, Peace, if there be any legal chicanery by which the strong chain of circumstances can be rent asunder, depend upon it, it shall not remain unemployed. For, on my soul, I believe him to be an innocent man: — the victim of a foul conspiracy, but one difficult to prove."

Louis Howland had straightway visited the Prison after listening to the astounding revelation Peace made to the home circle; and, in his noble offer to undertake her father's defence, when he returned from that interview — an offer approved by the hearty "Good! my brave boy!" of Judge Howland, and Orah's tearful sympathies — the grateful girl read another proof of his disinterested devotion.

"Oh, how can I *ever* repay you?" she exclaimed warmly and excitedly, as he passed her in the hall preparatory to going down to his office.

"By making Dr. Palfrey happy," he replied in a low, impressive voice. "Peace," he added with a slight flush, "had I known then, what I read to day in his anxious, watchful demeanor, I should never have lain my heart open to you—but you will bury the past. Give *me* a sister's love—and make *him* happy!"

And now—shivering from head to foot, clasping the railing of the bench before her for support as Louis Howland arose to plead her father's desperate cause—Peace sat between the two who had accompanied her thither to the crowded court-room—Orah Howland and Dr. Palfrey.

Save those two, there were no other females in the court; and yet, not so,—for, as the young counsel arose—pushing through the dense crowd came two other forms—one, closely veiled, and with the folds of a rich crape shawl drooping limp over the outline of thin but symmetrical shoulders,—and her companion, a neat mulattress, following closely her mistress, who sank down upon a bench only separated from Revere by the railing of the prisoner's box. And, as the tall, veiled woman sank down with head bent upon her breast, and thin white fingers playing nervously with the heavy netted fringes of her shawl, a dark-featured man who sat beside her drew a slouched hat farther over his eyes.

There was a pause before the counsel for the defence began—during which, like a young knight buckling on his armor before going forth to battle, Louis Howland briefly gathered about him his little web of arguments—resolved to fight right manfully in behalf of the apparently doomed man.

"Your Honors," he commenced; but hardly had the words

fallen, before an officer of the police stationed near the door pressed hastily through the crowd, and delivered a note into his hands. Pausing a moment to peruse it, a rapid flush went over the young attorney's face, the cloud cleared from his brow—he whispered briefly to the officer, who immediately went out and presently re-appeared followed by a tall young man whose features were concealed by a heavy brimmed hat, whom he ushered to a seat in the witnesses' bench.

Howland now went on, speaking rapidly and triumphantly.

"Your Honors and gentlemen of the Jury, I have little to say—I *need* say but little, in my client's behalf. I need not enter into a lengthy plea, to unravel the apparently complicated web woven so skilfully by my legal opponent—it were useless to draw the sword of argument, to clash against the weapons which he has wielded so valiantly—I only hurl a single spear, diamond-pointed by Truth. But, gentlemen, let me deal in metaphors no longer—for the time is wasted that withholds from you the proof that yonder prisoner is the victim of an infamous conspiracy—in short, is, as I propose to briefly show you, *an innocent man!*"

During this little exordium, Peace had risen breathlessly, leaning forward, tightly grasping the railing; the woman on the bench started suddenly, then sank into her old drooping, hopeless posture; the man beside her smothered a curse upon his lips, turned pale, and quietly slipped away among the crowd; while the prisoner raised his bowed head from the railing before him, and seemed inspired with something of that sudden confidence infused into his counsel's words and manner.

"Insufferable!" whispered the State Attorney to a brother lawyer, with a smile of contempt. "The conceit of these young sprigs is incredible! What witness has he picked up now, I wonder?"—then settled back into his seat again.

Howland nodded toward the witness's bench, and its occupant arose. His eye did not rove abroad over the dense mass of human beings who breathlessly viewed this new witness, but drooped downward to the floor. His face was haggard and careworn. A sudden whisper ran through the crowd.

"*Carl Linn, the actor!*"

Orah Howland's breath came thickly, and she drew her veil. The Attorney nervously shifted his position; the reporters paused with uplifted pens; and the lawyers and jury leaned forward. The court was still as death.

"Your name?" asked the examining lawyer, after the witness was sworn.

The reporters dipped their pens afresh.

"I am known as *Jasper Golding*," he replied in a low hard voice.

Looks of surprise were rife among the crowd.

"Look upon the prisoner. Have you ever seen him before?"

At Jasper's first appearance on the stand, Revere had regarded him with a bewildered expression. The years that had fled since the father looked upon his boy in the parlor of the academy boarding-house had swept away every likeness of the frank, genial, sunny-haired youth, and brought instead the pale, care-traced features of the man. But when that name, "*Jasper Golding*," was uttered, Revere sprang up with extended arms as if he would fain have clasped him. But Jasper smiled—a bitter, scornful smile—and folded his own arms resolutely across his breast. That gesture thrust him out; and the unhappy man sank back, covering his eyes with his hand. His own child had rejected him!

"You know the prisoner?" again queried the lawyer, when this brief pantomimic scene, on which the court looked with astonished gaze, was over.

"Yes!"

The monosyllable was cold and hard, and fell on men's hearts like iron.

"When did you last see him?"

"On the night of the thirtieth of June."

"Where?"

"First, in C—— Street; after that, at his own house."

"Will you repeat to the court what took place there which may go to prove or disprove the alleged crime of the prisoner?"

Jasper spoke laconically, and in a low, clear voice. You might have heard a pin drop in the court, so profound the silence.

"It was late on the night of the thirtieth of June, or rather on the morning of the first of July—for three o'clock had struck. I was returning from the law office, where I had remained copying papers. In passing Delmonte's gambling saloon, Mr. Revere stepped out just before me. His manner was excited—I followed him. The rain was falling in torrents. I entered his mansion behind him. I went into his library close upon his steps."

"And *why* did you steal into the *prisoner's* house at dead of night?" interrupted the State Attorney.

A peculiarly bitter smile crept about the witness's lips.

"*Curiosity*, sir, solely! Wanted to take a peep upon the merchant prince in his sanctum! I had heard that the *inner* lives of such men differ greatly from their *outer*!"—and he fixed his eye on Revere's. "Mere idle *curiosity*, sir,—upon my honor!"

There was something in the cool, easy, almost reckless audacity of this reply, that quite took away the attorney's desire for questioning the witness further.

"What followed?" asked Howland, with a triumphant glance toward the crest-fallen lawyer.

"Mr. Revere lighted a lamp upon the mantel; his face was pale; he uttered words by which I learned that he had lost his last dollar at the gaming table. Afterwards he grew calmer—went into an adjoining room—and fell into a heavy sleep. Then I left my hiding-place among the window-curtains, and sat down in the chair he left before the grate. Perhaps an hour passed—the heavy breathings of the sleeper came from the adjoining room—I had risen to leave, when a sharp click of the outer door-lock arrested me. The library door leading into the hall stood ajar—when I heard the key turn in the lock my first thought was of house-breakers, and I stepped back into my concealment. A man entered the hall stealthily, then stepped into the library. He paused—listened, with his ear in the direction of the bed-chamber, like one familiar with the house—took up the night-lamp—drew near a desk by the window where I stood concealed. The key was in the lock—he took a roll of bills from his own pocket-book and laid them in an inner drawer of the desk—turned the key—replaced the lamp upon the mantel—listened again at the door whence issued the heavy respirations of the sleeper—then crept stealthily out, closing the street door gently. Ten minutes after, I followed him."

"Did you see this man's face?" asked Howland in the breathless pause that followed.

"I did."

"Who was he?"

The judges leaned forward; the lawyers and jury rose, to a man; the reporters lifted their eager eyes, and poised their pens over the paper; a strong hand held Peace, or she would have fallen; and the living tide surged forward in the court-room like a great upheaved sea-wave.

"Witness, his name!"

"*Hugh Golding.*"

There was a great sensation in the court—a sudden expiration of a thousand breaths—then the tide flowed back to its channel again. The Judge's charge was uttered in a few words; the jury did not retire, but, after a brief consultation, sat down. All was still.

"Prisoner, stand up and face the jury!"

Revere stood up.

"Guilty or not guilty, Mr. Foreman?"

"*Not guilty!*"

A loud huzza rang through the court-room, and the heavy stamping of men's feet sent up a cloud of white dust that quite hid the heaving, pressing throng; but louder than the shouts of the excited multitude rang out a shrill cry.

"It is Peace. Joy has overcome her!" said Louis Howland, bounding away from the crowd pressing against the prisoner's box. But no! On his way he met the pale, tearful girl supported by Dr. Palfrey and his sister. Too grateful and excited for words, she mutely pressed his hand.

"Make way!—a lady has fainted!" cried a gentleman, bearing in the direction of an open window the form of the veiled woman who had crouched down near the prisoner's box during the trial. "Bring water!" and he flung back her veil.

"The same woman I saw at the Tombs!" said Dr. Palfrey mechanically.

But Augustus Revere had heard that cry; and, springing past them all—motioning back the crowd—kneeling down where they had lain her on a bench near the window—drawing her head to his bosom and tenderly sweeping back the long waves of midnight hair from her pallid, shrunken temples, he whispered huskily, "*Julie—my wife!*"

"Yes, I heard yesterday that she was released from the Asy-

lum over a week ago," said a bystander. "Poor woman! Here comes her faithful slave!" — and the mulattress, Minnie, knelt down beside her.

When the decision of the jury had been pronounced, Jasper Golding pressed out through the swaying crowd. In the vestibule, he became wedged among the human mass pressing in from the outer doors. Close at his side, striving like himself to effect an egress, with heavy hat shading his dark features, stood a tall figure. Side by side they went out together, and stood a moment on the pavement. Their eyes met.

"Nay, put up your weapon!" said Jasper in a rapid whisper, for the inlaid butt of a revolver was in the hand the tall man had partially withdrawn from his bosom. "Put that up, Hugh Golding! You would not *dare* shoot me here, — for a dozen officers would arrest you ere you had taken ten steps. I will not harm you. Go! if your life is worth aught to you — go quickly!"

The humiliated man crept away.

CHAPTER XLI.

Many a peril have I passed,
Nor know I why this next appears the last!
Yet so my heart forebodes, but must not fear.

BYRON'S CORSAIR.

Into the Silent Land!
Ah! who shall lead her thither?
Clouds in the evening sky more darkly gather,
And shattered wrecks lie thicker on the strand.
Who leads her with a gentle hand
Thither, O thither,
Into the Silent Land?

FROM THE GERMAN OF SALIS.

THE large and superb horse that Hugh Golding rode walked slowly up the hill-path leading to the Nest. The loosened bridle rein lay over his arching neck.

It was the evening of the day of the trial. As Golding rode slowly up the narrow hill-path — now among the dark shadows of overhanging firs, now out into some open space where the bright starlight lay clear and unflecked and the light winds lifted his hair — his brow unknitted, his eye softened, and thoughts that were long strangers flitted through his brain.

Certainly he seemed wonderfully self-possessed in that hour of danger, when he knew the emissaries of the law were upon his track; and yet, this coolness was quite in character with his whole career.

"They will not seek me here," he reasoned. "No one but Smyth knows about it — and he will not betray me. Mean-

time, leagues of ocean shall lie between me and the hounds of the law. Ha! ha! Augustus Revere — and, ingrate whom I fostered as my child — I shall escape ye *both*! Beyond the waters, with the singing bird I shall lure to a summer nest, I can laugh at Fate, and take gratefully the good the gods have provided for me!" and a contemptuous laugh disturbed the still night air. "Ha! ha! there are stores of gold in *my* coffers the hand of the 'burglar' never touched! That plot was a failure: and now I must save my neck from the halter! — But a truce to fear to-night! Leafy — Leafy! I must never seek *your* presence in a mood like this!" and his eye softened.

Notwithstanding the doctrine of total depravity, let us most firmly believe, that never yet was there nature so bedimmed by evil, but sometime grew illumined by rays emanating from a purer moral atmosphere; and yet, there was little to commend in the resolve of that man's heart, as, riding slowly toward the Nest, he said with honesty of intention, "This night will I ask Leafy to become my wife!" From the artist-girl's pure soul, temptation had fallen, as the rain is shed from the oiled plumage of a bird: and so he murmured as he rode along, "Well, well — I have sins enough on my shoulders to bear, and will add no more to the list, but woo and win her fairly! — after all, she is a glorious girl — beautiful, fresh, and pure as a water-lily! What the devil made me speak of her so lightly to Smyth yesterday, I wonder? Confound the fellow! I wish he'd not always meet me with his winks and shrugs and smiles! It makes a man say what he wouldn't think of! — But Jove! I'm getting over nice! — it can never come to *her* ears, nor harm her — for my bird seldom leaves her cage."

In that hour — with unknitted brows, lips relaxed into a smile, and even a dreamy softness in his midnight eyes, giving

token of the fascinations he might have possessed in his better moods — Hugh Golding's face was very like the unfinished portrait which lay upon the easel in the studio — the face Leafy Earle had always seen; — every feature — the cold eye, the cynical smile of the sensual lips — toned down to deceptive tenderness.

"Yes, I have been villain long enough, Heaven knows!" he mused, "and certainly, Conscience hasn't troubled me overmuch with her qualms. I think I must be *minus that* monitor," and he laughed lightly. "But why the devil can't I *reform*? It strikes me that, when a man begins to get gray hairs into his head," and he ran his white fingers lightly through his locks, their raven hue sparsely flecked with silver threads — "it's about time he should turn Methodist and Benedict. But I wonder, if, after all, I shall live *contented*?" and the habitual scornful curve deepened about his lips. "'Fore heaven, I couldn't endure a *tame* life! I'd rather put a bullet through my brain. — Bah! what put *that* ugly idea into my head, I wonder?" and he slightly shuddered, gazing over his shoulder into the dusky gloaming. — "Pshaw!" touching his horse's flank with his riding-whip, "I'm getting nervous! else that old Fortune-teller's words wouldn't rush uppermost into my mind, where they've slept these ten, aye, fifteen years. I was younger, then. The old hag! how her snake eyes glittered, because I stole a kiss from her pretty daughter! Let me see — her curse ran after this fashion, '*Her you would wed, shall bring you to your doom!*' The old crone! — But strange, it should come up *to-night*! If I were *superstitious*, I should say it was a *warning*. — Well, after all it can do no harm to hurry our flight. The Law has Argus eyes, and it will need all my caution to elude it. The foreign steamer must have us on board to-morrow. Come, Selim, we must be no laggards now!" and the noble animal quickened his pace toward the Nest.

A countless myriad of stars twinkled in the heavens; and the young moon timidly climbed her way from the western horizon whence the sunset splendors had not wholly faded. Faint streaks of gold and amber lay about the bed of trailing clouds whereon the sun had died, loath to leave the fair green earth, over which he had all day stood sentinel. But at length the sunset glories grew fainter; the vestal Queen trode her way with firmer steps, flinging down a royal largess of silver to her subject, Earth.

But, at the western window, gazing afar on the horizon's rim, or watching the crescent moon's ascent into fair fields of heaven, stood no artist-girl with dreamy eye; nor in the vine-covered door-way or latticed porch, awaiting her lover's approach, as she had always stood of erst. And, catching no glimpse of her fluttering white robes, the rider exclaimed disappointedly,

"She is not awaiting me! Pfaith — a bad augury for me! On, Selim!"

His foot crossed the threshold.

"Leafy!" The name echoed through the little hall.

"Leafy!" But no response came.

He crossed the passage and entered the little studio.

Pictures, books and flowers, were as at his last visit; the easel stood at the western window; a lamp burning dimly on the mantel, revealed the portrait.

"Dear child!" he murmured, pausing beside it, a smile upon his lip.

Again he spoke — "Leafy!"

A step came. He turned; it was Mrs. Earle.

"Good evening! And where is my pet?" he asked, extending his hand.

No reply came, nor was the proffered hand taken; but no marble could have been whiter than the woman's face.

"You do not answer! Is Leafy ill?" and he took a step toward the adjoining chamber.

"Hugh Golding, come here!" and she paused beside the easel — "come here. Is this your face?"

"Yes," replied Golding with a smile. "Love is a *flatterer*, though!" he added.

"*Love! love!*" echoed Mrs. Earle bitterly. "Oh, traitor, fiend, devil! That I could *thus* blot out every memory of you!" and with a quick gesture she seized a brush, dipped it into a mixture fresh upon the palette, and drew it across the canvas.

Hugh Golding stood enraged. "Madam — madam!" he said, "you are mad! Has your daughter sent you with these insulting words? By heaven! if I *thought* so —" and his eye grew stern.

"Mad? no!" and an abrupt laugh came from that woman standing so defiantly at the angry man's side — "That is denied me!" and she clasped her hands tightly above her forehead. "For me there is only memory and sorrow — for her, *rest!* Hugh Golding, you *dare* not tell me that you *loved* her whose hand painted this?"

"Heavens! yes! — madam — a thousand times, yes! What do you stand there mocking me for? I *will* see Leafy!" and he took a step nearer the door.

"Aye, you loved her! — you loved her —" and Mrs. Earle repeated his words in a low, level monotone, but with bitter sarcasm; then, her mood changing, she advanced nearer, and screamed in frenzied accents, "So the hawk loves the poor white dove — and the snake, the charmed bird. Deny it, if you can, Hugh Golding!" Step by step had she advanced toward him — her arm upraised — her tone shriller — her eye sterner; and that bold bad man cowered under her gaze.

But his anger mastered his fear. He caught her uplifted arm in his iron grasp.

"For God's sake, woman, tell me *what you mean!* Do you hear?"—and he shook her forcibly. "You meet me with insult—with ravings. By heavens! I will not bear *this*, even from the mother of my future wife! But, pshaw!"—and he dropped her arm—"I waste time on a doting woman! Lead me to Leafy!"

"*Wife! wife!*"—and Mrs. Earle repeated the word scornfully. "Hugh Golding, do not come here with *lies* on your lips! You did not utter *that* word *yesterday*, when you made my darling's name the theme of sneer and jest. It comes too late now!—*too late!*"—and she leaned faintly against the wall.

"Madam,"—and the angry man's eyes flashed fire,—"*be-ware!* You will tempt me too far. I acknowledge that I uttered those words. I was a dolt!—fool!—what you will; but you shall not gainsay my words *now!* No *man* would have uttered what you have spoken, and escaped me; but you are a *woman*. But let us have done with this!"

Mrs. Earle stood before him in the doorway.

"Tell me truly, as you would upon your dying bed, Hugh Golding, did you come here to-night to ask Leafy Earle for your wife?"

"I did!" he answered haughtily. "Now call her, or let me pass."

Mrs. Earle stood aside; and such a laugh as almost froze the blood in his veins, fell from her lips.

"That is all! Go in now! She is in there—ask her to be your bride! She will be very quiet, and listen! Or perhaps you will find her sleeping! Wake her gently—gently! There, go in now!"

With something like awe creeping over him, Golding paused upon the threshold.

A waxen taper burned faintly on the white-draperyed dressing-table. Pictures hung on the wall; little graceful trifles of the toilet lay on the bureau; an oval mirror gleamed dimly; a wardrobe-door stood ajar, revealing the light summer robes in which the artist-girl had arrayed herself; two dainty slippers, still arched into roundness, lay upon the carpet; a bouquet withered in a glass upon the mantel; and the scarlet blossoms of the Indian creeper lay in a shower where they had dropped in at the open casement. But Hugh Golding saw nothing, save the outlines of a slender form on a low French bed in the extremity of the apartment.

"Leafy, are you ill?"—and he bent above her with a kiss.

But, good God! what icy touch met his own! what marble lips! Was she—was she—and his heart framed a word his lips refused to utter—was she, *dead*? No! no! Had not Mrs. Earle said he would find her *sleeping*? She had been very ill, for the face within its frame of chestnut hair was fearfully pale—but she was only sleeping, and would waken at his call.

"Leafy! Leafy! Speak to me! hear my defence! Tell me you forgive!"—and he raised her head in his arms.

But it dropped, a leaden weight, upon his breast. Pale as death, he laid her back upon the pillows. The words that would have saved her, came too late—too late—for Leafy Earle was dead!

How had she perished? There were no blue livid lines about the sweet young mouth, to denote the subtle workings of Poison. No!—the gentle sleeper had not cowardly fled from the woe that weakened her brain.

Had God quietly taken her breath while she slept? It must

be! — for, so perfect the repose of the exquisite, statuesque form, that it seemed but an easy transition to another life, — a sleep, on earth — an awakening in heaven! Aye, *in heaven!* for surely waiting Angels had borne the released spirit of that sinless one up to the Father's bosom.

And yet, not *thus* had she been taken.

"So she died!" — and Mrs. Earle stood beside the awe-stricken man, and folded down the drapery from the fair white bosom whereon one black streak — the finger-mark of the scathing lightning — showed the stroke that sent her spirit to her God. "So she died!" murmured the miserable mother in a hollow voice. "With her maddened brain on fire — striving to escape from Thought and Memory — she went out into the midnight tempest, where God sent the stroke; for, so I found her, with His finger-mark there!" — and she gently touched the scarred bosom. "And here she lies," — and Mrs. Earle's voice grew shrill as she laid her hand upon the arm of the miserable man who cowered away from her touch, — "yesterday, blooming — to-day, cold, pale, dead! But, Hugh Golding, I will not reproach you. It is well — well!" — and the stricken mother folded her arms calmly. "It is *well* — *well!* aye, *better* to die so, than live to shame, disgrace, sin! I thank God that He took her! He knew what was best for my beautiful — my darling. God was more merciful than man!"

Lower and lower cowered the wretched man, staggering faintly against the wall — sinking beside the bed — reaching forth one trembling hand to touch the long, dishevelled hair oversweeping the pillows.

"Get up! Go away! You shall not *touch* her! — you shall not lay a finger upon her! it would sully the dead!" — and Mrs. Earle pointed to the open door. "Go again into your own world of Passion and Sin! — go, to madden other brains — to

break *other* hearts, to whom, haply, the thunderbolt may not come! Go! — and *forget*, if you can, *how* died one, stainless, young, and beautiful, whom God would not let you harm — for He wanted her for an Angel in heaven!"

And, mute and awe-stricken, Hugh Golding crept away

CHAPTER XLII.

Thus lived — thus died she: never more on her
Shall sorrow light, or shame. She was not made
Through years or moons the inner weight to bear
Which colder hearts endure till they are laid
By age in earth.

BYRON.

DEATH is a royal conqueror, and Consumption is his *avant-courier*, heralding his approach. And the messenger goes forward — hangs his crimson banners on the cheeks of his surrendering victims — mirrors the flash and glitter of his armor in their sparkling eyes; and the sound of their hollow coughs and faltering footsteps are but the feeble echoes of his trumpet calls. And afterward, when the Citadel is weakened, then comes the Victor, emblazoned in the panoply of triumph, to gather up his spoils.

Oh, would he only add to the list of his victims the sad, the heart-broken, the earth-weary — they, who, exhausted with their life-campaign, capitulate willingly, even joyfully, to the great conqueror! — would he might spare the young, the beautiful, to whom existence is a coveted joy, sweetened by Love, Hope, and a thousand pleasures! — then, indeed, his inexorable summons were not so terrible! But oftenest, he binds to his chariot wheels, as imperial Roman Cæsar sought a Cleopatra to add splendor to his triumphal march, the most brilliant, young, and beautiful — but to whom, alas! as to the proud Egyptian queen, no aspic poison from the Libyan weeds can bring release from his thrall!

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Jasper Golding went straight from the crowded court-room to the death-bed of his child-wife.

It had been even at "the eleventh hour" when Jasper entered the City Hall where Revere's trial was going on; and there had been a strong struggle in his heart. He, alone, of all living beings, possessed a knowledge which would save a fellow-being from the disgrace of crime and the severest penalty of the law; and that fellow-being was one to whom the ties of blood, if not affection, allied him. But had *he* acted a father's part toward him? Had he not, rather, ignored his existence, after dowering him with his sullied birthright? — and did this man, who had shown his own offspring no mercy, deserve it at his hands?

Brooding over such thoughts all the weeks of Revere's imprisonment — failing to appear at his preliminary examination before his committal to the Tombs, where a word would have saved him — Jasper obeyed the first and natural emotion of an outraged, wounded, and proud spirit; but latterly, the inherent honor of his soul pleaded against so ignoble a revenge, and whispered, "Return good for evil!"

Had the young man known aught of his father's heart-yearnings, and the subtle cunning of the evil Golding, who feared, lest, in the parent's acknowledgment of his son, his *own* power over him would cease — then, something of filial love would have prompted him to a widely different course; for his heart, though proudly sensitive, yielded to the slightest touch of affection.

But, instead, he only harbored a species of silent scorn, almost hatred.

On the night when, in passing Delmonte's, he saw his father issue thence, pale, haggard, and walking excitedly homeward, an unaccountable impulse urged him to follow his footsteps. Often

in the thronged streets he had stood beside him — watching the merchant's cold, proud, impassive face — then glided away to brood over his disgrace. He had heard the story of Revere's domestic sorrow in the insanity of his beautiful wife; but of his inner life he knew nothing — and a wild desire prompted him to follow him into his solitude. And, as he stood concealed among the heavy window-drapery, a sudden purpose took possession of his mind: he would boldly confront him! — the *son* should stand face to face with his *father*!

But the web of circumstances restrained him. He went forth the possessor of an important secret; and then came the exultation of anticipated triumph. When, next day, men spoke of the arrest of the merchant prince, he only closed his lips tightly, muttering to himself triumphantly, "The scales of Justice have turned. I will *not* save him!"

But the pleadings of innate honor could not be crushed. He would *save* him; but he would never *forgive* him. And when, in the court-room, he met that look from his father's eyes — a look appealing for reconciliation and tenderness — the old scornful resolve crept over him like an iron wave; and he shut his heart against its better pleadings, hurled forth a freezing, defiant glance — and in that glance, disowned him. Misguided Jasper!

And so he went forth from the crowded court, and returned to the home where Death waited for Gabrielle.

Lying on heaped up pillows — curly rings of hair swept away from a moist, pale forehead — eyes burning brilliantly under long lashes that swept cheeks colorless as death, save for two hectic spots glowing with a brighter crimson than the heart of June's damask roses — her lips, threads of vermell parted over glistening pearls — blue veins, tinted with dark violet streaks, weaving a net-work over thin temples and the diaphanous

hands that grasped a bouquet of flowers — so Jasper found her.

Never, in her most brilliant flush of triumph, when her exquisitely chiselled limbs bounded through the vigorous mazes or sank in the dreamy, undulating waves of oriental dances — when the crowded theatre rang with applause and a rain of flowers fell at her feet — never was Gabrielle so brilliantly, startlingly beautiful.

Jasper motioned the attendant to go out, then drew the dying girl's head to his bosom — for he saw the darkening shadows of Azrael's wing hovering over her face.

"Jasper, stay close beside me. Don't leave me!" she whispered.

The pressure of his arms reassured her; a meek, loving, child-like smile rippled about her lips.

"I am so happy — so happy here!" she said. "A little while ago — while you were away — a cold hand lay on my heart. But it has fled now. I shall sleep soon — for I am very weary, Jasper!" — and she threw up a strange searching look into his face.

A thrill went over his frame. What meant that glance? Did *she* know *whose* icy hand chilled the life-tide in her heart?

"Gabrielle!" he whispered; but his heart failed. He bent his head; left a long kiss on her moistened forehead; and the query died on his lips.

The dying girl comprehended him. Laying her head upon his shoulder, she whispered,

"Jasper, bend down your ear. I have been wanting to tell you all along — for many days — how I can never grow strong and well again. Jasper, do not fear to talk of this! I know it all — I am dying! Don't weep, Jasper! I want to tell you

how grateful, how happy, you have made me. It was good of you to love me at all—to wed me. You might have been wicked, and forsaken me, like as many proud men would; but you did not. Jasper, your heart was good, and you loved me—but *somebody had been there before me!* Don't start up! don't look at me! I know it all! I heard them talk about it at the theatre; and that benefit night, when I slipped into the actresses' box unseen, I watched a proud, beautiful face bent upon you. It was *hers!* Her eyes were proud and dark, but her lip was soft and tender. Then, I knew she loved you!—then, I saw that the little dancing-girl was no fitting wife for you. I was ignorant of many things—and you were kind, and pitied me, and taught me, for you loved me as a child—a little one; but, Jasper, I could never climb into the high places of your soul!”

“Gabrielle—Oh Gabrielle! Don't talk so! I love you! You must stay for me!”—and he clasped her more tightly.

“Hush!” she whispered, a few tears crushed under her eyelids. “Hush! You will make me *want* to live—and that would be wicked now. It is best that I go; you will be happier then. I have thanked the Virgin that I can go before, and leave you. That proud, dark-eyed girl will make your future brighter than I. Tell me, Jasper, have you not loved *her?*”

There, beside the dying, there were no secrets kept. Jasper bowed his head.

“I knew it, *mon ami!*”—and Gabrielle sat upright and spoke calmly. “And now, promise me—after I have been gone a little while, you will go and tell her all. You will remember how I wanted this—you *will* do this, Jasper?”

Again the young man's head was bowed in token of assent. No emotion of earthly passion thrilled his frame in that solemn hour; he seemed listening to the words of an angel.

For a little time, Gabrielle lay very quiet. Her face seemed

exalted, pure, holy. A tender smile played about her lips. Then she spoke.

“Jasper, I have thought a great deal about it of late—the life I led at the theatre. I see now, how wicked it was to go there and dance; I am very sorry. But I had never known any other life—I had almost lived upon the stage. I did not know then, why they stamped and cheered—why they threw gems and flowers before me,”—and a faint blush crept over her white face till it died among the damp curls upon her forehead. “But, Jasper, I kept my heart pure through it all; I never listened; I never took their gifts; I never loved any one, till you came. Do you believe God will think me *very* wicked, Jasper?”—and her dimming eyes sought his.

“Gabrielle, you are stainless as snow! God will make you one of his angels! But don't talk so! I cannot bear it!”—and his head was bent to hers.

“Jasper, I have no *fear* to die,” she whispered calmly, folding her arm lovingly over his neck. “The Virgin will plead for me, and Jesus is all-merciful. I have found consolation in *this!*”—and she drew a small gilded Catholic Bible from beneath her pillows. “This has told me the true way!”—pressing a small golden cross to her lips. “It is good to die here, on your heart—to look into the coming years and know you will not forget me! And you will be happy yet!”

She raised her head with momentary strength, and her dying words were uttered in prophetic tones: “You will be happy yet!” Then she sank wearily back.

“Lay my head on your heart. You have loved me a little?—a little, Jasper?”

“Much—much!—Oh Gabrielle!”—and tears dropped on her face where a bluish tinge darkened about the sweet mouth and a mist gathered in the dimming eyes.

"These tears! these tears!" she murmured, faintly smiling. "I am happy now! Hold me close over your heart! Take my hands — so!" — sliding them into his. "Yours are warm, Jasper — mine are cold — cold! Kiss me quick, Jasper! I am going!" — and a short gasp upheaved the fluttering chest.

Jasper bent down. But the eyes into which he looked saw not; the lips he touched gave back no answering pressure; for Death had been there before him, and rifled the kiss. Not a sigh — not a groan, — only a tighter clasping of his hands — a quiver of the veined eyelids ere they closed — a heavier sinking of the slight form in his arms.

It was over! Gabrielle, the dancing-girl, was dead!

When the sunset shadows were slanting into the room where Jasper sat beside his dead, the door softly opened and two forms stole in beside him. In that hour, the repentant father took his softened son to his heart; and a fair-haired girl, whose face brought him a memory of hers whose pale, gentle features had never faded from Childhood's morning twilight — his angel mother's — came and mingled her tears with his beside the death-couch. Peace had met her brother.

And Louis Howland, who had brought them thither, paused a few moments with the nurse in the outer room, then went back to his own home.

"How did he meet them? Are they reconciled?" asked his sister excitedly, meeting him upon the threshold of the library.

"Orah," — and he took her hand and drew her down beside him — "Orah, be calm. Henceforth there can be no bitterness between father and son. Sorrow is a softener and a sanctifier. I left them beside the death-couch of Jasper's wife."

Orah's hand tightened convulsively over her brother's, then she released them; and as he left her alone, tears dropped silently over her interlocked fingers.

CHAPTER XLIII.

But all is over — I am one the more
To baffled millions who have gone before.

BYRON.

I expect a judgment shortly — at the day of judgment.

BLEAK HOUSE.

TINY blades of grass and sweet wild flowers crept lovingly into the sod that covered Leafy Earle. The artist-girl slept among birds and flowers, and all of Nature's beautiful things that in life she had loved so well.

The thicket of wild roses grew near — but their petals had withered and fallen long before, — how typical of the brief, sweet life of the sleeper! The stately whitewood tree, under whose rent branches the mother had found her child, lay prone trailing its fallen, giant length down the hill-slope — shivered and blackened by the same hungry lightning-stroke that lapped up the sleeper's life.

There had been a little funeral for Leafy Earle. The people came up from the valley; and there were many who wept, looking on the fair young creature stricken down in her youth and beauty. The village-bell tolled, and the pastor read prayers over her, committing earth to earth and dust to dust. The village sexton filled in the grave, smoothed the sod above it; then a few kind-hearted women lingered to comfort the bereaved mother, and beg her to leave her lonely retreat.

But their offers were gently, yet firmly, refused. In life, her child had been her sole care — in death, she must watch the

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place where they laid her — and so they went back to their homes, and the solitude of the Nest was unbroken; and the stricken mother kept a lonely vigil with her woe.

A mother's love — how strong, how deathless! Born at the cradle — ending not with the tomb — but following the dead over the portals of Eternity; — perishing not when the sods sink heavier on the pulseless breast, and the death-mould lays its crown in the shining hair! — holds the wide earth another affection so holy and enduring?

Other loves perish. Children nursed at the same white bosom become parted and estranged in the great world-strife; between husband and wife — they who promised at the altar to love and cherish "till death do us part" — widens often "a great gulf," over whose precipitous cliffs of Pride, or Hate, neither may cross again to join the other; with the lover and beloved, error, jealousy, or deceit, may weave their treacherous thralls to part each kindred heart forever, —

"And never either finds another
To free the hollow heart from paining!
They stand aloof — the scars remaining —
Like cliffs that have been rent asunder."

Or Change may come! The eye that kindled at our glance grows cold — the fingers that clasped ours give back no loving pressure — the heart that welcomed our footfall throbs not a pulse-beat quicker at our coming — new ties are formed, for so it is that fresh loves build ever on the ashes of dead ones — but the Mother-Love never fades, or dims. Though new joys spring in her pathway and other feet make music in her ears, she never forgets the dead. The *mother's* heart has room enough for all.

Writing this, my heart goes out to yonder graveyard where two sleepers lie — a dark-eyed girl, who went home early in her

youth and beauty, and a little one, who lay down to sleep with but the shadows of nine short summers in his golden hair; and to-day, for them a mother still mourns who will not be comforted, because, like weeping Rachel, her children "are not."

But alas, if Remorse wrings the heart of the mourner! Grief-stricken Mrs. Earle was less miserable in her sorrow, than the pale, haggard man who, with the shadows of night, crept stealthily from the dense wood of pines and knelt at Leafy Earle's grave.

His attire was disordered, his thick hair dishevelled, and his frame trembled with fear and weakness as he feebly staggered forward.

Hugh Golding was a hunted man. For two days and nights, the officers of the law had been on the search in the great city; every vessel leaving port had been searched, cutting off his contemplated avenue of escape by the foreign steamer; advertisements, with descriptions of his person and offers of reward, were everywhere; and in desperation he had bent his footsteps to the spot of all others most terrible to him, and for two days and nights lain concealed in the dense pine forests.

"Hunted down like a dog!" he muttered as he sunk upon the turf. "It has come to *this*, then! To hide and skulk away, and starve *here*! — devil! who could have foreseen it? But *this* is hardest of all!" and he struck the sod with his clenched fist — "to know that my own madness did *this*! — Oh Leafy, Leafy — pure and beautiful! Did I believe there is a God — I would say he sent your death as a judgment — a judgment!" and with a groan, he buried his face in his hands.

"Hugh Golding, it *is* a judgment!"

The miserable man sprang up as though an arrow had pierced his heart, and glared around with a frightened air.

A woman knelt at the head of the grave.

Golding knew his danger. He went close beside her, and crouching down like the humblest beggar said in a hollow voice,

"Mrs. Earle, for God's sake be my friend. I swear to you *here*, that I never meant what I uttered in a moment of madness and she overheard. God knows that I am wretched enough this night, to know that *her* ears can never hear my words of repentance. But I cannot stay to weep over her grave. Mrs. Earle," and he lowered his voice to a whisper, "do you know that I am hunted — *hunted*? — that a price is set upon my head? — I have done a deed, for which, if once within the clutch of the men upon my track, I suffer the full penalty of Justice. You are a woman — save me — give me shelter, rest, food — hide me till the search is over. See! I will make you a rich woman for life," and a purse fell heavily before her — "there are hundreds of golden eagles — only save me!" and he sank abjectly on his knees.

"Make me *rich*?" echoed Mrs. Earle sadly, reproachfully. "Oh, miserable man, what are earthly riches to a mother who has laid her only treasure here? Hugh Golding, I would not touch a dollar of your gold, were I starving. Could it ever bring back *her*?" and she swayed her body to and fro with convulsive moans.

"Hugh Golding, you killed my child; you have desolated my life; and now you come with another confession on your lips: and I hold your life in my hands. — But I will not betray you. 'Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord.' You are safe! — In yonder house you will find food and shelter — I would not harm a hair of your head — because — *she loved you!*" and a quick, choking sob stifled the mother's voice.

Humbly, abjectly, the miserable man crept away.

But Justice, long wronged of her rightful prey, could be

defeated no longer. The last leaf in the life of that evil man was turned.

That twilight, two travellers — in supping at a little village inn three miles down the river — exchanged intelligent glances as the garrulous landlord detailed an event that had stirred the whole surrounding country.

"Mayhap you've heard of it, strangers," he said — "about the young girl killed by lightning the other night? 'Twas dreadful lonesome where they lived — she and her mother — in the old stone house on the hill. Everybody, a'most, went up to the funeral: they said she looked jest like a child asleep — beautiful as a picter. There was a gentleman used to come up often from York, and take his fine horse from the stables — he kept it here — and ride up there. I've watched him twenty times; and he always come back late and slept here, then took the first morning boat for the city. He was her sweetheart, maybe, — but it seems strange he didn't come nigh at the funeral."

"You say this man was from New York? Who was he? — his name?" asked one of the strangers.

"Don't know. He always paid his bills like a gentleman. Settled up the last night when he went away — the next after the thunder-storm. Was a tall man — black eyes and hair — every inch a gentleman. By the way, strangers, maybe you're from York? Have they found the Bank robber yet? Pretty bold stroke, that!"

"No! — so far, the villain is scot free," answered the man, rising. "But — I forgot — you said, I believe, sir, that this death by lightning was in these parts. Whereabouts is the stone cottage, sir?"

The landlord pointed from an open window. "There, you can see the hill from here — 'Eagle's Nest Hill' some call it. The old stone house is just round the corner of the bluff."

"Thank you!" said his interrogator. Then, settling the bill, he took his companion's arm and sauntered slowly from the low porch of the country inn.

"This must be the region. Smyth put us on the right trail. If he has not fled the country, we shall find him here," and they quickened their pace along the lonely highway.

When Hugh Golding crossed the threshold of the stone cottage, two tall, powerful men stood before him in the gloom. Strong hands were laid upon his arms. With a sudden bound and infuriate cry of despair, he dashed off their grasp and fled toward the forest. But they were with him there. Midway between the house and the wood, their footsteps paused beside his own.

"Hugh Golding, you are our prisoner!" and a heavy hand fell on his shoulder.

Like a panorama the Future swept before his mental vision. Fetters — the prison cell — the trial and condemnation — the jeers of the rabble, and the penalty of the inexorable law.

The resolve of that desperate man was taken.

"*Never!* By heaven, I will never see Sing Sing! *Thus I defy you!* Now — ha! ha! — now take me — on *her* grave!" and with a sudden bound forward, a pistol-shot woke a hundred echoes among the hills; and a shrill scream of mortal agony — louder than the cry of the frightened woman who stood spell-bound in terror — rang out on the night air, as he staggered heavily forward on Leafy Earle's grave.

The officers raised him; but a blood-red stream dyed the turf and dabbled their hands, and a white, ghastly, convulsed face was upturned to the solemn starlight.

The soul of the Suicide had passed into the presence of its God. *Retribution had begun!*

CHAPTER XLIV.

A consummation most devoutly to be wished.

SHAKESPEARE.

SOME one has said, reader, that modern novels always terminate with a wedding. And pray, why not?

Nor shall we depart from the established rule. In this, our novel, we will have a bridal also — and readers, one and all, you are bidden; for, mayhap, if your eye has followed these pages thus far, with us, you may desire the completion of our gentle Peace's happiness. For how could it be otherwise?

Tell us not, O, cold worldling, "It is a sin to love too much! God will claim your idols!" We *never* love "too much." God never sent Death, or Change, or any other messenger, to take away our treasures because we loved them too fondly — it is because we love HIM too little; for "God is love," and He never bestowed upon his creatures hearts to lie rusted, and affections whose "fine gold" should become dimmed. Only let us take heed that the image of the *human* comes not between us and the *Divine*.

At the altar, looking into eyes that make brightest stars in our life-sky, clasping hands that henceforth lead us on our life-path, — do we love "too much" then? Beside the dying, pressing quivering lips to marble foreheads, clinging fast to fingers Death is striving to wrest from ours, or dropping tears upon the coffin-lid, — do we love "too much" then?

Oh, no! Whether at bridal or burial — in joy or woe — in the sunshine or the gloom — we never love too strongly!

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It was no brilliant, worldly gathering, that grouped about the altar of Springdale church, where the old pastor uttered the marriage ritual — and then accompanied them back to the new mansion Lucien Palfrey had erected on the site of the ruined Hall.

Augustus Revere gave the bride away — and there was a tremor of his form and a paling of his cheek, for he thought of a time when, by night, in a dimly-lighted church, he had uttered mocking vows to a fair and gentle girl — the counterpart of Peace; and Julie Revere, bending to press a tender mother-kiss on her lips, whispered earnestly, "God bless you, my daughter!" — then lifted her dark eyes, filled with chastened happiness, to meet the gaze of him who was then, as he had been during that long blank dream of her darkened brain — her true, loyal husband.

Little Cora almost comprehended the ceremony, as, standing on tip-toe and plucking at delighted old Nurse Allen's sleeve, she whispered,

"Look, Aunty, is'n't my new mamma *real beautiful*?"

Old Judge Howland — rejoicing in the consummation of the bride's happiness — hardly refrained from rubbing his hands together over his gold-headed cane; nor were more fervent congratulations offered the blushing Peace at the completion of the ceremony, than Louis Howland's. For his high-souled nature scorned to envy Lucien Palfrey the bride he, too, would have won; and afterwards, when a beautiful and refined woman, very like Peace, filled his heart and home with sunshine, he was fully repaid for the sacrifice.

But to the bridesmaid and groomsman — they who came up the aisle of the old church with the betrothed, and stood beside them when a wedded pair — was there, in the beautiful marriage service to which they listened, the solemn benediction of the

clergyman, the bridegroom's manly pride or the tender fight in Peace's blue eyes, to *them*, no foreshadowing of a day in *their* future?

Gabrielle's prophecy will be fulfilled! Though never forgetting the rare, loving child-wife mouldering under the turf-sods in Greenwood Cemetery, Jasper Revere knows that a stronger, riper love, sways his heart toward the noble girl to whom he pledged his faith. Proud, impetuous, — but loving and yielding to the beloved — such antitheses exists in both characters; combined, they will form a harmonious whole. Nor will their union be a mere priestly formula, joining hands alone — but, as are too few in this world of ours — in heart, mind, and soul, they will be married!

Only two — hearing of that bridal — vented their rage and discomfiture in angry passion. Mrs. Delano reproached herself that she had ever taken "that artful governess" into the house — and stormed and fumed, till her "darlings" were glad to find refuge in the deserted school-room, and the pet poodle, "Marky," set up violent canine demonstrations. But the haughty Florence — though outwardly cold as ice, and hoping "mamma wouldn't make a fool of herself" — shut herself in the solitude of her own room and wept such bitter tears as she had never shed before — such tears as a haughty, humiliated woman weeps, when the *only* heart for whose love she strove is indifferent alike to proffered love, or scorn.

But at Springdale church, the wedding was over, and the bridal party had entered their carriages to return to the Hall, when occurred a little episode which, as it relates somewhat to the fortunes of the new-made bride, we will relate by way of *finale*.

"Peace, Peace! — pray look at that *outré* looking being!"

exclaimed Orah Howland. "See! — as I live, he is actually bowing! What *can* he mean?"

Peace leaned from the carriage. Keeping pace with the vehicle, a figure, strange and *outré*, indeed — but, after a moment of bewildered recognition, strangely familiar — met her astonished gaze.

In the well-remembered suit of gray linsey-woolsey — his crape-banded hat and thick shoes white with dust, — every feature of his little, quizzical, meagre face beaming with the wildest delight — his outstretched, tanned, bony hands holding a paper package up to her view — she recognized the bound boy, Chip Weed. A smile of recognition flitted over her features.

The inmates of the carriage looked on in surprise.

"Ah, Peace — you *know* him, then?" queried Palfrey with a mischievous smile. "Some old lover, perhaps! — some "brave Lochinvar come out of the west," to steal the bride from the wedding! I must inquire into this!"

Peace rallied.

"It is Uncle Reuben's bound boy! How *could* he have found me here?" — and with impatient wonder she beckoned him to the carriage.

"Aha! no trespasser, then!" said the young husband gayly. "In lieu of a brave young knight, come to rob me of my bride, he proves a gallant retainer come to render his mistress homage. But you would speak to him. John, let down the steps! Come in here, sir!"

The coachman smiled, and handed the awkward, uncouth, wonder-stricken Chip into the velvet-lined carriage.

The bound boy stood mute and amazed at the elegant equipage and the strange, smiling faces; but joy at the sight of Peace banished every fear. Taking off his straw hat, he twirled it unconsciously, gazing upon her with silent delight.

"Chip, how came you here? Was it in search of *me*?" asked Peace.

His tongue was unloosened.

"Yes, Miss Peace — come all this way to find you — mighty long way, too! Run away in the night — guess old Hannah's mad enough about it! — travelled all the time. Got rides on stages, carts, *anything*! Slept most anywhere, nights. Folks ask me where I was bound — give me my vittles. Clever folks in the world! Found out New York arter a while — mighty big town! — couldn't find *anywhere*! — monstrous high stone walls — called 'em houses, folks did! Asked lots of people where Miss Peace lived — everybody fools, laughed at me, don't know a darned thing! Come away — wouldn't stay in the tarnal rackety place — couldn't hear my own ears! Come up here yesterday — got a ride on a monstrous steamboat — sot down to rest under a big tree. Fust thing I knew, saw you, Miss Peace, comin' out o' the meetin'-house, lookin' so mighty fine! Found ye at last — no thanks to nobody, nuther! — He, he, he!"

"But what *sent* you? What made you undertake such a wild thing, Chip?" asked Peace.

In his delight at the meeting, Chip had quite forgotten his errand; and, while fumbling at his hat-brim, had slid the little package back into his pocket. Drawing it thence, he said with a sly look of cunning,

"He! he! he! — Think I'm a fool, Miss Peace, mebbe? — Guess old Hannah Ward's the biggest fool *this* time! — Look here!" and he held up the package with a mysterious shrug, "jest you look here, and say if Chip Weed *Esq.* don't know a thing or two!" and dexterously untying a perfect "cat's cradle" of twine, he unfolded an old newspaper and drew forth a written sheet, laying it upon the folds of Peace's white satin bridal robe.

"What is it?" asked the company in a breath.

"A legal paper?" queried Palfrey, unfolding it. "'I give and bequeath to my adopted daughter, Peace Wedgewood —' why, it is a *Will*!"

"Yes indeed! *Uncle Reuben's will*!" echoed the astonished girl, her eyes bent on the familiar signature.

"He! he! he!" and Chip fairly shook with laughter — "who's the fool *now*, Miss Peace? Guess old Hannah's mad as a hornet! You see" — and he lowered his voice to a whisper — "*she stole it*! — she hid it — the night Uncle Reuben died. But it's yourn *now*, Miss Peace — you'll go back to the old place agin?"

Tears dropped silently from the blue eyes bent gratefully on the faithful bound boy. Lucien Palfrey took her hand, and whispered softly, "There is a Providence in this, my dear wife!"

Chip had been a watchful observer of Dr. Palfrey. He plucked at Peace's mantle.

"Who is *he*?" he whispered mysteriously.

The whisper was overheard.

"My good fellow, I am your young mistress's husband!"

Chip looked appealingly toward her. "You *belong* to him, then? You won't go back to the Ridge? 'Twas for no use I cheated Hannah, and got the Will, then, Miss Peace?" he said sadly.

The faithful fellow's devotion went to her heart.

"My good Chip, I shall go there some day — but I cannot stay always. This is my home now; and you shall live here with me. I want to talk with you again by and by," and the carriage drew up before the Hall.

Chip hung his head — jumped out — and crept away under a hawthorn hedge, while the party swept up the gravelled walk. Long he sat there, until a domestic summoned him to the mansion; and when he entered, the brim of his straw hat was

pulled down over eyes red with weeping. Peace was "an angel" still in the eyes of the simple, tender-hearted, faithful bound boy — but she was a *lost angel*, to him.

When the bleak, cold New England December came round, Peace again crossed the threshold of the old farm-house at the Ridge. Not, as when she had gone forth — a lonely, desolate orphan, to toil for her daily bread — but the cherished daughter of a repentant father, and beloved, honored wife of the man who accompanied her thither.

On the carriage at the door sat Chip, arrayed in all the glory of a new suit — looking smiling and happy.

Almost palsied with fear, Hannah Ward, with pale, trembling hands, placed chairs for her visitors.

"No, Hannah," said Peace kindly, "I cannot tarry. But do not fear! I have not come hither to upbraid you. While you live, you are welcome to a home at the Ridge. — I shall never expose you. I came here to-day to see the old place again."

Then Peace made a brief pilgrimage to the old familiar haunts where her heart had been so often. Entering every room in the old house, not forgetting the attic chamber where she had played in her childhood, but lingering longest in the bed-room where Aunt Patience died — she came back to the long kitchen with a calm smile on her lips.

"Good bye, Hannah Ward. I shall come once every year to visit the old place. Do not fear! I am your friend!" and leaving the spinster amazed, and pale with humiliation, she recrossed the threshold.

Then, beside her husband, she opened a little gate, crossed the stubble-fields, and followed the foot-path in the valley meadow — walked slowly through the sere, naked woodlands —

and sought a shrine where Augustus Revere and his wife had gone before them, — where, her rest guarded by the shadowy firs whose green no winter winds or snows could wither, slept one, over whose mouldering form repentant tears were shed — Mary Revere, in her lonely rest on Wood Hill.

FINIS.

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