

MINOR PLACE.

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BY ANNA FREDAIR.

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BELoved SISTER AND COUSIN—

To whom should the first work of a writer be dedicated if not to those who have aided in its production? This, though unconsciously, both of you have done.

Well do I remember, whenever, through long months of wearisome toil, Hope, as she often did, would raise her light pinions, shedding a lustre over the future, your smiles only added to the brilliancy; or, as was oftener the case, when that same future was rendered dark by despair, still you smiled, and whispered "Persevere."

The task is finished, the work is completed, and ere it goes forth to receive the criticisms of a reading public, I would offer it a grateful tribute to you.

Should it be allowed to reach in safety the haven of popular favor, more than all others I know you will rejoice; or if it is destined to sink beneath the waves of oblivion as unworthy a place *there*, your tender sympathies must prove the greatest solace of,

Your devoted Sister and Cousin,

ANNA FREDAIR.

MINOR PLACE.

CHAPTER I.

"WHY will you persist in your determination? If you would only see the error of the step you are about to take as clearly as those who love you do, what happiness you would bestow on them, and in so doing secure your own."

The speaker ceased, and gazed on the beautiful girl beside him, awaiting her reply. After some moments had passed in silence, she raised her tearful eyes to his and with emotion said,

"Cousin Lonnie, I do regret sincerely that you are so much prejudiced against Walter, for I am very sure nothing but prejudice could cause you to entertain the opinion of him that you do. Mother approves my choice, and I do not think that any one else has the right to interfere. I wish you would try to think well of him, if only for my sake."

"Ida, listen to me! If it were not for you, I might think differently of him; or rather, what he *was* or *was not*, would be a matter of indifference to me. But when I reflect that Walter Minor will soon rob me of your own dear self, yes! of you whom I love better than I do my own life, I can but despise him."

"Oh, you are mistaken ; I will ever be the same to you, and why should my affection for Walter change my feelings toward you ? will we not be brother and sister still ?"

"Ida, my dear sister cousin, believe me, the love I have borne you for years past has not been that of a brother for his sister ; nor of one cousin for another, but it has been the one love of a man's life which cannot be contented with a sister's return. I had resolved never to speak thus to you, so long as I knew you were untrammelled ; but now that another—and that other *one altogether unworthy of you* has come between us—I can no longer remain silent."

The large and eloquent black eyes had been hidden by jetty lashes, and an expression of pain might have been observed settling on the fair brow, until the last remark caused a rapid change of countenance, and the pale face was now suffused with crimson.

"How can you torture me in this way ? It was enough to surprise and grieve me as you did by the confession you have made ; that, though I cannot blame you for, could have been endured ; but disrespect shown the man I am so soon to marry, is too much !"

"Well, well, go on, marry him ; but, *mark me !* the time will come, and before five years have passed, when, as a broken merchant's wife and a miserable woman, you will remember this evening, and, when too late, perhaps learn to appreciate the offer you now spurn."

It was the first time harsh words had ever been

spoken by Alonzo Rivers to his sister-cousin, as he called Ida Rivers. She had never known the time when she was not beloved and caressed by him, for she was too young when her parents had adopted him to realize the true relation which existed between them. She had ever gone, as a younger sister to an elder brother, with her joys and sorrows, to him, and on the present occasion, had timidly told of her betrothal to Walter Minor, expecting that sympathy which had ever been hers. No wonder that surprise, grief, pain, and even torture had succeeded each other during their interview, and all combined, proved too much ; bursting into tears, she arose to leave the room.

Perceiving her intention, he prevented her by closing the door ; then, taking her hand, led her to the sofa, on which she sank, and wept bitterly. Waiting till calmness had succeeded this outburst, he proceeded in a subdued tone and changed manner.

"Cousin Ida, forgive me, if I have spoken too harshly. I could not help it. But listen, now, while I implore, as I adore you, to make me one promise—*only one.*"

She looked at him, through her tears, but spoke not. Observing this, he continued :

"Only say that you will never, never marry Walter ; or at least that you will break the engagement now existing between you."

"I love you very much, Cousin Lonnie, and would make any other promise you might exact from me ; but death alone can sever the tie that binds me to Walter !"

"Well, go on! go on to your doom, and hurry me to mine! Since the subject is so very unpleasant to you, I promise never to mention it again."

"Thank you for that promise! but try to overcome your feelings in regard to him for my sake."

Had Ida Rivers been penniless, as her cousin was, when her parents gave him not only a home, but a father and mother's care, he never would have cared to make her his bride. Ida's mother, having been for several years previous to her husband's death an invalid, had chosen his nephew as her daughter's guardian, and to manage her own affairs, and a desire to obtain complete possession of this large estate alone had prompted him to torture his gentle cousin, as we have seen.

Around the sick bed Ida and her cousin were always cheerful, and the invalid's chamber was used as the sitting-room. She had remained out longer than usual on this afternoon, and, though she appeared happy, and spoke cheerfully, the watchful eye of her mother discerned traces of weeping; and there was another mammy, her mother's faithful nurse, and constant attendant, observed the same.

"I am no worse, my child, than I have been for weeks past. Did you fear I was?"

"No, mother; why did you suppose I did?"

"If it was not that fear, then tell your mother what troubles you."

The daughter's hand was held in, and feebly clasped by, the wasted one of her mother; the gentle voice, whose every tone was treasured in the child's heart,

was so expressive of that sympathy a loving mother ever feels, it caused the tears to flow afresh, and, reclining on the couch by the sufferer's side, the young girl wept violently.

"Have you heard ill news from Walter, my daughter?"

A shake of the head was the only response, and in a short time her sorrow was forgotten in sleep.

"How do you feel this evening, aunt? Why, what is cousin Ida doing asleep this time of the evening? Is she sick?"

"Do you know what is the matter with her, Alonzo?" And, without replying to his inquiry concerning herself, she related all that had transpired.

"Oh, I can tell you. It is really nothing. I was teasing her about Walter and his fine house. I dare say the idea of leaving her so soon does cause her to feel badly. Then you are not well. Don't mention it to her again; she'll soon get over it."

All had retired for the night ere the sleeper awoke, save mammy, who sat contemplating the scene, and contending with the reality which she alone seemed to feel fast approaching—the separation which must in a few hours, or days at farthest, take place.

"Oh, mother, why did you let me sleep so long?" was Ida's first exclamation, as she looked up at the small clock of curious workmanship which sat upon the mantel. "Have you had your tea? Did cousin Lonnie eat alone?"

"Never mind, I have been cared for, and Alonzo

can take care of himself; you get up and eat something."

Having partaken of the refreshments placed before her, more to gratify others than her own inclination, she sat before the fire looking thoughtful rather than sad.

Mrs. Rivers had long watched for an opportunity like the present to speak with her child on the subject of leaving her in the world alone; for she felt each day that the thread of her life was weakening and must soon be broken. Calling her to the bed-side she said, "I have a request to make of you, my darling, will you grant it?"

Why that start, that increased flush, that earnest gaze? The thought flashed through her mind, "Surely she would not ask me to do that!" then she reflected, "Oh, no! she loves Walter, and has sanctioned our betrothal."

Taking her mother's hand, and bending over her, she exclaimed, "Could you make a request of me, mother, that I would not willingly, yes, even cheerfully grant? I am sure you could not."

"Come here, mammy! it is quiet, we are alone! I feel strong enough, and Ida has promised to hear me; I would talk to you both together!"

"My child, the time is drawing near, when, in the providence of God, you will be left an orphan in the world."

"Oh, mother, if you love me do not talk so! I cannot, cannot hear it."

"It is because I do love you, my daughter, that I

would have you listen while I make known all my wishes. I would not willingly pain you, but if you refuse to listen now, there will surely come a day when you would give worlds had you not refused to comply with your promise. That remorse has followed me from girlhood to this day—I would not listen, because I felt I could not hear my dying mother's injunction."

"I will hear you, mother, but your talking in this way will not——"

"No, my child, it will not separate us any sooner, and through life you may look back on this night and feel thankful that you heard what I had to say."

"First of all, let me command you each to the other's care. Go with her, mammy, to her new home. You know my views on all subjects. Whenever you see her disposed to do, as you know I would not have her do, reprove her gently; and if she still persists, remind her of this hour."

"You need never fear to take her advice, my child; remember you are young, and though in Walter you will have protection and affection, he, too, is young, and many will be the hours you will be glad to have mammy with you; remember she nursed your father in his last illness; for years she has faithfully watched day and night by me, and when she grows old, and unable to take care of herself, don't forget she carried you in her arms when an infant, and followed your parents to the brink of another world. Make these promises first, then I will tell you of other things."

By the bedside of the almost dying mother and mis-

tress, knelt the daughter and faithful servant; their vows were heard and registered, as all such vows are, by that good angel who keeps watch and takes note of every thought, word, wish, vow or prayer.

It was a moment of awful solemnity, and of the three, she alone who was nearing the brink of another and unknown world remained calm. How often do we see it the case, that as a spirit is about to take its flight from this world of suffering and of sorrow, though contending with weakness of body and physical suffering, the dying are enabled to speak calmly words that the stoutest and bravest cannot hear unmoved. "According to thy day shall thy strength be."

Then for long hours Mrs. Rivers talked, and freely made known her wishes on various subjects, and every word was treasured up in fond and faithful hearts not to be forgotten but profited by through after years.

As morning dawned, the invalid ceased speaking, and sweetly slept. During the short time she was permitted to remain with them these subjects were not again referred to.

Alonzo still maintained his wonted cheerfulness in the sick chamber, but there was a marked difference in his intercourse with his cousin when they were together elsewhere. Yet true to his promise, the subject which had apparently separated them was never mentioned.

CHAPTER II.

"SEVEN years! how many changes take place in that length of time, and how many we have seen. Yet they have been happy years to me withal."

"Has it been that long, Miss Ida? I did not think it had!"

"Yes, even longer; seven years and one month since we were married, and I am neither a *broken merchant's wife* nor a *miserable woman*."

"I wonder how Mars Lonnie is getting on, Miss Ida? It's so strange he never writes to you."

"I don't know! I hope his married life has proven as happy as mine. Oh, mammy, how the wind blows. I don't think I ever knew so very cold and disagreeable a night in my life. If I could only know there was not a suffering family in this city to-night how it would rejoice me; but alas! I know there must be many! Did you tell them to be careful about fire?"

"Yes ma'am! and it is so cold I don't think they will stir out at all."

Though not felt within that magnificent home, winter in all his sternness was felt abroad. There had some days before been a heavy fall of snow, which robed the earth, tops of houses, corners of fences, and every spot where it might rest with its unrivaled whiteness. Then came a sleet covering the whole with a crust of ice, and now the wind blew fiercely, causing the trees to bend with their frozen

weight, and to creak till the ear was pained with the sound.

The moon shone forth in all her glory, so that you might with ease have read by her light; yet not one ray of warmth did she give. Her cold brilliancy only seemed a mockery to those poor creatures who were scantily provided with food and clothing.

How seldom are the hearts of the wealthy and affluent pained by thoughts of suffering humanity. In the majority of instances could their most secret prayer be heard it would be only a repetition of the one offered by the Pharisee: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." There are noble exceptions, however, to this rule, and Mrs. Minor was one of them.

Though reared in affluence, and not being able to remember ever having had a wish ungratified that wealth in the hands of affection could supply; with money to remind her of the benevolence of her parents, and her own kindness of heart, none ever applied to her for assistance in vain. Nor was even the application necessary if the knowledge of suffering was hers.

Though the prophesy made by her cousin had not been fulfilled, the promises made on the same night had been kept inviolate, and often, as on this Christmas eve night, when her husband's business called him from home, mammy was her companion. Short seemed the hours, and pleasantly they passed in conversing of the old times in that dearest of all places, a childhood's home.

"Give it here, mammy! Why did you not ask me to thread it for you," she said, when, on looking up, she saw the old woman holding the needle and thread between her large silver-framed spectacles and the fire, endeavoring in vain to find the eye with the thread, and failing, by an inch or more, to touch it.

"Because, Miss Ida, you are as anxious to finish your sock as I am my cravat."

"Yes, but I am closing my sock now! and Walter said they could not possibly get through before two o'clock, and it is but near eleven," glancing up, as she spoke, to the same curious little clock, which, for so many years, had taken note of time in her mother's chamber.

And now, resuming her own employment, there flashed ever and anon from one of her fingers, gleams of many-colored fires, reminding her of the time when she had blushingly received that emblem of a union that was to take place.

"There—my work is finished! how proud Walter will be when he knows I made them all myself;" and the socks were carefully placed in a drawer, where lay hidden a handsome dressing-gown and a pair of richly embroidered slippers. In a few moments the cravat was placed with them, and after the fire was replenished they sat down to await the sound of a familiar footstep.

"What a treasure is such a wife to her husband!" Blessed indeed is that man who feels conscious that the happiest moments of his wife's life are those spent in some labor of love, which she thinks will

add to his personal comfort or enjoyment. Such an one may be truly termed a gift from the Lord, and her worth can never be told.

"There's Walter now! He must be almost frozen. Hush! What was that?" They listened to a feeble knock, followed by the sound of some one having fallen on the verandah.

"Oh, mammy what can it be?" and fear had blanched her cheek.

"It's not Mars Walter, Miss Ida; for it didn't sound like his step."

"I did not hear any footstep, only the gate; but oh, if it is not he, who or what can it be?"

"You wait while I go and see;" but she was too anxious to wait patiently, and reached the door just in time to see mammy raising some object from the verandah floor. Soon perceiving it was a child, her fears being removed, she arranged a place on the couch where the burden might be placed. Having been deposited, it proved to be a little girl about nine years of age, so chilled from the cold, and a want of proper clothing, that the power of speech, for some minutes, seemed denied her.

Mrs. Minor brought, and persuaded her to take a glass of wine, while mammy rubbed her hands, questioning her the while as to who she was, and how she happened to be out at that time of night.

Looking, with her large brown eyes, into the lady's face, she sobbed, "Oh, you are good, I know; won't you send somebody to help lay my father out?"

Drawing the child to her, she asked where her father was; and reaction having taken place, she began to weep, and repeated her request.

"Where do you live, my dear? and what is your name?"

"In the little brown house by the river. My name is Mattie—Mattie Garland. Thank you for the fire; but please let me go; I will show the way. Mother's waiting for me."

Having given some orders to mammy, Mrs. Minor rang for a servant, and proceeded to the dining-room, where she busied herself placing in a basket such articles as she thought would be necessary. She soon re-entered the room, where, during her absence, little Mattie had been quite transformed; though the clothes were rather small, they contrasted strongly with the tattered ones she had worn.

"Mattie, won't you stay with me? Mammy will go to your mother, and I will take you in the morning."

"Please, ma'am, let me go; mother's all by herself. It is so cold there, and father's——"

"Yes, yes, we know. There, don't cry; you may go." And soon she was lifted in a servant's arms, and they started—mammy with the basket, and a boy rolling a wheel-barrow, on which was wood and pine.

Mrs. Minor stood in the doorway, listening to the sound of their retreating footsteps over the frozen ground, and watching their receding forms, when the familiar step of her husband greeted her ear, and disturbed her reverie. Having related the circumstances to him, she went to take a farewell look, for the night,

at her own loved ones ; and, while her heart offered fervent prayers for the poor sufferers, there arose one of thankfulness for the blessings she enjoyed.

Sounds of merry voices came from the nursery next morning, as the various gifts of "old Santa" were removed from tiny shoes and stockings. Nor would any one have asked the question whether Mr. Minor was a proud husband, who could have looked in his face, as, having donned the gifts of his wife, he preceded her to the dining-room to await her look of pleased surprise, when she should see the elegant breakfast service, of massive silver, as his gift to her. But their happiness, great as it was, did not cause them to forget the inmates of the little brown house by the river, for a comfortable meal was arranged and sent to little Mattie and her mother ere their own fast was broken.

"Well, mammy, what of them? Tell us about the poor woman."

"Mars Walter! Miss Ida! you think you've seen poor people. I thought I'd seen 'em too; but I never saw such a sight in my life as that one last night. When we got there the man was lying on the floor—"

"Was there no bed in the house?"

"In the first place, it's hardly a house! There's but one room, and you might as well be out of doors as to be in that; there's some rickety something in one corner they called a bed, but he fell off when the fit came on, and there was nobody to put him on again."

"He died in a fit, then. Had he been sick very long? What was his disease?"

"He did not have any; he had sold himself, as many a poor man has done before."

"Sold himself! To whom, mammy?"

"To whiskey, Miss Ida. He had *melirium dremens*. Ain't that what you call it, Mars Walter?"

"Delirium tremens, mammy; you had it near enough right. Go on; tell us what you were able to do for them."

"Well, the first thing we did was to make a fire, for, if the moon had not been shining, we never would have known where either of them was."

"Where was the poor woman?"

"Lying down by him; and at first we thought she was dead, too. While I made the fire Nelson scraped out the snow so the door could shut, and Martha made some coffee. As soon as we could make a pallet before the fire, we got her to sit down there and take some wine. Miss Ida, the lady shows itself, I don't care how poor people get to be; and Miss Garland is a lady—she's known better days; but, like many a poor, silly girl, she ran away from her home and married that man, and this is the end of it."

"How do you know she did? Did she say so?"

"No, ma'am, she didn't tell me anything, except that misfortune had come with her marriage; but she told her little girl what to tell her uncle when he came for her."

"Then she has relatives. Did she take any nourishment? and what did you do for the poor unfortunate man?"

"She drank the wine and eat a little bread, then

went to sleep—her and the child, too—and I left 'em both asleep when I came to tell you ; we couldn't do anything but cover him up. She had tried to wash, yesterday, and the clothes were hard as any board in the tub !”

“Ida, get ready some clothing for them, and send by mammy. I will go and make some arrangements about the burial.”

“Walter, I will go too. Don't you think I may ?”

“It is very cold, but do as you think best about it.”

By noon that Christmas day, the little brown house by the river presented quite a novel scene. Side by side before the glowing fire, sat the poor heart-broken, poverty-stricken widow, and the wealthy merchant's wife. A carpet covered the floor. All crevices had been closed, behind a temporary curtain Mr. Minor superintended the last sad offices for the unfortunate man. Several neighbors had come in, and feeling sure that Mattie and her mother have found friends who will provide for all their wants, we will leave them for a time, and introduce you to others who are connected with our story.

CHAPTER III.

IN an old fashioned mansion situated in the country near one of Georgia's most flourishing cities, behold on the same Christmas eve another family picture !

An old man sits in one corner of the large fireplace, in which are burning whole logs of wood. The rich pine knots in full blaze causing the light of the candle to seem a mere spark. By his side is a table on which are writing materials as if preparatory to an evening's work.

The room is a library. The tall book cases between the windows reaching almost to the ceiling, the shelves of books occupying one side of the room, the large circular table in the centre, on which, in some confusion, lay books, papers, and all manner of writing implements, all prove it to be one. The tall clock in one corner, taking the same note of time as Mr. Minor's diminutive one. The antique furniture of this room at least evinced the fact that the house was not of modern structure.

We have called the man sitting in the corner an old man. He had not reached the age of fifty. Yet from his bent form, care-worn brow, and frosted hair, it would have seemed he had passed the three score and ten, allotted to man. Of a truth he might have said, as did Byron's prisoner of Chillon :

“My hair is white, but not with years,
Nor turned it white in a single night,
As men's have done from sudden fright.”

It is sad at all times to behold one who has grown old before his time, and especially so, when from some word inadvertently spoken, we learn that others are responsible for the unnatural change.

Mr. Nichol was not the only occupant of the library. Across the fire-place, and just opposite to him, sat a lady busily engaged in plaiting point lace on the neck of a sea-green velvet cloak. She was dressed as only a votary at fashion's shrine might have been. Every movement caused a rustle of the rich brocade she wore. Bright buds, and glossy leaves, mingled coquettishly with her curls. On a chair near her lay, neatly folded, a suite of fine cloth, for a half grown boy, and across the same a pelisse of plaid velvet. These could be none other than presents from a wealthy mother to her children.

Occasionally, had you watched closely, you might have observed a cold steel-like expression fixed upon her companion, who sat with his elbow resting on the table, and his head bowed upon it. The crackling of the cheerful fire, and ticking of the clock, mingled with the rustling of her dress, alone broke the silence.

Perhaps an hour had passed thus, when, as if moved by a sudden impulse, the old man arranged his paper, and taking up the pen began to write. It was evidently a letter, but ere many words were penned he stopped, and looking at his companion said, "I do not know why it is, but for days past my sister has been ever present with me, and to-night I feel impelled to write to her, and yet know not where to find her."

This remark elicited no reply; but so much was he

absorbed in the subject, he continued as if speaking to an attentive listener. "Yes, if I only knew where she was, I would write to her this night, and once more offer her a home, for oh! I feel that she is suffering wherever she may be."

His head bent low, and closing his eyes, it seemed he would fain shut out from his mind the picture. Without seeming to have listened, his companion had heard, as was evident from her remark:

"I dare say she has learned, before now, the fruits of marrying a drunkard, as all women deserve to do, who act as she has done."

"Mary! Mary! for the sake of heaven say no more. I forgot! I thought I was alone; but my sister I must find, and if she is homeless our homes must be the same; too long already I have neglected this duty."

"I think you will do no such thing. She will never leave her pet, Joe Garland, while he lives, and you surely would not willingly receive him as a member of your family."

"I do not believe myself she will ever leave him, for I know she loves him. At all events I cannot rest for thinking of her. I shall write to the place her last letter came from; perhaps I can learn something."

"It is my opinion you have done enough already. Mrs. Joe Garland has evidently never thanked you for your advice or proffered kindness. And suppose her husband is dead, and she should accept your offer of a home, what kind of an influence do you

suppose her child, raised as she has been, might exert over our children, and she has been out of society so long? Do you suppose I——”

Raising himself up at this, he said, “Stop; in God’s name, stop. Do you know it is my sister of whom you are speaking, and her child is as dear to me as my own could be, and of neither of them will I hear unkind words spoken. Supposing her husband is dead, and she could be prevailed on to come here, they need not live in the same house with you and your children. They could occupy the house over on the hill, and I would know that they were comfortable, and feel that my life was not being spent in selfishness. To say nothing of a brother’s duty to an only sister, I have ever thought it the duty of persons, wealthy as we are, to do good by giving liberally to needy and worthy persons, and surely in this we agree.”

“Indeed, sir, I think it is every man’s duty to provide handsomely for his own family, and that is more than you can do, with all your boasted wealth; and I can see no reason for increasing your family.”

“Perhaps if we were more economical we might be able to do more good.”

“*More economical!* I suppose I am ever to be hit in the face with my extravagance. I will let you know, when I was a girl, my income was equal to yours—yes, even greater than yours is now. *Oh, that I had never married!* No! I do not mean that! but oh! that I had remained my own mistress, when the Lord took my kind husband from me! Then I was

free to do as I pleased, and now, if I spend a few dollars on my *poor fatherless* children, I am called extravagant. I suppose if Mrs. Joe Garland and her upstart were here, it would not matter how much they spent. You had better start to-morrow; hunt the outcasts up; give them the best room in the house; I can take *my* children to the cabin on the hill, where we can dwell in peace.”

“Mary! Mary! I said it was *our* extravagance; and you must admit that our expenses, more than one year since our marriage, have been greater than our income.”

“Yes! I know you said *our*, but I know what that means. Would to mercy I had remained a widow. My dear lost husband would never have spoken to me in this way.”

She had touched a string that ever jarred the nerves of her husband, for she could not more earnestly wish she had remained a widow, than he did that his quiet bachelor life had never been disturbed by her fascinations as one. Without deigning a reply, he rose and quietly left the room, and cold as the night was, an hour afterwards he might have been seen walking back and forth, wrapped in gloomy thought, regardless of the cold.

The mansion in which they lived had been the property of his grandparents. It was the home of his childhood, and had witnessed the scenes of his earlier and happier years.

His parents had but two children—his sister, of whom he had spoken, and himself. He was several

years her senior, and he had endeavored to act a father's part to her after that parent was taken from them.

Their mother was one of the few pure spirits to be found on earth, who devoted herself, after her husband's death, to her children, caring nothing for society. She was delicate, and her only happiness consisted in rendering them happy. Martha was her mother's earthly idol, the pride of her brother's heart, and beloved by all who knew her. She was very beautiful, and, when a mere school-girl, had rejected more offers of marriage than many girls receive during their girlhood. At seventeen years of age, and while yet at school, she became fascinated by, and ran away with, a young man, who was handsome, wore the finest cloth, drove the finest horses, and was made really quite a personage of by his associates. He was what might be termed a gay, dashing gentleman, who lacked that, of all qualities the most essential, *principle*.

This proved too much for their mother's sensitive nature, who grew weaker each day, and soon joined her husband, whose death she had never ceased to mourn.

After a division of the property had been made, and his sister's portion given to Mr. Garland, (for on no other terms would she receive it), William Nichol left for the continent. While in France he met Charles Lenier, a friend and former class-mate, on the eve of embarking for England, where he had left his wife and three small children. As William had no definite

plan for his tour; indeed, as his chief object was to seek forgetfulness of the past, he readily consented to accompany his friend.

Soon after sailing, they learned that there were several cases of cholera on the vessel. Up to this time they had enjoyed each other's society, talking of former days, and relating scenes through which they had passed since parting. No sooner was it known that this terrible disease was among them than fear possessed Mr. Lenier, and it was impossible to rid him of the idea that he would fall a victim to its ravages; and a few hours before the voyage ended, these fears were realized. All that friendship could suggest, or medical skill perform, was done, but in vain!

"We are almost there!" exclaimed his friend, as they came in sight of land.

"Too late! too late! I am dying. Tell my wife, William, that I feared not to die. To you, my friend, and to God, I leave her and my children. You will carry them back——." Another paroxysm, the grasp tightened, and William Nichol stood by the corpse of his friend.

On reaching Southampton he sought out the family, and in a short time, under his care, they started for America. Having almost entire charge of the children during the voyage, a strong attachment was formed between himself and them. Having spent a few days with them at their home in New York, he returned to his own desolate home, which brought so forcibly to him the bitter past. He found it impos-

sible to remain there alone, and started in search of his sister, hoping to prevail on her to share it with him.

After many days spent in travel and inquiry, he found her. Mr. Garland, in two short years, had spent her property and moved to Alabama. Much as Mrs. Garland loved her brother, she loved her husband more, and, woman-like, the worse he did, the closer she clung to him!

Finding it impossible to shake her resolution, he purchased a home, and left a purse with them, though he felt sure they would possess them for only a short time. All that he carried back with him, was the sad, changed face of his once lovely sister, deeply engraven on his mind.

His next resolution was to make his bachelor's home a pleasant place of resort for his many friends. He was social in his nature, and very soon, in society, he found comparative happiness.

CHAPTER IV.

THUS he lived for two years or more, corresponding, now and then, with Mrs. Lenier, each one freely communicating with the other as to their plans. In all things concerning him she had ever manifested a deep inte-

rest, and in regard to his sister had expressed her sympathy.

He was consulted in all affairs of importance relating to herself and the children, and feeling complimented by the confidence thus reposed in him, he advised freely and even discreetly.

At last he received a letter from her in regard to Charles, her eldest child and only son. Fearing that a northern climate did not agree with him, she was anxious to send him farther south to school, and, at the same time, to some one who would watch over him carefully. She continued by saying, to no one would she so willingly resign her darling boy than to himself, and concluded by asking whether he would take charge of him.

The idea presented in this letter, to the lonely man, was, though a novel, yet a pleasant one, and he thought that life would then possess a charm for him, and he would thus be fulfilling the promise made to the boy's dying father. Thus he soliloquized. With him, to form a plan was to execute it, and, ere many days had elapsed, he presented himself before Charlie's mother, and made known his more than willingness to comply with her request.

Mrs. Lenier was still clad in widow's weeds, but received her dear husband's friend so graciously, and was so grateful for his kindness, that his vanity was flattered.

She was a charming woman, and though she was anxious to have Charlie go South, she could not bear the idea of being separated from her only son, just

when he needed a mother's care as well as a father's.

So great was her distress at the thought of giving him up, that Mr. Nichol, from the fullness of his generous heart, proposed her going with him.

"My dear sir, how can you make such a proposition? I would have to leave my little girls; yet I do so much wish you to have Charlie, for I know you are the only person his father would have consented to his being with."

After a short silence, Mr. Nichol replied: "Well, madam, there is one way by which all these difficulties may be obviated. If you are willing, I can have charge of your son, nor need you be separated from your daughters either."

"And pray what plan is that?"

"If you will allow me to become your husband, and father to your children. I am a plain, matter-of-fact man, and have never before contemplated marriage with any woman. I can think of no other way in which all this may be done, and if you are not averse to it, I see no reason why ours may not be a happy family—what say you?"

She blushing replied, that the proposition was so unexpected, she could not reply at once, but would give him an answer the next day.

What that was, may be known by what followed. In about one month from that time, Mr. Nichol returned home, and, much to the surprise of his many friends, carried a family with him.

His bachelor establishment underwent many

changes, but the greatest, though unseen, had, in a few months, taken place in the master of Oak Wood.

Many were the invitations given to, and accepted by, his numerous friends to dining and evening entertainments. Mrs. Nichol was ever gracious and pleasant to her guests, and presided with dignity as mistress of the house. All congratulated Mr. Nichol on having won such a prize. He received their opinions courteously, but might have replied, "My case you do not understand; I think that I know best."

Great indeed had been the first disappointment he met with in the woman he had placed at the head of his establishment. Only a few weeks after their marriage he received a letter from his sister, telling him of a severe illness she had just recovered from, and asking, at his hands, a sufficient sum to reward the physician who had kindly waited on her. Nothing was more natural than for him to read this letter to his wife.

"What are you going to do?" she asked, when he had finished reading it.

"Send her what she wants, my dear! I am only glad of an opportunity to aid her. What else would you have me do?"

With anger flashing from her eyes, and bitterness on her tongue, his bride of a few short weeks replied: "I would have you do no such thing; and if you will make me your banker, I will put your money to a better use than paying *pauper's* doctor's bills!"

When the mask, which had been worn so closely, was removed, and the woman's true character made

manifest, her husband was stunned for a few moments, and stood gazing in amazement upon her; he could not believe that he had heard aright, or, if so, that she meant what she had said, and, to convince himself of this fact, replied:

"My dear wife, you surely do not realize the meaning of your words!"

"Indeed I do! and pray do not call me your *dear wife*, if you would, in this way, rob me and our children of a living!"

He was agonized by her words, and could not reply. He took her advice in one respect: never did he afterwards call her by any endearing epithet.

He quietly replied to his sister's letter, enclosing more than double the amount asked for, and urged her never to hesitate to make known her wants to him.

From that time he became prematurely old; nor was it surprising that this was the effect produced. His youth had been a sorrowful one. The woman he had brought to his home, who had held his happiness in his hands, whose children he was learning to love, and to whom he had not, nor would have denied anything, was so ungrateful as to speak thus of the sister he so much idolized; 'twas too much! and beneath the blow he bowed. *Pride*, that sustains so many under such trials, enabled him to hide from the world his sufferings.

Of all the dark spots on depraved human nature, of all the vile acts of man toward man, none throw such a freezing chill over the whole body, and drive

back the purple current on the aching heart, as *base ingratitude*!

Indifference continued, boldness persevered in, favors forgotten by one who has been the willing recipient of our bounty, and friendship unrequited, have a paralyzing effect upon the soul, and make the whole head sick, the whole heart faint.

Thus was Mr. Nichol affected by this removal of disguise. She had touched a vital part with a poisonous wand! *It was done!* and was one of the deeds, which, once committed, ever remains irrevocable.

The world knew it not. Yet they were each conscious of the change, and in a thousand ways, from that time, had the breach been widened.

Ere many months had passed, Charles and his younger sister, Nettie, were the only attractions of this sorrowful man's home, and almost the only ones life itself had for him.

Some years had passed since the event last recorded transpired, and it would seem it might have been forgotten. As Christmas approached, his wife had demanded a sum of money, with which to purchase presents for the children. It was given, for her so-called *liege lord* had, long before that time, learned that his peace of mind was only to be maintained by strict compliance with her wishes or demands.

While in the act of taking the money from the safe, memory, with its sacred, renovating power, awoke, and reminded him of the same amount being sent to his sister, on that eventful day, and from whom he had heard nothing since.

He had resolved never to breathe her name again to his wife, but for days her pale face had haunted him, and his heart was overburdened with thoughts of her. In a sorrowful moment, feeling the need of tender sympathy, the olive branch was offered. It was one of those golden opportunities which if neglected, or treated with scorn, may never more return. The result has been seen.

Notwithstanding the manifest happiness of their children at the handsome presents they had received, the next day was to him indeed a sad one. While seated at his bountifully spread board, around which sat many gay and joyous guests, so keenly was he alive to what he could but deem a dereliction of duty in regard to his sister, and so vividly arose before him the scene of the preceding night, that to eat, or enjoy himself, was utterly impossible.

Several times during the meal he was rallied by his friends on his abstraction and loss of appetite, but how could he enjoy that repast, when perhaps his only sister was suffering for food?

Life has its bitter moments, and while they are passing by, what matters it if the flowers do bloom, they bloom not for us; what if the sun does shine, not one of his roseate rays can enter our darkened minds; what though we are surrounded by gay and happy ones, we heed not their merry laughter. No! we are blind and deaf to all that is bright and beautiful around us.

CHAPTER V.

REGARDLESS of pains or expense, Mr. Minor had every preparation made for the burial of Mr. Garland. Quite a respectable company had assembled in the little brown house on the following morning. Some of them might secretly have felt themselves above attending such a funeral; but there, as elsewhere, *wealth* had its influence, and when asked by Walter Minor to go, said, "Yes, certainly they would;" mentally adding, where he can go, why may not I?

About nine o'clock there might have been seen a small procession, slowly wending its way to the cemetery on the outskirts of the city, and near a mile from their starting point. It was a beautiful spot; though the chilling blasts of winter had seared every leaf in the city, and well nigh stript every tree in the forest, here all was green as in mid-summer. The enclosures were separated one from another by hedges of evergreen; and as the sun was shining brightly, though so cold, on each leaf covered with ice, millions of drops glittered and sparkled.

The monuments looked like so many ice-bergs, and shone so brightly it pained the eye to behold them.

Just before reaching this sacred and silent place, they passed a large building, in front of which stood a party of gay young persons just starting for their homes, having spent the night in mirth and festivity. Wrapped in cloaks, hoods, and furs, they waited till

the slowly moving ones had passed by, then bidding adieu they formed quite a different one moving in the opposite direction. There was one who had not gone. Edwin Terryl stood at his father's gate till the last vehicle had started; then closing the gate he hurried into the house, but soon returned wrapped in a cloak, and drawing on his gloves.

He was scarcely seventeen years of age, and had never been known to fail attending a burial when at home; so long had this been his habit, that when he was not present some one was sure to remark it.

He was a noble youth; his clear open brow ever attracted the notice of strangers. Those who knew him well, said he was sure to make his mark in the world. Having joined the gentlemen who were walking, in a few moments he had learned all they knew of him who was being carried to his last home.

Mattie had accepted the minister's offered hand, (who with Mr. Minor had approached the carriage,) and was led to the open grave, around which all were assembled. Finding that the other occupants of the carriage still delayed, Edwin approached to learn the cause, and there a scene met his gaze which remained with him for many days after. Mrs. Garland's bonnet had been removed, her head rested on Mrs. Minor's shoulder, and from the extreme pallor of her face, one might have supposed her spirit had already taken its flight; but from her parted lips there flowed a stream which proved that she still lived. Mr. Minor sat opposite, with his handkerchief, endeavoring to stop the flow.

"Mr. Minor," exclaimed Edwin, "take her to father's. Do not let her die here in the cold."

On hearing a strange voice, the closed eyes opened, and fixing on the youth an imploring gaze, she gasped, "My child! my child! where is she?"

"I will take care of the little girl ma'am, and bring her to you if you will only go to my father's."

Directing the driver where to go, Edwin closed the door, and walked towards the grave; taking the child's hand, he motioned to the minister to proceed, and observing her wistful eyes watching the carriage, he stooped and whispered,

"Your mother is sick, I will take you to her in a few minutes."

Then folding his cloak around her, in silence stood while the service was being read. The first frozen clods had scarcely fallen on the coffin's lid, ere the sound was followed by a shriek so wild, that without waiting longer, he lifted the child in his arms and hurried away.

Who that has seen a loved father lowered into a dark and lonely grave, and listened to that awful sound, can fail to know what her feelings were?

Some might think she had less cause for mourning than many others have had when they remember what kind of a man Mr. Garland had been.

He was her father; she had been taught by her mother to respect him, notwithstanding his faults; and she loved him. When she saw him lying dead on the floor, placed in the coffin, and lowered in the grave, her little heart was rent, as would have been

the heart of any other child who had loved, and lost a different father.

Edwin had to wait only a few moments at the gate for his father's buggy, as Mr. Minor had stopped there long enough to request its being sent. He drove rapidly home, but on learning that Mr. Minor had carried Mrs. Garland to his own house, he hurried on, fearing they might be too late.

Mr. Minor and a physician were standing in the hall. Approaching them with his burden, he asked how her mother was.

In an under tone Dr. Laws replied, "we fear it will be over with her soon."

Mrs. Minor and mammy were watching quietly by the sufferer. No sooner did her eyes fall on her child, than placing one hand on her head, and enclosing her in the other arm, she faltered: "I feel that she will not be left entirely alone;" then extending her hands, which was grasped by Edwin, she said; "You will be her friend."

"To thank you, kind youth, I cannot, but heaven will reward you for that promise."

For near an hour the silence of death reigned, broken only by the heavy breathings of mother and child, who lay clasped in each other's arms. One was the deep sleep caused from exhausted nature, which such sleep alone can restore; the other was produced from extreme physical debility and opiates combined. On waking from this unnatural slumber the sufferer said:

Mr. Minor when *it is over*, write to my brother, Mr. William Nichol, in —, Georgia, *tell him all!* I leave

my child with you who have promised to be her friends, but should my brother and his wife urge their claims, and you do give her up, ask them never to speak disrespectfully of her father in her presence. Don't waken her, it would do no good,—farewell kind people—again she coughed—and ere that stream had ceased to flow that gentle spirit had wended its way from earth. It had scarcely gone when the child awoke, and seemed to know that she was an orphan indeed.

Raising her tenderly, Edwin followed Mrs. Minor to her own room, and, placing her on the divan, sat beside her; holding her close to his side, he said: "Mattie, I saw my mother die when I was little, like you, but you have good friends left."

An hour afterwards, when Mrs. Minor returned, she lay sleeping while Edwin sat watching her. "Is she not a beautiful child? You will keep her Mrs. Minor, will you not?"

"She is certainly very beautiful, Edwin; and so far as I know, we will keep her: I hope at least we may be allowed to do so."

"If you do, may I not help you raise her?" he asked with boyish innocence.

"You, Edwin! how could you?"

"I mean what I say! I promised her mother I would be her friend, and that is poor friendship that only wishes one well."

"Well! we will talk about that some other time!" for the boy had spoken a truth not easily controverted, and there were other claims on her time, but

though she refused to continue the subject then, his words had surprised her, and were not forgotten.

Edwin related to his father all he had witnessed on going home, and then returned to the house of mourning. That night, for the first time in his life, he watched by a lifeless corpse. As during that solemn night Mr. Minor, the man of experience, and Edwin Terryl, a mere youth, sat together; they conversed of life, death and eternity; and Edwin expressed his regret at having done so little good in the world, and his desire to do more.

His father was a wealthy man, called by some a selfish one, by others a miser, but to *his* boy, as he always called him, he was liberal. Having been for years the child's only parent, he had reared him tenderly, exacting perfect obedience from him, yet never failing to gratify any reasonable wish.

Fortunately he had never been disposed to take advantage of this indulgence. Mr. Minor knew all this, and when Edwin asked permission to assist in defraying Mrs. Garland's funeral expenses, perceiving in the boy a real desire to do good, the request was granted. This proved the first of many charitable acts, which caused him, ere he had grown old, to be known as one of the most benevolent men in the county where he lived.

A larger procession than had left the little brown house, moved the next day to the same place, and the husband and wife were laid side by side.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the last night of the old year! The day had been a terrible one! Old Winter had been as busy in Georgia as in Alabama, and still traces of his footsteps were to be seen. The wind blew fiercely, and the year then being numbered with the dead, was howling and moaning its own funeral dirge.

In the same room where we left Mr. Nichol, he was again to be found, not writing a letter to his much loved sister, but reading one he had received from a stranger, in reference to her sufferings, death, and burial.

Unenviable, indeed, were the feelings of that brother, as he sat alone, surrounded by every luxury that wealth could provide, and read the story it contained.

Though Mr. Minor had written as delicately as possible, and said as little of what he had done for her, the fact could not be disguised that but for timely assistance his sister must have starved or frozen to death.

"Before him glided phantom forms,
Like fancies in a dream;
Or mist-shapes, that, at even-tide,
Sail down upon a stream.

"'Twas sadness rested on his heart,
And on his spirit's wing,
As o'er the track, he wandered back,
To life's unclouded spring."

In fancy he was once again a child, and scenes of that happy childhood were passing before him, in every one of which his fair-haired, blue-eyed sister had taken part.

As so many spectres of the long-gone past, appeared the cheerful faces and loving words of their parents, as they watched, or joined in, their childish sports.

Then appeared the death-bed scene of his father. Again he listened to his dying words: "William, I will soon be called away; be a dutiful son to your mother, and, to your little sister, a brother and father in one!" He remembered the lonely hearth, the saddened faces, after that first great sorrow, and his own efforts to fulfill the promise he had made.

The scene changes! The shadows of that grief have grown fainter. Cheerfulness has begun to resume her sway, and again the pride was felt he had in his sister's charms. He re-visits scenes of gayety and amusement where she was the admired of all. Her features rose distinctly before him; even the shades of color, as he had often seen them come and go.

Her merry laugh, and rich, melodious voice, were heard, and in fancy he stood by her side and joined in the songs she loved, as of yore. Those moments were to him,

"A union of the present hour
With *happy* by-gone time;
They were *all*, when life and hope were o'er,
To tell that they had been!"

Another turn of the mental kaleidoscope, and a cloud

obscures the sky of the past. He remembered one evening, when his sister, having remained longer than usual at school, he walked to meet her. Before reaching the academy, he learned that she had left town in a buggy, driven by Joe Garland. Her association with this man had been their only cause of disagreement; and, a few days before, the first words of disrespect their mother had ever listened to from her daughter, had been spoken, when she avowed her intention to marry him at all hazards. The fact that she had, doubtless, carried her threat into execution, was to him a severe trial; but a far greater one awaited him—that of breaking the news to his mother!

Not many weeks elapsed (during which time she never left her bed) till he listened to her last words! And now, as he sat alone, on that winter's night, through the long vista of years which had intervened, his mental mirror reflected anew that scene, and the words were heard again:

"William, tell her she is forgiven; and my dying prayer is that she may never suffer as she has caused me to do! And, my son, let this thought comfort you through life—you never caused your mother one hour's sorrow!"

Once again he travels in foreign lands, meets his friend, returns to America, and seeks that sister whose pale face now rises before him as when he saw it last.

He returns home. The circumstances of his marriage are reviewed. The scale again drops from his eyes in regard to the woman he had made his wife, and the anguish he then felt is suffered anew. Was

it not in connection with the idol of his youth she made her true self known? All these scenes are from memory and life-like!

Then imagination pictured one more vivid than them all. As he views the hovel in which his brother-in-law lay dead—the lonely walk of that fatherless child—the degree of degradation to which his sister had been reduced, almost to starvation; and, after death, she had been buried by charity, while he abounded in wealth, a portion of which was daily being lavished upon those who cared little if anything for him! Even then, preparations were going on for a festival in honor of Rosa Lenier's birthday, which would be celebrated the next night.

The clock in the corner, to whose sounds he had listened since childhood, slowly chimed the hour of twelve. The old year had gone out with a howl of despair! the new one was making his entrance with a stiff and freezing air.

So completely had this man of sorrow been absorbed in retrospection, he was unmindful how low the fire had burned, or how cold the room was. There he sat, his head resting on one hand, while the other held the open letter. Just before the clock struck one, his reverie was disturbed by the sound of rolling wheels.

Soon merry voices were heard in the hall, as Mrs. Nichol insisted on the gentleman who had accompanied them, coming in to the fire.

He arose, and from the pile of wood and box of pine near by, soon made a cheerful blaze, but this had

not been done a sufficient length of time to make the room comfortable, when his wife entered, and in a gay, boisterous tone, began commenting on the party.

Not finding her husband inclined to converse, she began,

"What on earth have you been doing sitting up till this time of night, and the room cold as the grave? Only to think of spending an evening so delightfully from home, and then coming to a frozen house is bad enough, but to a frozen husband is worse. I'll have John well whipped for this piece of work. I declare this room will hardly get warm again in time for Rosa's party!"

All this was so little in unison with her husband's feelings, he did not attempt to speak. She was not to be outdone, however, and continued:

"Really Mr. Nichol you look as if you had been to a funeral, instead of my having just returned from a party!"

Turning his sad face to her, on which even a casual observer might have seen traces of sorrow, he said:

"I feel as if I had been to a funeral. Mary, I have this evening received a letter from a *stranger* informing me of the death of my sister, and I really think, under the circumstances, it would be best to postpone Rosa's party! Read this letter, my daughter, and see if you do not agree with me."

"Postpone Rosa's party, indeed!" broke in his

wife. "If Mrs. Joe Garland had died here, I suppose it would be different."

"*Would to God she had!*" ejaculated her husband. "Then I would have the consolation of knowing that she was not buried by charity. I will go to Alabama very soon, and bring her daughter home with me, and do by her as I now wish I had done by her mother."

"A nice family to be sure you will have; that detestable wretch, Joe Garland, and his child."

"Mary! My sister's husband is dead, too; her child is an orphan, dependent on the charities of others, and surely you will not, you cannot, refuse her a home, and a mother's tender care. Remember you have children, and can have no lease of your life or of mine, nor can any parent tell what may be in store for their children."

"Well, go then! as your mind was already made up to do before you mentioned it to me, but she will soon find that this is my house, and I am its mistress."

With these words she left the room, followed by her daughter, who handed back the letter without having even glanced over it. Rosa was her mother's own child, and though her lips had not moved, her manner had spoken volumes.

Again alone, the heart-bruised man, with arms folded and eyes fixed on the floor, walked up and down the room, filled with contending emotions.

"What a horrible place is a home
Where religion doth never preside,
Where the heads never seem to remember
They were once bridegroom and bride."

Mr. Nichol, though a good man, was not a Christian, and in this, his darkest hour of sorrow, knew not where to look for comfort; so much the more was he to be pitied.

Having walked for more than an hour, he resumed his seat, and could not help contrasting his kindness to his wife's children, with the treatment he knew his sister's child would receive at her hands.

"Every cloud has its silver lining;" and now as he reflected that from Charles and Nettie, Mattie would receive kindness, and by them she would be loved, the thought was a balm to his wounded spirit.

New Year's morning had dawned; and when the servant came in, he was surprised to find his master sitting where he had left him the night before.

"John, tell Esther to have a very early breakfast, and you have my buggy at the gate by the time it is over."

Then, going up stairs, he entered the room where his wife lay sleeping, and commenced packing a few articles in a valise preparatory to making his journey.

Charles and Nettie, neither of whom had lost rest the previous night, were in the library, when he entered, ready to wish him a Happy New Year.

They had scarcely done so, when noticing his sad face and traveling garb, each one began, in kind tones, to inquire what was the matter with him, and where he was going.

Sitting down he took Nettie on his lap, and motioning Charles to stand near him, he began and told them the story of his youthful days, dwelling

on the love which in childhood had existed between himself and his little sister. It was a sad and beautiful story, and listened to with real interest; finally, he told of the letter and read it to them, and said he was going to bring their cousin home with him, and he hoped they would receive her as a sister.

Harder hearts than theirs might have been melted by the recital, and they not only promised to do as he wished, but begged him not to return without her.

While at breakfast, they were already, through their blinding tears, proposing plans for the future.

"Father," said Nettie, "Cousin Mattie can help us hunt eggs, can't she? And you will get her a new doll, won't you? But she can play with mine till you get hers!"

"Yes, Nettie and I will learn her to ride on horseback, like I did you; and sometimes father will let me take you both in the buggy to church—won't you, father?"

He agreed to all their childish plans, and felt thankful that there were those in his own family who sympathized with him: though they were children, their sympathy was not feigned.

"After I have started, Charles, you must take this letter, and read it to Uncle Ned and Nurse Nelly; they knew your aunt, and can tell you all about her."

CHAPTER VII.

ON learning from Nettie that her father was on the eve of starting to Alabama, Mrs. Nichol sent for him to come to their room, as she wished to speak with him.

In a moment this selfish woman saw, that if her husband did go, Rosa's party need not be postponed, and she must have more money to carry out her plans.

So pleasant was the voice in which she spoke to him of his niece, that Mr. Nichol could scarcely believe it was the same woman who had left him in such a rage the night before.

"I have been thinking about your sister's little girl," she said, "and thought I would suggest, that if you find her near a good school, and with really good people, to leave her there for one year at least, as there is not a good school in this neighborhood; you can pay her board, you know, and leave money for the tuition."

"I shall be governed altogether by circumstances in the course I pursue;" and after a pause he continued, "Mary, if I do bring her here, and it certainly is my duty to do so, I hope never to have cause to regret it—do you understand me?"

"Of course you expect to bring her here some day, but I was thinking it would be best to wait awhile," and seeing him about to start she added:

"Mr. Nichol, I would like to have some money before you do go."

Poor man! but for that remark, he might have gone off hoping, at least, that she was changing. Handing her his purse she took the amount desired; then, handing it back, smilingly thanked him, and, having received a Judas kiss, he descended the stairs, and was followed to the gate by the two children who awaited him below.

After sending many messages to their cousin Mattie, and again begging their father not to return without her, they bade him an affectionate farewell, and, when he was out of sight, they ran, hand in hand, to Uncle Ned's cabin to comply with their father's request.

There were two superannuated servants who had belonged to Mr. Nichol's grandfather, and now he was taking care of them for the service they had done. The old people wept as they listened to Mr. Minor's letter, and for several hours entertained them with scenes in which their father and Aunt Martha had been the actors.

Much longer would they have talked, but the children were sent for by their mother. No sooner had her husband started, than, finding the *coast clear*, to use her own words, she wrote several invitations, in addition to those already issued, and sent them to the city.

As Rosa was not yet grown, she at first intended only to have youths and maidens near her own age; but it was high time she was turning out, so she post-

poned the party one night, and invited young ladies and gentlemen of her acquaintance.

Several notes had to be written, to inform those already invited of the postponement; and it was to carry these Charles had been sent for.

"Where on earth did Mr. Nichol start for, so early this morning?" asked Mrs. Davies, a neighbor, who, according to promise, had come over to render assistance.

"Started on a wild-goose chase to Alabama!" was the answer.

"To Alabama this time of year! Pray, what for?"

"Father has gone to bring cousin Mattie to live with us," said Nettie.

"*Your cousin Mattie*, indeed! She is no cousin of yours; and never do you let me hear you call her so again! Do you hear and understand me?"

"Well, mother," chimed in Charles, "you told us we must call father, father; and if he is our father, aunt Martha was his sister and our aunt, and cousin Mattie is her child, and she is our cousin, I think."

"Go out of this room, sir! and take care that you don't trouble me again to-day."

"Who is it they are talking about? I did n't know Mr. Nichol had a niece."

"You know, Mrs. Davies, there are black sheep in every flock. It is just so in families. Don't you know this?"

"Yes, sometimes this is the case; but how do you know that this girl is one? have you ever seen her?"

"No! I know nothing of *her*; but her mother was

Mr. Nichol's only sister, and she must have been the black sheep in this flock, for there were but two in it; and I know that my husband is not, and so do you."

"This sister certainly was not as good as she might have been, or he would have talked more about her. I have never heard him speak of her more than twice since we were married!"

Her listener sat and quietly heard her, without interruption, apparently willing to hear all she had to say. Having paused a moment, for comment, Mrs. Nichol continued:

"Last night he heard of her death. She died in some out-of-the-way place; and some man, learning that she had a respectable brother, and what his name was, had her buried decently, and wrote to Mr. Nichol."

"Indeed! is it possible?" ejaculated her visitor, and then relapsed again into silence.

"Yes, it is true! and she left a child, and he has gone to bring her here. You know, Mrs. Davies, that 'evil communications corrupt good manners,' and I am opposed to her coming."

"Indeed, is it possible?"

"Yes, I am! My children have been well raised, and I am particular about whom they associate with, as all good mothers should be; you know that mothers can't be too particular."

"Very true; they cannot; but really, you surprise me greatly. Was your husband's sister's name Martha?"

"Yes! Why, did you ever know anything about her?"

"Not personally, but I have often heard Mr. Davies speak of her, and only a few days ago, he said he was strongly tempted to ask Mr. Nichol about her."

"It is very well he did not, for I tell you, he never speaks of her to me."

"Well, that is passing strange! Mr. Davies says she was one of the most beautiful and accomplished girls he ever knew; he says everybody loved her, and when she ran away with that man, the whole neighborhood grieved for her, and with her mother, who must have been as perfect a lady as ever lived. I know Mr. Davies will be so sorry to hear of it, when I tell him."

"Of course, you will tell Mr. Davies of her death, but do not mention the other facts to any one. You know if the poor child does come here I will have to do the best I can with her. And then these things, if they were to get out, might injure my children, and it may not be as bad after all as it has been represented."

They soon became interested in their employment, and the subject was not again resumed.

The next evening Oak Wood was illuminated, and Mrs. Nichol and Rosa, both elegantly attired, awaited the arrival of their guests. Charles had expressed it as his opinion, that it was not the proper time to have a party, but in obedience to his mother's command, he and Nettie had dressed to entertain the children.

The early part of the evening all gave themselves up to their entertainment, and then the library was assigned them, where they could amuse themselves.

Music being introduced, dancing commenced. The tables being rearranged, wines of various kinds were placed on them, and ere the night passed, many of them had partaken too freely.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT is there enhances our interest in persons, or strengthens our affection for them so much as witnessing their mental sufferings and bodily pain? To minister day after day to their wants, and watch night after night by their sick couch?

"How is she, mammy?"

This was asked by Mrs. Minor, as she entered the nursery, just as the sun was rising, holding a glass in her hand.

"She has been quiet, Miss Ida, ever since you went out, and I don't think her fever is quite as high as it was then."

Taking one of the child's hands, she replied, "You are right! then rousing the sleeper, she prevailed upon her to take the nauseous dose.

"Now, mammy, you lie down! I will watch by her till the doctor comes; it is almost time he was here."

"No, Miss Ida! I'm not sleepy. I was just thinking, suppose her Georgy uncle was to come, would you let him take her away?"

"I do not know! but one thing is very certain, it will be some time, if she lives, before it will be possible for her to travel; and, I almost hope he never will claim her; really, I should dislike to give her up."

Mammy had dozed off; and, lying down, holding one of the child's hands, Mrs. Minor fell asleep too.

Mr. Minor and the doctor, or Edwin Terryl, had, for three weeks, watched the little sufferer till twelve or one o'clock every night, then Mrs. Minor or mammy would watch till morning.

Her very great restlessness the night after her mother's funeral, had made them anxious, and had resulted in brain fever, brought on, the physician said, from violent cold, over-excitement, and loss of rest. For many days she had lain in a profound stupor, conscious of nothing, and now the crisis had arrived.

Mr. Minor went in and found all three sleeping. He had turned to leave the room when a movement arrested him. On approaching the bed, he saw the child's eyes were open, and fancied there was reason beaming from them. Taking her hand he asked how she felt.

"I am better, thank you!. Please give me some water."

So great was his joy at finding her conscious, without questioning the propriety of the act, he held a glass of water to her lips, from which she drank eagerly.

"Oh, it is so cool, and so good!" and, in a few moments more, she was sleeping sweetly, when he left her to obey the summons to breakfast.

Scarcely was he seated at the table when the door bell sounded, and a servant announced a stranger, who wished to see him. He went to the parlor, when a gentleman rising and meeting him, said:

"You are Mr. Minor, I presume."

"The same, sir."

"I am William Nichol, of Georgia, to whom you wrote, not many days since. My object in coming here, Mr. Minor——"

"I am most happy to form your acquaintance, Mr. Nichol! Let's walk in the dining-room to the fire;" and, as he spoke, he led the way, still holding Mr. Nichol by the hand.

"As I was going to say, sir, my object in coming here is to thank you for your unprecedented kindness to my sister and her family. Her child, I suppose, is still with you. The debt of gratitude I owe you can never be cancelled; for I am sure your kindness has been far greater than you admitted. Now will you be so kind as to make known to me every particular as to their situation when you found them. You need not fear to do so, for imagination has painted a picture *reality cannot surpass!*"

"I was about taking breakfast when you came in; will you not join me? and afterwards I will comply with your request."

Mr. Minor told of Mattie's illness, and the hope entertained that morning of her recovery. While they

were talking the door bell sounded and the physician was admitted. Having received an introduction to Mattie's uncle, and inquired for her, he went to learn whether the good report he had received was correct. He was met at the door by Edwin, who remarked, on being presented to Mr. Nichol:

"I am very glad to see you, sir, unless you have come to take our little girl away with you! We will not consent to that, will we, Mr. Minor?"

"According to Mr. Minor's account, my young friend, she is far too ill to be removed at present, and you will have to keep her awhile longer at least; but I hope you will not refuse to accept my unbounded thanks for your kind feelings to the child, nor object to my taking her home with me when a suitable time arrives!"

Dr. Jason returned in a few minutes, followed by Mrs. Minor, and confirming the account already given of the child, in a short time they all repaired to the nursery.

Approaching the bed, Mrs. Minor told Mattie her uncle had come all the way from Georgia to see her. The child opened her eyes and gave him her hand. She did not speak, but looked at him with eyes that reminded him of her mother. For some time all was still, then, as if weary with looking, the child closed her eyes and soon slept.

Mr. Nichol repeated the request already made, that Mr. Minor would tell him, without reserve, *all* he knew of his sister's last days. While he listened to the story, which was even then covered with a mantle of charity, the old man wept.

When we see the young weep, we are reminded of April showers, and know their tears will soon be followed by smiles. When we see a woman weep, we think it is natural to woman. When a strong man sheds tears, we know something more than usual has occurred, and are subdued by the sight; but to see an *old* man, whose head is frosted over, whose brow is wrinkled by care, whose form has lost its elasticity; to see such an one give way to a flood of weeping, is a humiliating scene indeed.

Several times the speaker ceased, but each time he was urged to go on, as Mr. Nichol wanted to know *all, all*.

Just as Mr. Minor had finished, the door opened, and Rev. Mr. Norton entered. He too greeted the stranger cordially, and expressed his pleasure at meeting him. While speaking with the minister, he recognized mammy, and having expressed to her, and again to them all, his gratitude, and he offered to give them a brief history of that sister's life, and, to interested listeners, he gave expression in words to the retrospection of a few nights before, save that portion which concerned his wife. That this sorrow had been his none could have told.

The morning had well nigh passed, and still the merchant was away from his store; the physician from his patients; the minister from his charge. Edwin felt no need of sleep, nor did Mrs. Minor, or mammy, feel as if they had been up for several hours.

Having finished the sad recital, Mr. Nichol requested Mr. Minor and Edwin to accompany him to the sacred spot where they reposed. When it was

reached, he begged that they would allow him to refund all they had expended, and in a measure, rid himself of the terrible thought that they had been buried by charity. He spent several days with these kind persons; during which time the child continued to improve, and left them, feeling satisfied that she would find a more pleasant home in the house of a stranger than in his own.

"We are spirits clad in veils,
Man by man was never seen;
All our deep communing fails
To remove the shadowy screen."

On reaching home, the children were deeply grieved at his returning alone. His wife regretted very much the child's illness, but said she was glad he agreed with her in thinking it best to leave her in Alabama.

Not many days elapsed before a letter came, telling of her rapid recovery. A regular correspondence was kept up between Mr. Nichol and Mrs. Minor until Mattie was sufficiently restored to reply to her uncle's letters.

Her education had in no wise been neglected, and she was well advanced for one of her age.

Mrs. Garland had received an inheritance of which no change of fortune can deprive us, a liberal education; and fearing she would never be able to educate her child, had taken great pains to instruct her when quite young in the primary studies; and "the lady," to use mammy's expression, which had

been manifest in the mother, even when steeped in poverty's vale, was inherent in the child.

Charles, with his father's consent, replied to one of his cousin's letters, and soon all that passed between the families was through their childish correspondence.

Though Mrs. Nichol was compelled to admit that she wrote well for her age, she was opposed to her letters being replied to by Charles, for it was her influence over him she had dreaded rather than over his sister.

CHAPTER IX.

NEARLY two years had passed, and yet Mattie remained in Alabama; every day had only endeared her more to her kind friends.

Her foster parents viewed her with pride; Lelia and Annie Minor loved her as an own sister, and little Ida would leave even mammy when sister Mattie called her. She had been at school for eighteen months, and her teachers were being amply rewarded for their labor by the progress she was making.

She had early manifested a talent for music, and, as a child, possessed a voice of which many older girls might have been proud. Many were the evenings spent by her mamma and herself singing together for

the entertainment of the family. Mrs. Minor had a sweet bird-like voice; Mattie's was loud and clear, and they harmonized well.

Edwin Terryl had been good as his resolution, and now felt a real pleasure in giving, to which he might have remained a stranger but for the circumstance which made him acquainted with "Little Mattie," as he always called her. Many prayers had ascended from the poor for the kind lady and good boy—through whose assistance they had been enabled to spend the winter more comfortably than had been their wont.

At Edwin's request, mammy had often taken the children to see his father, and Mr. Terryl had already learned to love his *boy's pets*, as he called them.

The old man was determined that his boy should be a traveler as well as an educated man, and had resolved to send him to Germany to complete his course; then he was to spend a year in traveling over the Continent.

The time of his departure drew near; he had gone to Minor Place to announce the fact that his father had actually consented to accept Mrs. Minor's special and urgent invitation to *his* dining, as the one she was to give the next day was called.

When he had gone, Mrs. Minor noticed that her husband appeared unusually serious, and begged to know the cause.

"I was just wondering, Ida, what you will say when you learn what I have done to-day."

"Let me hear what it is, and you will soon know,"

was the smiling reply, never dreaming that he could have done anything at which she might not smile.

"Well, what would you think if I were to tell you that I have taken John Ketchum as my partner?"

"I should think you had acted unwisely, and hope you are only jesting," was the serious reply.

"I am sorry such is your opinion, for I am not jesting! Let me explain it to you. He has clerked for me nearly twelve years, during which time he has saved several thousand dollars, and this evening he told me that he was thinking of opening a store of his own.

"He is a splendid book-keeper; indeed, I do not know his superior; he is a popular salesman, and I believe him to be an *honest man*! indeed, I could not see how I could get on very well without him."

He waited for his wife's comment, but perceiving she was not disposed to make any, continued:

"When he spoke of opening a store of his own, I asked how he would like to take an interest in mine; he said he would much prefer to do so."

"It is done, Walter, and I hope may turn out well."

"I am sorry I acted so hastily, since you do not approve of it; for I never like to take any step which will not meet with your approbation; but, as you say, it is done."

"What are the terms of the partnership, Walter? have you any objection to my hearing?"

"Of course not! It is not an equal partnership; he places his funds in the treasury, and receives one-

fourth of the profits. The bargain was closed in a few minutes after the proposition was made, and I do not see how I can honorably retract."

"Since it has been done, and cannot be honorably undone, it is policy to make the best of it. I hope you may never have cause to regret it; and it was having heard you speak of how very dissipated he was before you employed him, that caused me to speak as I did."

"Yes! 'Tis true he was dissipated, but he is a reformed man, and often when we have been alone he has expressed his gratitude to me for giving him employment, and more than once has remarked, 'If ever I am worth anything, Walter, you will deserve the credit.'"

During this conversation, mammy had sat with little Ida in her arms, moving her back and forth; the child finally slept, and she sat with her forefinger pressed on her upper lip, looking intently in the fire; at length, looking up, she said,

"Mars Walter, suppose you should die, whose hands would your papers fall in?"

"His, of course, mammy! The law resigns all the business of a firm into the hands of a surviving partner—but why did you ask such a question? You are not going to prophesy my death because I have a partner, are you?"

"No, sir! But I was thinking I would hate for Mr. Ketchum to be my *reviving* partner."

"*Surviving*, mammy, that means the one who lives the longest."

"Mars Walter, I don't always call the words proper, I know, but I know what they mean, and its best to look at both sides of anything before it goes too far."

"Yes; that's all very true, mammy."

"Suppose you was to die, would he have to pay anything if he did not settle it right?"

"If I should die my business could not fall into the hands of any man who would do a better part by my family; for, I tell you both, I believe John to be an *honest man*."

"I hope you are not mistaken, Mars Walter, but haven't you heard Mr. Norman say, before he died, he believed old Mr. Simon was an honest man? Miss Norman was left the richest widow in the State. I thought of it this evening, when Miss Ida sent me there with a loaf of bread and turkey for their dinner, to-morrow, and saw Miss Sallie kindlin' the fire to get supper."

"Oh, mammy, don't paint such a picture as that for my future, if you please!"

"Well, Miss Ida, I only hopes Mars Walter will never find out he's made shoes out of sole leather this time."

"How is that, mammy? You will have to explain."

"You know, Mars Walter, some leather makes good soles; but you make uppers of it, and the shoes will cramp your feet so you can't walk! And it's just so with colored people; some of 'em work first-rate under an overseer, but you make drivers of them,

and there aint another one on the plantation can work to please 'em."

"But, mammy, that's leather and negroes, and has nothing to do with the case in point. But let's talk about something else," for he observed how sad his wife looked.

Edwin's dinner party passed pleasantly. His father was there and occupied the seat of honor. The dining seemed to have been given to the father rather than the son; such was the marked deference shown him by all, and especially the young persons present.

He was fond of youthful society, and often enjoyed it at his own house. He never interfered with the pleasure of his young friends, but seemed to take pleasure in increasing it. It was a rare thing to see him away from home.

Mr. Ketchum was there, too. Though Mrs. Minor said not a word at which he could be offended, for such was not her nature, she did not offer him her congratulations. And this may have been the reason, let the case have been what it may, they each felt that the freedom with which they had ever exchanged sentiments was at an end.

CHAPTER X.

"PAPA, are you not going to the examination to-day?"

"I am very anxious to do so, my daughter, and will if it is possible; but I am compelled to see a gentleman on business this morning, and, unless I can find him very early, will have to meet him during school hours."

"Did you not think of that when you made the engagement, Walter?"

"I was not in the store, yesterday, when he called, and he left word he would call again at ten this morning."

"I hope you can see him earlier; it will be such a disappointment to the children if you do not go; especially to Mattie, who feels so keenly her uncle and cousin failing to arrive before now!"

"Well, I will go now and see if I can find the gentleman."

"Who is he? Does he not live in town?"

"No! his name is Freeman; he belongs to the firm of Greene, Freeman & Company. You have often heard me speak of them. I have traded with them ever since I have been merchandising, and have never yet suffered the accounts of one year to run on to the next, and I have several thousand dollars to pay him now. At any rate, you come for me, and, if I have not seen him, John Ketchum can settle with him."

"No, Walter; I would rather the girls were disappointed! Transact your own business, if it does require a sacrifice of pleasure."

When they were alone, he said, "Ida, is it possible you have yet to learn to have confidence in John? We have been partners now nearly five years, and I have seen nothing amiss in him. Even should mammy's prophecy come true, my books have been so correctly kept, it would be next to impossible for him to injure you or the children. As I have said before, I believe him to be an *honest man*, and you have confidence in my judgment."

"Forgive me, Walter! it is the first time since you told me of the partnership that I have expressed my opinion of him, but I have never felt since then that he is the friend you believe him to be. Go and see Mr. Freeman, if you can; I will come by for you, and let this conversation be as though it had never taken place. We will pray that you may long be spared over your family!"

At the hour appointed for visitors to attend the examination, Mrs. Minor was about to start; on opening the door she observed a strange carriage stop in front of the gate.

From it there sprang a young man who offered his hand to an older one, whom she recognized as Mr. Nichol, and supposed the youth to be Charles Lenier.

Her cordial welcome was not feigned; then, ringing for a servant, hurried them off to a room to re-arrange their toilets, assigning, as a reason, her fear that they would be too late. She left them, saying she

would send Mr. Minor to accompany them to the academy.

After making known to her husband the fact of their arrival, and saying she would send the carriage back to him, she paused; her wistful look was understood.

"Mr. Freeman is in the store now, and he will have finished by the time the carriage returns," was the reply.

The large school-room was arranged, as most of them are, with a platform on either end, on which, during public exercises, the teachers and scholars sat facing each other, while the audience occupied the seats usually occupied by the scholars.

The girls were arranged so that all could be seen at a glance; the smaller ones in front, and larger ones farther back.

It was a sultry July day, and the scene presented by them, arrayed as they were in white, with sashes of different colors, by which the various classes might be distinguished, was indeed a refreshing one!

Lelia's class was being examined, and she was answering, when her father and his guests arrived. The room was crowded, and they stood on the verandah, near an open window, not far from the teacher's platform. It was natural that he should point out Lelia to them; and so much were they interested in her recitation that neither asked, while it was going on, which, of all that group, was Mattie.

"Duet, by Misses Garland and Duval!" announced the President.

"There is your cousin, now," said Mr. Minor to Charles, who eagerly watched the girls as they came forward and took their places at the instrument.

"Which one do you mean?" But ere the question was answered such a sound of full rich melody filled the room, as Mattie began the song, which had been written and set to music for the occasion, that no other was heard.

It was as if suddenly a tuneful breeze had stolen on the ear, and floated and swelled full of sweet, rich harmonies. Then she was joined, by her companion, with the murmuring, dying notes, that fall soft as snow on the ear!

Again Mattie's rose "with a passionate strain that, deeply going, refines the soul it trembles through!"

The listeners were silent ones. No word was spoken till the last note had died away; then, turning to Mr. Minor, Mr. Nichol said, with evident feeling:

"'Tis she that mingles, in one sweet measure,
The past, the present, the future, with pleasure;
And memory links the tone that is gone
With the blissful note that still flies on!"

Charles seemed not to understand his father's quotation, if indeed he heard it, for, turning to him, he said:

"I do not think Miss Duval beautiful, but such a voice I never heard! I shall ask cousin Mattie for an introduction as soon as I have spoken to her."

"She is Mattie's most intimate friend, and she will doubtless grant your request with pleasure," observing his mistake without correcting it.

Mr. Nichol felt sure that the voice which had so much affected him could be no other than Mattie's; he fixed an inquiring glance on Mr. Minor; but, observing a peculiar smile on his face, humored the mistake, by saying:

"Why, Charles, this is too bad! You have been in love with your cousin's letters, ever so long, and nothing would do but you must come to her examination, and lo! without giving her a passing thought, you fall in love with her friend."

"Not with her friend's face, father, but her voice! Did you ever hear such an one before?"

The examination of another class began, and, unwilling to acknowledge he had heard just such an one, Mr. Nichol gave his undivided attention to the young ladies.

The regular exercises for the morning being over, Mr. Williams requested Miss Lelia Minor to advance to the front of the rostrum.

This request was unexpected to Lelia, and she hesitated until it was repeated. Her confusion was so evident that, turning to where her father stood, he asked him to go and stand up with her.

This was a greater surprise, and all wondered what he would request next, as Mr. Minor, with much difficulty, made his way to where his daughter stood, and took her trembling hand.

This re-assured her, in some measure, for she felt that all eyes would be directed to him rather than herself, and it was touching to witness the glances

exchanged between father and daughter, as if each would learn of the other what it all meant.

Quiet being restored, Mr. Williams remarked "Miss Lelia has been called up before you without warning. She has naturally the greatest mathematical talent I have ever known any one to possess, and I think such talents should be made known."

Poor Lelia! it was well her father stood so near, for the ordeal she was to pass through utterly discomposed her.

"I now request any two gentlemen in the room, who feel disposed to do so, to question her on mental arithmetic."

She looked up imploringly to her father's face; he begged her for his sake to compose herself, and answer promptly.

When Mr. Pritchard, the president of a large male academy, mounted the teachers' rostrum, Mr. Minor stooped, and spoke a few words to Lelia, then holding her hand more firmly, waited in as much excitement as she did for the first question.

"How much, Miss Lelia, is twice sixteen?" With a smile, which said, "how simple," she quickly replied, "Thirty-two."

"Twice thirty-two?" "Sixty-four."

"Twice sixty-four?" "One hundred and twenty-eight."

"Four times one hundred and twenty-eight?"

"Five hundred and twelve."

Now the interest increased, and several persons with pencils and paper were endeavoring to keep

pace with Lelia, who, having forgotten the presence of all save her querist and her father, with the same rapidity as at first, replied to the next question. "Six times five hundred and twelve?" "Three thousand and seventy-two."

"Five times that amount, Miss Lelia?"

"What amount, Sir?"

At this, all smiled, and Professor Smith, of the State University, repeated the amount, when she quickly answered, "Fifteen thousand three hundred and sixty."

The questioner declaring himself satisfied resumed his seat, when Professor Smith remarked, he would like to give her an example of a different nature. Mr. Williams having consented, he asked,

"Miss Lelia, how many shingles will it take to cover a roof one hundred and eighty-five feet in length, and fifty-four in breadth?"

"Please give the height of the roof from the edge, sir?" asked Mr. Minor.

"Thirty-two feet," was the reply.

"And how many shingles allowed to cover one foot square?"

"Give the length and form, meaning from the top to the edge."

"Give the example again!" called out some one in the room; but before it could be done Lelia replied,

"Two hundred and sixty-six thousand and four hundred."

"I am satisfied sir," said the Professor, bowing to

Mr. Williams, "and will resign my claim to any one else;" then looking at Mr. Minor, added:

"Accept my congratulations, sir! You have a right to feel proud of the talents of your daughter."

Mr. Minor bowed, and, with Mr. Williams' consent, led Lelia to her seat. As she took it he imprinted a kiss of approval on her forehead. Long and loud bursts of applause greeted him, as he resumed his place by the window. Then came the duet Charles had waited so patiently for, which, according to the programme, was to close the exercises.

Though almost forgotten during the excitement of the previous half hour, it was remembered as Mattie took her place at the instrument, and Ella by her side.

More than ever was he spell-bound, as the same melodious voice fell on his ear. He never thought of watching the performers, or he must have found out his mistake; but closing his eyes, he gave himself up to the delightful emotions with which the music filled him.

He was roused from his reverie by the chorus, which was swelled by innumerable voices, for in it the entire school joined, yet far above them all might be distinguished the one which charmed him, and was listened to with feelings hitherto unknown to him.

The song finished, Mr. Williams announced a short recess, during which all present were invited to partake of refreshments out in the grove.

Mr. Minor sought Mattie, and told her of the arrivals, and of the mistake Charles had made in regard to her voice.

It was a capital joke, and she was capable of enjoying one at her own expense.

After giving and receiving from her uncle an affectionate greeting, she turned to the young man, and said, in a merry voice :

"And this is cousin Charlie! we are not strangers to each other, are we? Oh! I am so glad you came in time for the morning's exercises. Did not Lelia do splendidly? and did not Ella sing exquisitely?"

"I certainly never heard such a voice before! Father says I have fallen in love with her already! Will you not manage to present me to her?"

"Mattie, I really believe you are more rejoiced to see Charles than myself. Now I claim the privilege of being escorted by you."

Taking his arm she led the way, followed by Charles and Lelia; behind them started Mr. and Mrs. Minor, but they had so many congratulations offered them in regard to both the girls, it was some time before they rejoined them.

Mattie had found Mr. Williams, and presented her uncle and cousin to him as well as to other friends, and now all laughed at Mr. Minor turning "School-boy" again.

A beautiful scene indeed was the one under the trees; two long tables with their snow-white covers, on which were large cakes interspersed between baskets filled with red and yellow peaches, bowls of raspberries and strawberries, and pitchers of golden cream, large stands of apples, many of which were

dissected ere the feast was over, for the seed they contained.

Nor would we slight the melons of various kinds, which abounded in profusion.

In the centre, and nearly the entire length of each table, there had been erected a low arbor of wire, on which had been woven grape vines; from under the leaves hung large bunches of grapes, from the darkest purple to the translucent white, which had been rarely surpassed for beauty, richness and sweetness.

Some such scene must have been in the mind of Moore, when he wrote his "Feast of Roses."

When the eye turned from the tables to the fair ones wandering there, it rested, if possible, on a more pleasing picture.

Though a July day, it presented a spring scene. Was it not truly their spring-time, and a day never to be forgotten?

"The first! the first! ah! naught like it
Our after years can bring;
For summer hath no flowers so sweet
As those of early spring."

As our story has nothing to do with any member of the senior class, we will leave its exercises to the reader's imagination!

CHAPTER XI.

"OH, Ella! I have such a good joke to tell you; but not now. Did you see my new Georgia cousin to-day? I am going to bring him to see you to-morrow, and will tell you all about it then."

Mrs. Minor had gone home, accompanied by her visitors. Charles was loud in his praises of Miss Duval, or rather her voice. All joined him by saying that the young lady, who had so fascinated him, did sing beautifully.

Mr. Nichol had asked to see mammy, who entered the room, dropped a courtesy, and stood at a respectful distance. He approached and shook her hand cordially, remarking:

"Well, mammy, we will not be so ceremonious; allow me to present my son, Mr. Charles Lenier, and to tell you that he is already desperately in love with his cousin Mattie."

"Oh, no! mammy, father is mistaken; I was half-way in love with Cousin Mattie till this morning; but am not now! and as she said to me, 'We are not strangers—are we?' I mean we have been sending messages to each other long enough to feel well acquainted—don't you think so?" then looking at her steadily for a few minutes, said:

"Well, really, mammy you are a better looking old lady than I expected to see. Can you say the same of me?"

"Charles, I am afraid you are a ruder boy than my friends expected to see!"

"Father, I am only trying to make a friend of mammy, so that for one she will not oppose Cousin Mattie's going home with us." Then, turning to Mrs. Minor, asked "if she knew that was the principal object of their visit?"

"No!" was her reply, "but I think there are others to be consulted besides mammy and myself."

"Well, here they all are, and let's talk it over now," for, while he spoke, Mr. Minor and the girls entered the room.

"Now, papa, we are at home; what is it?"

"Wait a few moments and you shall see."

Unwrapping the bundle he held, he handed to Lelia a beautifully illustrated copy of Shakespeare, as a reward for having answered so promptly, and to Mattie a copy of Byron's Works, elegantly bound.

Having received a kiss from each of them, he gave himself up to the task of entertaining Mr. Nichol, while Mattie was learning from Charles about his mother and sisters.

He said Nettie was waiting at home for her, as they had promised not to return without her. His mother and sister Rosa were in New York, where they would remain for some weeks longer.

The subject of her going home with them having thus been introduced, it was freely discussed, and Mr. and Mrs. Minor consented, provided they would promise that she should positively return in time for

the fall session; as she had but one more year to study, they did not wish her to lose that one.

This having been agreed upon, Mattie began expatiating largely upon the many and very rare virtues of her friend Ella Duval.

"Oh, I am so glad you are prepared to like her; I tell you she is one of the very best, prettiest and smartest girls I ever knew; and even if she did not play and sing so sweetly, she has attractions enough! Would you object to calling on her this evening?"

"There is nothing I would object less to doing, I assure you. Then I can hear her sing again."

"No; not at her own house! She has no piano, but we will bring her home with us; then we will play and sing for you till you ask us to stop."

"I am not sure but I might ask you to do so, (you will pardon, I hope,) but I know she never could weary me."

* * * * *

"O, Ella, I have come to tell you something; and you must promise not to tell him any better—say, will you?"

"Not to tell whom? I don't know who it is I am not to undeceive, nor what it is about?"

"Sure enough you don't know. It is rich, I assure you; Cousin Charlie is in the parlor with your mother, but I must tell you now. He thinks you have the most charmingly exquisite voice he ever listened to, and if you will only do as I tell you we can have such rare fun."

"But Mattie I cannot do this; in the first place it

would be claiming that which belongs to you, and it would be practicing a gross deception; besides, I don't see how you could carry such a thing out."

"Well, never you mind that! Come on, and don't you contradict him; you did sing yesterday, you know. Let me arrange it; promise me that! Will you?"

"Well, well! if you are willing to have fun, as you call it, at your own expense, I am willing."

Mattie asked Mrs. Duval's permission for Ellen to accompany them home, and, having made a short visit, insisted on her getting her hat, so they might take a ride first.

Charles had been agreeably entertained, and, by the time they reached Minor Place, they were mutually pleased with each other. They had not been there long when he raised the instrument, and asked if she would not favor them with at least one song.

"No! not till after supper, Cousin Charlie; and, if you are not very obedient, we will have no music then!"

"Of course I will obey implicitly; but I hope supper is not very far off!"

In due time Mattie invited her uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Minor and Lelia, to witness a performance which she promised them would be worth seeing, as well as hearing; and they all followed her to the parlor, whither Charles and Ella had gone.

"Cousin Charlie has promised implicit obedience. Perhaps you do not know that all music affords greater pleasure if we do not see the performer. Now, Order

the first: 'Go to the back parlor, and carry the lamp with you!'"

"Most willingly would I obey, but I cannot move the chandelier alone!"

"Ah, well; I must have thought we were in the dining-room, that is a fact. Then you must go and sit where you cannot see the piano."

"I don't care about seeing it, and why may I not sit in here with my back to it? Or I am willing to be blindfolded just as long as Miss Duval will sing!"

Ella said that was a capital idea!

Having submitted to having his eyes bound up, he promised not to make any effort to see.

"Well, then, Ella, if you are ready, and all will sit quietly down, the performance will begin."

Mattie took her seat at the instrument, and they sang the first song together; then Ella, moving some distance from her, became an attentive listener. One song after another was given, and, motioning to her friend, and resigning her place, she went to her cousin and asked if Ella might not rest awhile, for she must be tired.

After much persuasion he consented, and, when the bandage was removed, he approached the piano where Ella sat, and, thanking her, declared he was not weary in the least, and reminded her that she had not complied with her promise.

"Now, Cousin Charlie, while Ella is resting her poor throat, will you not ask me to favor you awhile?"

"No, Cousin Mattie, I will listen to you when we get home; for, if you must have my opinion, your

voice did not add to the duets yesterday, and pardon me if I say the song you joined in to-night was completely spoiled!"

"Complimentary, I declare! Now remember, whenever you want really to enjoy music, keep your eyes closed."

The farce was complete, and enjoyed by none more than Ella, who was willing to continue the deception.

The next day being Sunday, Mr. Nichol and Charles accompanied the family, first to Sunday-school, where Mr. and Mrs. Minor were teachers, and then to church. After the services were over, Mrs. Minor invited Mr. Norton home with them, and the re-union was a pleasant one.

Monday morning Charles and Mattie went again to see Ella, and he expressed his regret at not hearing her sing; but she declared her inability to do so without an accompaniment: however, an hour or more passed pleasantly.

"Cousin Mattie, you were right; Miss Ella does possess other attractions. If she had a piano I never would have found out how intelligent she is!"

"I knew you would agree with me, and I am so glad you do like her!"

Besides Mattie's foster-parents most of the servants had assembled to bid her good bye. It was the first time she had ever left home, for more than a day or two, and all disliked to have her go.

Mammy had an idea that her Georgy uncle and cousin intended to take her away for good, in spite of their promises to the contrary. Observing the sad-

ness on every face, Charles endeavored to dispel it, as he offered her his hand, by saying :

"Well, mammy, I am going to leave my interest in your hands, for I have learned the extent of your influence ; and, though you are black, I believe——"

"Thank you for the compliment ! but Mars Walter and Miss Ida can testify that my principles are white."

"Don't let us part enemies, mammy. I meant you were a lady of color ; and, as I was going on to say, 'if you will watch over my interest here, when I bring Cousin Mattie back I will bring Uncle Ned along to see you.'"

"If you do, I would like to know, Charles, what Aunt Nelly will say."

While all smiled at this pleasantry, he hurried Mattie into the coach ; a few moments more and they were out of sight.

At a request from Charles the driver halted at Mrs. Duval's gate, where Ella and her mother took leave of the travellers.

Charles talked so incessantly, and Mr. Nichol so cheerfully, that Mattie's tears were soon dried, and they had succeeded in diverting her thoughts from the home she was leaving to the one they were going to.

When the coach was exchanged for the cars, past and future were forgotten in the novelty of the present. She asked many questions, and made original comments on all she saw.

When they exchanged the cars for a steamboat the

waves made by its motion, and the many beautiful views they passed, gave continual food for thought.

By the time they reached the city, where the carriage was awaiting them, she was exhausted for want of sleep.

At Charles' suggestion, as she would have many opportunities of viewing the road they had yet to travel, she settled herself comfortably for sleeping.

She was roused late in the evening, just as they were entering a long avenue, and soon the carriage stopped in front of Oak Wood.

CHAPTER XII.

WE cannot give the reader a better description of how the first few days spent in her uncle's home passed, than by placing before them Mattie's first letter :

OAK WOOD, July, 18—.

MY MUCH-LOVED PARENTS :—The promise made before leaving you, to write as soon as we arrived here, would have been complied with, but uncle said he would announce our safe arrival. Supposing he told of our journey, I will begin where he left off.

Having slept most of the last day, when I awoke late in the evening my eyes rested on a beautiful

scene. The long avenue through which we passed may well give the place the name it bears; the oaks are very large, and almost meet overhead.

The hedges on either side are beautiful. The flower-yard is neatly laid out, and many flowers are in bloom.

Cousin Nettie is the dearest little creature I ever saw. She met me so kindly; I know we will be the very best of friends, for we love each other very much already, and, will you believe it, she made me sit at the head of the table. Just imagine me pouring out tea and coffee. At first I refused, but uncle said I looked so much like my own mother, and reminded him so much of the time when she lived here, and, though he almost wept, he seemed so happy, I complied with the request.

After supper, we went out on the front piazza and entertained Nettie with an account of our trip for near an hour, when uncle said he thought I ought to retire and rest, as he wished me to ride with him the next morning.

We separated for the night, and I soon found myself alone, for Nettie said if she stayed with me we would talk all night, and I would not be refreshed; but she might as well have done so—it was impossible for me to sleep.

I knew it was the same room my mother used to occupy, and I could but feel that her spirit hovered near and watched over me. As I lay and gazed on the clouds, made by the moon in passing along, and

the stars as they sparkled, the song you taught me came to my mind.

"If yon bright stars which gem the night,
Be each a blissful dwelling sphere,
Where kindred spirits reunite
Whom death hath torn asunder here.—
How sweet it were at once to die,
To leave this blighted orb afar,
Mist soul in soul to clear the sky,
And soar away from star to star."

The next morning Nettie had my breakfast brought to my room, and said her father was waiting for me to ride over the farm with him; but it was so warm by the time I went down, he postponed it till evening.

As we passed the cabins and fields where the negroes were working, they all bowed or courtesied. When we came to any of them who had known my mother, uncle would stop and tell them who I was. They would shake hands with me and say, "*How pretty she is, to be sure, and so much like Miss Martha.*"

After supper we went into the parlor; there stood my mother's harp and piano. On looking over the music I found some of the very songs she used to sing. When I tried them, to my surprise, uncle joined me. He does sing beautifully; one in particular, he sang all the way through—"Oft in the Stilly Night." Nettie was as much surprised as I was, for she had never heard him before. While we were singing the last verse, Cousin Charles came in; with him were two gentlemen—Mr. Marks and Dr. Lipscombe. Nettie says the Doctor has been in love with

cousin Rosa for more than a year. Cousin Charlie told them, when they complimented our music, "If they enjoyed that so much, he did not know what they would do, if they could hear one of my friends in Alabama."

They spent the night, and we all went to church yesterday; but my letter is already so long, I will tell you about that the next time I write.

Good-night, my dear parents; kiss Lelia and Ida for me. My next letter will be to Lelia. Tell mammy and all the servants *How-d'ye*, for me.

Your affectionate daughter,

MATTIE.

From this letter, it will be seen that Mattie bid fair to have a pleasant time in her uncle's home.

The next day they went to church in the country, where there were three sermons preached in succession, and everybody took their dinner; this was, indeed, a novelty to her. A temporary table being made, as many as wished placed their lunch upon it, while others spread theirs on the ground, and several groups were formed in this way. All enjoyed, not only the meal, but the many things to be heard and seen.

By no means the least attraction for those at Mount Carmel, that day, was the beautiful stranger with Mr. Nichol's family. Charles and Nettie, with much pleasure, introduced her to their associates, while Mr. Nichol, with pride, presented her to his older friends and acquaintances, most of whom remembered her

mother. Almost without exception the resemblance was commented upon, and several remarked on her extreme loveliness.

After several such remarks had been made in her hearing, Mr. Marks approached Charles, and, in a voice loud enough to be heard by Mattie, said:

"My friend! I would advise you to take your cousin home."

"Why?" asked Charles in astonishment.

"She may possibly survive it, but I think she has been told often enough for one day, that she is perfectly beautiful." Then turning to Mattie, continued,

"Miss Garland, yonder come Mr. and Mrs. Davies; make ready to thank them for their compliments."

Sure enough they only swelled the list of those who told how beautiful her mother was, and how much she was like her.

Mattie had been in such a state of excitement ever since leaving home, and had slept so little, she told her cousin, with his permission, she would take his friend's advice, as her head ached badly.

The following week, Mr. Nichol's house was thronged with visitors from the neighborhood, and her fame extended to the city, too, and though, but a school girl in Alabama, in Georgia, she was treated as a young lady.

Picnics, riding and fishing parties were much in vogue that summer, and, every few days, invitations to some such place, reached Oak Wood. Her uncle was ever ready to accompany the children, and Mat-

tie soon became accustomed to the pleasures of a country life.

About twice a week they went to aunt Nellie's cabin. "It really seemed like old times, the old people would say, to see old master so young and spry." "Just for the world like it was, when his mother and sister was there." His neighbors often jestingly threatened to report to Mrs. Nichol on her return.

Of Mattie's visit he might truly have said,

"She came an angel bright to me—
When hope and peace lay wrecked—
Upon Life's dark and stormy sea,
By sorrow and neglect,—
She filled my soul with tenderness,
And warmed my heart to Love."

The summer had passed delightfully, when Mattie received a joint letter from her foster-parents, reminding her that the fall session would soon commence, and advising her speedy return.

The reader will pardon them, if the many letters written by Mattie, giving a minute description of how her time was passing, roused within them a feeling of jealousy lest she should be weaned from her childhood's home, and her mind taken from study.

Could they have known that her presence there had caused her uncle to spend so many happy days, and that domestic peace was to him a stranger, they were far too unselfish to have hastened her return.

Though Mattie had enjoyed her visit so much, and she had learned to love her uncle and cousins so dear-

ly, she had not forgotten "the loved ones at home," and when this letter came, almost without a regret she resolved to return in a few days.

Nettie proposed that they should give a large party before she went away; this was seconded by Charles, and agreed to by their father, and as she must start the following Wednesday, in order to reach home a few days before the school opened, it was agreed to have the party on Tuesday night. This was on Friday the arrangement was made, and as Sunday would intervene, they would have to be very busy.

The girls worked night and day assisting the servants, and on one occasion when Mattie was going to the kitchen, the following words were overheard:

"I tell you what, it's might'ly to be hoped that missus wont come home afore this party comes off."

"Yes, indeed!" was the answer, "I've been scared every time there's been so much company here. She wouldn't know master, you think she would?"

Mattie wondered what it meant, but asked no questions. She remembered never once having heard her absence regretted by any of the family, and had only heard Dr. Lipscombe wish Rosa could join them in their round of gayety.

Though Charles and Nettie often mentioned their mother and sister, they never expressed any great desire for their return.

Preparations for the party went on. Invitations had been issued; Tuesday evening came. Charles, Dr. Lipscombe, and Mr. Marks (who had by this

time manifested a decided preference for Mattie) had decorated the parlor, hall, and library with flowers, and prepared the front windows for an illumination. Mr. Nichol was the general adviser and superintendent.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT an early hour, while the girls were yet arranging their toilets, the sound of approaching wheels was heard.

Charles, supposing it to be the first arrival of invited guests, went out to meet them, when, to his surprise, he was accosted by his mother:

"Well, Charles, what means this wonderful illumination?"

"In honor of your arrival, mother," was his quick reply.

"How did you know we would be here to-night?" asked Rosa.

"Did you never hear of a little bird that tells wonderful things, my charming sister! I hope neither you nor mother are too much fatigued to welcome and enjoy the society of your many friends who will be here to greet you."

By this time they had reached the piazza and met Mr. Nichol and Nettie. Greetings over, Mrs. Nichol remarked to them:

"Well, really, this is a surprise we could not have anticipated; it is so kind of you all and so pleasant! But what wonderful bird is this, Charles is talking about? for we intended taking you all by surprise!"

"She does sing like a bird, mother! I am so glad you and sister Rosa came before she went away!" exclaimed Nettie, with enthusiasm.

"Before who went away?" asked Rosa, giving her mother a look, which said: "So it is not in honor of our return, after all, you see!"

Nettie supposed Charles had told them of Mattie, and was so much rejoiced at the spirit with which the tidings had been received, she unfortunately overstepped the bounds of praise.

"Cousin Mattie is going home to-morrow," was all she could say, but that was enough.

"I suppose it is for Miss Garland, then, the house was thrown open! So she has been here all the summer, has she? and I kept in ignorance as to what was going on in my own house. A nice state of affairs, truly!"

When they had entered the library, Mr. Nichol said:

"Mary, it was your own fault that you were not kept advised as to what was going on; for, in answer to the letter I wrote, telling you I had brought Mattie home with me, you positively forbade my mentioning her name to you again in my letters; which injunction I have obeyed.

"Now listen to reason: You know this subject estranged us years ago; let that past be as though it

had never been! Receive my sister's child as you know how to do, and can do if you will!

"She is a very lovely girl, and you cannot help being pleased with her. This is the last night of her stay, and do not let it be the only unpleasant one. I am very much attached to her, and Charles and Nettie have learned to love her very much!"

"I dare say! *Charles Lenier in love with Joe Garland's child!* I ought to have come home when I heard she was here. She will learn, even now, that she is an intruder on other people's rights!"

These words were spoken in a very angry tone, and one which indicated she would be as good as her word.

Mattie was met, while descending the stairs, by Nettie and Rosa. "Come on, Cousin Mattie! here is sister Rosa!"

Her offered hand was unnoticed, and a cold and haughty "Miss Garland, I presume!" was the only greeting.

Mattie stood bewildered; for she did not know, till then, of the arrival.

While standing there she heard her uncle say: "Mary, for the sake of Heaven, do not drive me mad!" and, on leaving the room, they met in the hall.

"Come here, my child!" Obeying his summons, she was conducted into the library, and found herself face to face with the enraged woman.

Never had Mattie looked more beautiful than at that moment! She wore a simple white muslin, with a wreath of tiny buds and leaves around her head.

"This is your aunt, my dear, who has arrived unexpectedly."

Mattie timidly approached, and would have embraced her aunt, but, as Rosa had done, no notice was taken of the movement by Mrs. Nichol, who, assuming all her dignity for the occasion, took a few steps backward, saying, as she did so:

"You are Joe Garland's daughter, I presume!"

For a moment the terrified girl looked at her, then staggered and would have fallen. Tears were in her eyes, and, as her uncle caught her, she turned, and, hiding her face on his bosom, she wept like a child, while he folded her close in his arms.

In a few moments she disengaged herself and went to her own room, intending to remain there the entire evening, but he had followed her and entered before she could close the door.

Sitting down by her, he said: "My dear child, if you prize my love for you, and the affection of Charles and Nettie, of which you can have no doubt, do not notice what has occurred; but appear in the parlor, happy this *last* night!"

"I ought to have prepared you for it; but hoped they would not return during your stay, and could not tell you! For *my* sake say you *will* come down, and *seem* happy."

Throwing her arms around his neck, she sobbed, "For *your* sake, I will try."

When he had left the room, she felt it was impossible for her to comply with the request, but she reflected:

"He loves me, and is unhappy about the treatment I have received, and he only asked me to *seem* happy."

For the first time in her life she was called on to act as she did not feel. Having bathed her face, and re-arranged her toilet, she descended the stairs, and was met in the hall by several acquaintances.

She smilingly received and conducted them to the parlor, where they found Charles and Nettie in close conversation.

Their entrance broke up the *tete-a-tete*, and, in a few minutes, all were cheerfully talking, and none more so than Mattie.

Rosa soon appeared in full evening dress, and not seeming the least fatigued from her journey.

Could Dr. Lipscombe have known the deception his earthly idol was practicing, even then, as she spoke so kindly of "Cousin Mattie," and regretted so much not having enjoyed more of her society, how his faith would have wavered!

When, during the evening, he heard her urging Mattie not to leave the next morning, could he have contrasted that invitation with the "*Miss Garland, I presume!*" of an hour before, his idol would have fallen; but all this he could not know.

"Heart to heart was never known;
Mind with mind did never meet;
We are columns, left alone,
Of a temple once complete."

Leaving the occupants of parlor, hall, library, and veranda (for the house was rapidly being filled),

with their blackbird chattering, we will enter the chamber of the mistress of Oak Wood.

She had thrown herself on a couch there to remain till the party was over, never supposing that her husband would dare intrude himself on her presence, for usually he remained where she left him, in one of her pets, or left the house entirely.

There is a point, however, where "forbearance ceases to be a virtue," and this point had been reached when she greeted Mattie as she did.

Having entered the room, and closed the door, he said, in a calm, dignified manner:

"Mary, I have endured a great deal from you, and have suffered much at your hands, but the insult you have this night offered me, by your reception of my niece, is not to be borne."

She would have replied, but he asked her to be quiet, and hear him through. Never had she heard him speak, or seen him look, as on that occasion, and she looked fixedly at him while he continued:

"My sister's daughter has spent the summer in my house, which should, from the first, have been her home. Her time has passed pleasantly. I have left no means untried that could possibly add to her enjoyment. Very much attention has been shown her by those of her own age, and more by friends of mine and of her mother. I have seen fit to give this entertainment before she leaves, which will be to-morrow." He stopped a moment, and then continued:

"Had it been your pleasure to give a party to one of your children, or in honor of the child of one of

your friends, so far from objecting, I would, as I have ever done, furnished the means, and added to their happiness so far as was in my power. I speak not boastingly; for you know this is nothing more than has often been done, nor have I ever refused to comply with any wish of yours or your children.

"Now hear and understand me! I have seen proper, in my own house, and at my own expense, to give this entertainment to my orphan niece. I have anticipated much pleasure in witnessing the happiness of Charles, Nettie and Mattie, with their friends. You have seen proper, by *one* remark, to mar their enjoyment as well as mine, instead of increasing it, as you could have done. Nor is this all! You have caused me to speak words I had hoped never to have spoken, and now listen to them." Again he ceased speaking, and trembled with emotion, and, for the first time in their married life, his wife cowered before him.

"Death to me would be preferable to life. I now give you your choice: either dress yourself becomingly, accompany me down stairs, act your part as mistress of this establishment, and treat Mattie with that respect due her from you, or consider yourself, from this time, debarred the privileges my name and house have afforded you."

In a supplicating tone his wife asked, "Is it possible that you would advise me to act the part of a hypocrite?"

"You may urge that you will be acting deceitfully. I grant it; but not more so than that dear child, who

never before has been called on to hide a wounded spirit with a cheerful face, as, for my sake, she is doing to-night. I shall not appear down stairs without you, but in Charles's room will await your orders." Having said this, he left the room without giving her an opportunity to reply.

Who that saw Mrs. Nichol, as, in less than an hour afterwards, elegantly attired, with a smiling face, she descended leaning on her husband's arm, could have dreamed what had transpired?

Few ladies could act the agreeable to greater perfection than Mrs. Nichol. Few displayed greater taste in dress than she usually did, and never had she appeared to greater advantage than on the evening in question. She wore a dress of lilac silk, on which were rich clusters of leaves formed of black velvet. She was tall, erect, and dignified.

Listen! oh, you who have witnessed the scene of one hour previous, listen to her words, as she met a group of acquaintances!

"Yes! my arrival, though unexpected, is quite *à propos*. It is so fortunate that Rosa and myself came before Mattie left, and it is so very pleasant to meet so many friends at once. Nothing I assure you could have delighted me more than this brilliant entertainment the night of our arrival."

As Dr. Lipscombe approached: "Good evening, Doctor! I suppose you have seen Rosa; I hope her friends will think her improved. She has spent the summer delightfully, but doubtless it would have

passed more so in the society of her charming cousin."

"Charming, indeed, is the word, madam! Oak Wood has been one continued scene of gayety. I have seen Miss Rosa, and allow me to congratulate you as well as herself on your improvement."

"I am glad that you, of all others, think her improved."

"She is looking remarkably well to-night, and, I assure you, the surprise of meeting you both, has added much to the pleasure of every one here. Permit me to say, that though you have spent the summer pleasantly away from home, you have missed a great deal."

"Yes! from the brief account I have had, I am convinced of the truth of that, and it has all been owing to the timely arrival of Mr. Nichol's niece."

"Is she not beautiful?" asked Mr. Davies, who now joined them. "You have not heard her sing yet, have you?"

"She certainly is very beautiful, and, though I have not heard her sing, Nettie told me of her voice almost before I entered the house, and called her a bird! Is she singing?"

"Yes! will you go to the parlor now?" Accepting the Doctor's arm, they entered together, where Rosa was in ecstasies over "cousin Mattie's voice."

As Mrs. Nichol moved gracefully from one group to another, expressing her joy at having returned before Mattie's departure, not even her husband could

find fault, or say that she was not acting the part he had required perfectly.

Mr. Marks was lavish in praises of, and assiduous in attentions to, Mattie.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE party was over! The guests had departed. So very pleasant had every member of the family rendered themselves, that each one as they bade adieu had spoken truly, when they gave expression to the enjoyment the evening had afforded.

How natural after such a scene of festivity for a family to comment freely on the events just taken place. Very different, however, was it after this one.

Mr. Nichol bade Charles and Nettie an affectionate good-night, kissed Mattie, and thanked her for having gratified him, then quietly sought his own room.

Mrs. Nichol called Charles into the dining-room, and closed the door. What transpired there, will be known in due time.

Rosa sought repose for weary limbs, and reflected on what Harry Lipscombe had said in praise of her charming cousin.

Nettie, true to her trust, accompanied Mattie to her chamber, assisted her in disrobing, chatting pleas-

antly the while, then having given the usual good-night kiss, sought her own.

Before this was done, the clock below had chimed the hour of another day.

Left alone, Mattie applied herself to the task of packing her trunk preparatory to an early start. As day dawned, after donning her travelling dress, she sat on her trunk near an open window, and looked out on the sky, to catch the morning breeze.

As she sat there, the stillness, where late all had been bustle and confusion, caused the solitary watcher to reflect as she had never done before. The events of the preceding evening and night had unfolded to her unsuspecting mind, mysteries in human nature of which she had never dreamed.

Never had she seen a good person receive such treatment as her uncle had done, or deemed it possible that such could be borne so bravely.

For the first time in her life, she was called on to realize how very deceptive were the hearts smiling faces could conceal, until she contrasted, as she could not help doing, the private with the public reception given her by her aunt and cousin.

Never before had she been treated with scorn and contempt, nor had she ever acted as her feelings did not dictate.

She had learned from her uncle's face, one hour, so happy and cheerful, the next, so unhappy and sad, then, though thoughtful, wearing a pleasant smile, what it was to "suffer and be strong."

She had learned much within a few hours to re-

member, and to regret. And as she thought of how she had been received, how bright by contrast grew the home to which she would soon return, and how inexpressibly dear to her (even more so than ever) appeared her foster-parents and little sisters. Already she had grown impatient for the hour of departure.

Her reflections were disturbed by the varying notes of a mocking bird, which was perched on a twig so near she might have touched him with ease.

The sun was just appearing above the far off hill-tops, and as she sat musing on the wonders of creation, watching the varying clouds, and listening to the mocker's notes, she mentally repeated words learned in childhood, but never understood before.

"Sing on little bird ; as I hear thy sweet song,
I dream what a bright world this might be,
Could we banish afar all oppression and wrong,
And sing as thou singest to thy mate in the tree."

Sounds of a far different nature startled her, and these words greeted her ear :

"My pride as your father's wife forbade me closing my door on any one before such a crowd, but I tell you again, it is well she is on the point of leaving."

It was not difficult for Mattie to determine who the speaker was, or that she was the subject of this unkind remark. A moment more, and Charles in a husky voice replied,

"Mother, cousin Mattie may not be asleep, nor

father either. How would they feel to hear you speak in this way, nor could you do so if you knew her. She is amiable, gentle, and kind. I only wish you and sister Rosa could have been with her all summer, for if you had you would have learned, as every one has done, to love her for her many virtues."

"Learned to love her indeed! I suppose you have found it impossible *not* to love her. Perhaps you already anticipate some day making her your wife, and sister-in-law to my daughters. Never, while my name is Mrs. Mary Nichol——"

Charles had entered his room, and now the door closed between them, and so far as the enraged woman could tell, the walls alone would have heard what more she had to say; without speaking another word she hurried away.

Poor Mattie! Her first impulse was to confront her aunt, and let her know that she had been an innocent listener to her words, but she reflected that this would wound Charles, who had expressed his fear that she was not asleep.

Drawing from her pocket the last letter she received from home, she reperused it, and its words of affection and tenderness soothed her troubled spirit. The fact that she would soon find refuge in that happy home comforted her.

She did not leave her room till summoned to breakfast, which was later than usual; how wearily dragged the moments, but, like all weary ones, they came to an end.

She returned her uncle's and kind cousins' salutations with a smile, and for their sakes continued, "Good morning, Aunt Mary! Good morning, Cousin Rosa."

"Good morning, my dear! Are you still determined to leave us to-day?"

Mattie replied she was, then turning to her uncle said:

"I never can forget the many very happy hours I have spent at Oak Wood, uncle; and above all things I rejoice at the information I have gained in regard to my mother's earlier life. I feel as if I had lived here when she was young."

After replying pleasantly to some question of Mrs. Nichol's, she continued:

"Though I have never known the loss of parents—for no orphan was ever more blessed than I have been in Papa and Mamma Minor—still I have ever felt a great desire to know more of my own parents: that desire has been fully gratified."

Tears had gathered in Mr. Nichol's eyes, and he could not reply. Observing the effect of her words, Mattie said she must go and bid Uncle Ned and Aunt Nelly good-bye, and asked Charles if he and Nettie would object to going with her.

"Cousin Charlie, I do dislike to take you from home so soon after the return of your mother and sister."

"Never mind that, my charming cousin; don't flatter yourself that you are taking me away. To see Miss Ella, and hear her sing once more, is enough to

carry me to Alabama, and I don't object to your company on the way."

Having taken leave of the servants, as they were returning, Mattie began by saying:

"It is impossible for me to express to you one half the happiness my visit has given me; and now, Nettie, I want Cousin Charles and yourself to make me a long visit in my home; my friends there would be delighted to see you, and I claim this next vacation."

"Thank you for your kind invitation; I know it would be pleasant, for I am already in love with Mr. and Mrs. Minor, and Lelia, too. You must give my love to all of them, and don't forget your mammy. Ah! Mattie, you have a delightful home, I know, and I know something else too."

"What else do you know? Come, let us be as wise as you are."

"I know Cousin Mattie can come back here, if she will, before I can go there."

"How? What do you mean, Nettie?"

"I know that Mr. Marks is going to ask you to! If I am a child, I know some things that some people don't."

"I think you have been looking through leather spectacles this time, little cousin; you forget I am almost as much a child as yourself, and never had a beau in my life. I fear Papa and Mamma Minor will not be pleased when they know how great a young lady I have appeared here."

"All I have to say on that subject is, when you

consider yourself old enough to own such property, you will never acknowledge Will Marks to be one."

"Why, brother? I am sure Mr. Marks is wealthy and good-looking, and if he can bring Cousin Mattie back here, would you be sorry?"

"Yes! I should regret very much to see my cousin or one of my sisters marry a man who is afraid to walk in the sunshine."

"What an idea! Who ever heard of any man being afraid of the sunshine. He is not so fair, I am sure. We had better get him a sun-bonnet."

"You don't understand me, Cousin Mattie. Will Marks is afraid of the sunshine, not that his complexion will suffer, but lest his shadow will ask him for something."

Nettie stooped and picked up a broken and rusty nail, then walking in front of her brother said, "Merit ever deserves reward, and for this definition of a stingy man, *accipe hoc naile.*"

The carriage was waiting, farewells were over, and Mattie, accompanied by Charles and her uncle, started home. Mr. Nichol went with them to the city, but no word was spoken, during that ride, of the unpleasant circumstances which had taken place.

CHAPTER XV.

To attempt a description of the re-union at Minor Place, would be useless.

So eager was Mattie to tell all she had seen and heard, and so absorbed were the others in listening, that the supper, which had been announced soon after the arrival, was scarcely touched.

When they had assembled for an evening's talk, Charles learned that Ella Duval had been very ill, and was still unable to leave her room. It was agreed that Mattie should go early the next morning to see her, and, if she was able to have company, Charles would go in the afternoon.

Though Mrs. Minor had told her how very sick her friend had been, she was not at all prepared to see her so thin and pale. Nor had she, for a long time, seen either Ella or her mother look so sad.

For more than an hour she entertained them with incidents of her journey. They were delighted to see her back, and told her so. Outside of Mr. Minor's family none had the same reasons for feeling her absence.

The cottage lay on her road to school, and scarcely a day had passed, for years, that she had not spent some portion of it with them.

She had a warm heart, and had ever manifested a tender sympathy for them in all their trials, and rejoiced in their joys. So far from ever feeling that

Mattie was a visitor there, it seemed that a member of their own family was absent when she was away.

Having endeavored, in vain, for some time to cheer them, she suddenly changed her manner and said :

"Look here, Ella ! I want to know what is the matter with you besides being sick ! I see there is some trouble preying on your mind, and your mother's, too. Now I am not going to talk any more till I know what it is."

Ella did not reply. Turning to Mrs. Duval, Mattie continued : "I am not changed because I have been away. Why will she keep it from me ? Will you not tell me what it is ?"

"You are right, Mattie ! we have cause for sorrow, and it will be a relief to talk to you about it. You know a part of it, child, for you do know that Mr. Duval had made two payments on this house when he died, and there were two more to be made. I have paid the interest every year as it fell due ; but have been able to do nothing more and keep Ella at school.

"A few weeks ago Mr. McLaw sent me word, unless I could make the last payment by the first of next month, I must give the house up ! I see no way of doing this ; and it is the thought of giving up our home and having to stop school, that has made Ella sick."

Mattie began to revolve in her mind some way by which they might be relieved. "Have you told Papa Minor of your difficulty ? I know it would afford him pleasure to assist you, and it is in his power to do it."

"No! I have told no one. I do not doubt either his willingness or ability; but then the same indebtedness would rest on us."

"Let me tell him! You don't know how it troubles me! I cannot bear the idea of Ella quitting school now!"

"No! no!" pleaded the sick girl. "Please do not mention it to him. There is but one person in the world from whom I would willingly receive such a favor!"

"And pray who is that?"

"If you were wealthy I would not mind being under such obligations to you! Ah, the sting of wronged orphanage! you have never known it, Mattie!"

"No! my lines have truly fallen in pleasant places; and I often fear that to feel sufficiently grateful, *I cannot!* I constantly think of the many blessings which have been lavished on me, and I do sincerely trust some way may be opened by which your mother may get through this difficulty; and I believe there will."

"Mattie, there is great injustice practiced in this world! I remember once hearing Mrs. Norton make a remark, which I never understood till I became a widow. It was this: '*The books of dead men are often handled with soiled fingers!*' It is true, and I believe causes more than half the trouble in this world!"

"Well, hoping for the best, let me tell you, Ella, what I came over here for; my time is out and I must go. Let's all try to forget trouble for awhile, and tell me that Cousin Charlie may come to see you this

evening. You remember how he was captivated with your voice? Well, he is more in love now than ever!

"As soon as he heard you had been sick, nothing would do but I must come and see whether you were well enough to see him!"

"Oh, Mattie, I do not feel like seeing any one but you; especially if they are gay and happy!"

"Hush, child! don't talk that way; as Mattie says, let's try and forget our trouble, and hope for the best. Send the young gentleman word he may come, and you will see him. It makes me feel worse to hear you talk so!"

"Pardon me, mother, if I cause you pain. You know I would not willingly do so!"

"Well, Ella, he may come, and, after he is gone, I will stay nearly all the time with you till you get well. 'Tis true you are a little paler than when he saw you, but that, you know, will only enhance his interest."

"How foolish it is, Mattie, in you to talk so. I know I am pale and thin too, and feel incapable of entertaining company; if I did not, you know I would gratify you and mother."

"You may think I am jesting, but I never told a more solemn truth than when I say his principal object in coming home with me has been to see you, and hear that bird-like voice once more."

"Now, you are not well enough to go to our house and have me sing for you, but you will not refuse to see him here, where he will not expect to be so highly favored."

"Would you believe it, Mrs. Duval? As often as he

heard me in Georgia, he reminded me of the contrast between Ella's voice and mine."

Having changed the current of their thoughts, she bade a hasty good-bye, and hurried home, wishing it were in her power to relieve their wants, and wondering whether it were not her duty to tell Mr. Minor what she had learned, and thinking if ever she was rich she would do good in the world.

"Cousin Charlie, Ella is looking very badly, and more homely than I ever saw her. She will see you, but let me give you two pieces of advice; first, close your eyes, lest your opinion should change; secondly, do not make a long visit, for she is very weak, and not able to sit up a great while."

"Mattie! Mattie, how can you say Ella is homely? That she cannot be, and your cousin can make allowances for sickness."

"Never mind, Mrs. Minor, I beg to judge for myself as to her beauty, rather than take cousin Mattie's opinion. I am only glad that she will see me, if it is only for a short time."

In due time he made the visit, and on returning, called his cousin to account for what she had said.

"Well, I am very sure it is better to prepare a person for a pleasant surprise than a disappointment, and if I had said Ella was looking very beautiful, when she was not, I would not have been speaking truly."

When he was about to leave the next morning, he asked her to go with him as far as Mrs. Duval's, and when they reached the cottage, she called Mrs.

Duval out of the parlor, to ask some question relating to her business affairs; how natural such tact is to woman.

Having taken leave of Mattie at the gate, Charles handed her a letter and package, which he said his father had sent by him, and he had almost forgotten. Before she could open either one, he had started. Mattie opened the letter, and read as she walked slowly home.

OAK WOOD, Nov., 18—.

MY DEAREST MATTIE:—How is it possible for me to express in words, either spoken or written, the pleasure your visit has afforded me? I have been carried back to other and more youthful days, and so potent has been the influence your presence has at times exerted over me, I did not realize that years of care and trial had been mine since I was separated from your dear mother.

No! they were all lost, or forgotten in the enjoyment of passing hours. It has been a bright star in my darkened sky, and through future time the memory of it will twinkle and sparkle along the path I have to tread.

Oh! that your visit could have ended as pleasantly as it has all along proven! May I ask that the scenes of the past few hours may never be mentioned by you to your dear friends in your pleasant home? Would that I might ask that they might be forgotten, with as much surety of the request being complied with!

You now know, my dear child, why I never before insisted on your visiting me, and why I never urged you to make my house yours. I was fully aware of the fact that, if I consulted your happiness, it was far better to resign my prior claims of relationship to those of friendship, and leave you with your foster-parents, who loved you so well.

Remember, my darling niece, how much your cousins Charles and Nettie love you, and how much they have enjoyed your visit! For their sakes you will not refuse to make another, when I extend the invitation.

Yes! you will come, Mattie; nor will you refuse to accept the package which will accompany this letter. I will direct Charles to give them both to you, just as he is leaving for home.

I know you have friends, who are willing to provide for you as for one of their own children; and, though you may have no personal use for it, you may be enabled to do for others what has been done for you.

If you should, therefore, have no use for such an amount, give of it to those who are needy. Nor would I have you do this unknown to Mr. and Mrs. Minor. Never do anything, my dear child, to excite suspicion in them. Let perfect confidence ever exist between you and them.

I would not have them read *all* of this letter; but you know what portions of it to pass over. Let them know how you come in possession of the money, and consult with them as to spending it. If you feel disposed to use it, as I have advised, ask their permis-

sion; and, remember! so long as I live, my purse is open to you for charitable purposes!

Remember me, kindly, to your parents, kiss each of your sisters for me, and present my kind wishes to your mammy.

And now, my darling, adieu! That guardian angels may ever watch over and keep you from all harm, is the earnest prayer of

Your affectionate Uncle,

WILLIAM NICHOL.

When Mattie had finished reading this letter, she had nearly reached home; blinding tears traced each other down her cheeks. She passed Mrs. Minor without speaking, and, going to her own room, closed the door.

Sitting down she re-perused the words of affectionate interest, which had been penned by her unhappy uncle, and more than ever regretted his ill-fated marriage. But, on this occasion, she found comfort in her sorrow; for, she reasoned, if he had never married that woman, she never could have known and loved her cousins: nor would Charles have loved her friend Ella, which, she thought, he certainly did.

Thinking of Ella, brought to mind her and her mother's trouble. Then came the pleasant reflection that it was in her power to relieve their wants: and would not using the money thus be acting according to her uncle's advice?

But now arose a difficulty; she had not learned the amount necessary to do this; nor did she yet know

what amount the package contained. And when, on opening it, she found in her own possession five hundred dollars—a larger amount than she had ever handled before—she spoke aloud:

“No, I have no use for it!” Then placing all in a drawer together, she continued: “Yes, I will tell papa and mamma about the money and about Mrs. Duval, and ask them to let me use it in that way.”

With her eyes still red from weeping, she went in search of Mrs. Minor, and begged her to go with her to her own room.

Having noticed that Mattie was weeping when she came in, Mrs. Minor supposed it was caused by the separation from her cousin. So open and candid had Mattie ever been, in regard to her feelings, that Mrs. Minor was not surprised at the request, and quietly followed her up stairs.

When they were alone, sitting down at her mother's feet, in a trembling voice, she said: “Mamma, I have something to tell you, and I want you to tell papa, and ask his advice about it.”

Her tears flowed freely, and Mrs. Minor, taking her hand, said kindly: “No, Mattie, don't you tell me; let me guess what it is; or let me tell you without guessing.”

With a look of surprise, Mattie asked: “How did you know anything about it? Did Cousin Charlie tell you?”

“No, my daughter! it was not necessary that he should. Your papa and myself both found it out; nor were we surprised!”

Just then, hearing her husband down stairs, she opened the door, and called to him: “Walter! come up here, in Mattie's room; she wants to see you!”

With an elastic step, for one of his years, up the steps he ran, and, as he entered the room, Mattie exclaimed:

“I can't believe Cousin Charlie told it, for he did not know; and even if he had, he would have told no one but me!” and a look of sadness settled on her face.

“What is this, Ida, you all are talking about? You said Mattie wanted to see me.”

“Yes! she wants to know how her cousin knew he had stolen her heart; and thinks even if he had——”

“Oh, my dear mamma, it was not that! believe me, you never were more mistaken in your life!”

“Come, don't cry, Mattie! your mamma and I have suspected, not so much your partiality for Charles, as his for you; now tell us about it.”

Never had either of them spoken to her on such a subject before, and it evidently pained her to find they were, or seemed to be, in earnest; looking up, she calmly replied:

“I called mamma up here to tell her something of a very different nature, but before I began, she asked me to let her guess, or tell me what it was.

“I then asked if Cousin Charlie had told it; this only confirmed her suspicion. But believe me, my dear parents, we love each other as cousins should.”

Then she gave a history of her visit to Mrs. Duval's the previous morning. They listened with deep

interest, but, before they could make any comments, she unfolded her uncle's letter, and pointing to one page of it said :

"Papa, that part of this letter alludes to family matters, which you would rather not know, but please read the rest of it to mamma ; then you both will understand what I meant."

When he had finished, she placed the money before them, and asked "Have either of you any objection to my spending it as I would like to?"

"It is yours, my daughter ; you can use it as you think best. Your uncle is right ; it is our pleasure to supply all your wants, and if at any time he sees proper to make you a present of this kind, we have no desire to dictate as to the use you make of it."

Mattie stood between them, and placing an arm around the neck of each one, she asked, in low soft tones, as if she almost feared a refusal, their permission to give it all to Ella's mother.

The request was first acceded to by Mrs. Minor, who kissed her, saying :

"You have my consent, and doubtless your papa's too ; and may you ever give of your means thus wisely."

Mr. Minor asked if she knew how great Mrs. Duval's liabilities were.

"Well, then, find that out first, and if you have not a sufficient amount your mamma and myself will supply the deficiency. And now, Mattie, forget the words we spoke to you, before we knew what you did mean, for we surely would not have teased you had

we known the truth. The subject you have presented, and the manner in which you have done it, is calculated to fill us with gratitude for the confidence you repose in us. Let it ever be so, and you are sure of our sympathy."

When Mr. Minor returned to the store, Mattie accompanied him as far as the cottage of her friends.

How her heart throbbed with gratitude to the God above, who had enabled her, through kind friends, to do so much good for those she loved.

"Well, Ella, how do you feel this evening? I have come to condole with you, my friend ; I know you must feel badly ; but cheer up, I dare say he will come again one of these days."

Ella was reclining on a couch, looking paler and thinner than on the day before. Mattie soon found her cheerful strain was not pleasant, and turned to Mrs. Duval as if to ask for an explanation, for, without speaking, Ella had burst into tears.

The old lady understood her and replied :

"At noon to-day, Mattie, I received another note from Mr. Mc Law, asking whether I would be able to make the payment at the required time. The reason he gave was, that he has an opportunity to sell it, if I do not intend keeping it, and I know not what to do or say."

"What reply did you make?"

"I said I would let him know positively in the morning, and ever since I have been trying to summon courage to take your advice, and apply to Mr. Minor for assistance, for I believe the very idea of

leaving here will kill Ella in her present condition."

"Oh, Mattie! if my health was good, and my education complete, I could do something! as it is, I can do nothing," sobbed the sick girl.

"Ella, let's suppose a case: suppose I had the money and could lend it to your mother, would you promise to pay the debt when you become Mrs. Charles Lenier?"

"Mattie! Mattie Garland! you are my friend, I know; then how can you jest over so serious a matter? You have not the money! If I did not know you so well, I would feel hurt at you," and again she wept bitterly.

"But Ella, I am serious! If I had, would you accept it on the terms I have named?"

"Mattie, we know if it was in your power you would relieve us; but it is time I was doing something. Will you stay with Ella while I go to Mr. Minor's store?"

"How much do you owe for the house?" asked Mattie.

"Three hundred and seventy-five is what I am to pay the first of next month; I owe four hundred and ten in all."

"Stop, my friends! repine no longer," and she placed the package her uncle had sent in Mrs. Duval's hand, then sitting down by Ella, and taking her hand, she said:

"Remember, of your own accord, you said you

would not refuse it from me. I did not ask Papa Minor for it, either."

Then she related the circumstances which are already known, and read them most of her uncle's letter. "Now, Ella, you will let your mother use it, and when I call on you as Mrs. Lenier, and ask for it, you will liquidate the debt."

Mattie had talked so fast, neither of her hearers had been able to say a word, nor could they have spoken, for their hearts were too full for utterance. *Gratitude* was their only feeling.

Mrs. Duval attempted to thank her. "No thanks are due me: I tell you it is only placed in your hands for me, to be returned by Ella, at the time already specified," and, ere they were aware of her intention, she had left them.

Mrs. Duval went early next morning and satisfied her creditor, and stopped at Minor Place, on her way back, to leave the remainder. Mattie had gone out for a walk, and the grateful woman related the occurrences of the past few days to Mr. and Mrs. Minor, and offered to leave it with them. At first, they refused, saying they knew that such was not Mattie's intention, but, when she insisted, Mr. Minor received it, and placing that in his purse, took from it fifty dollars, and handed it to her.

"Take this to Miss Ella, as a reward from me for so completely fooling Charles Lenier, and tell her I say Mattie will call for her, Monday morning, on her way to school."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Is it not strange, mammy, that all this while I had never heard from cousin Lonnie? and now he writes so affectionately, and says he is coming soon to make me a visit:" and, as a smile played over her ever bright face, she continued:

"I am glad he will have an opportunity of learning for himself, that his prophecy in regard to Walter has failed. We have been married nearly twice six years."

"Miss Ida, Mars Lonnie has some object in coming here beside making a visit. Mark me, he wants Mars Walter to loan him money or go his security, or something else."

"Ida, guess who this is from?" exclaimed Mr. Minor as he entered, holding in his hand an open letter.

"From cousin Lonnie!"

"Why did you guess it was from him? I never had that pleasure."

"Because I have, this morning, and I thought perhaps he had written to both by the same mail. He is coming to see us very soon, Walter."

"Indeed! I am glad to hear it, but mine is from Edwin Terryl. It is a beautiful letter, and will repay you to read it. He has started on his tour before returning home. I must go and see the old man, this evening! Would you like to go with me?"

"Yes! mammy has just come from there, and says he is quite feeble, and feeling very anxious about Edwin."

The children coming in from school, when Mattie and Lelia heard who the letter was from, they, too, were impatient to hear it, and to an attentive audience, Mr. Minor read: we will make a few extracts from it to give the reader some idea of his views of that great world across the waters.

"I am now on the summit of one the highest Alpine passes, and for some time have been reveling in all the grandeur of Swiss scenery. Snow-covered mountains, beautiful cascades, rushing torrents, perpendicular precipices, and, indeed, all that is grand and glorious in nature.

"Though I am rarely alone, still the passing acquaintances, however pleasant, can never supply the place of old and well tried friends.

"On my return to Berlin, I will send you a minute account of all my journeyings. When I reach a place at night, my first thought is repose for weary limbs; the next morning, I take a cup of coffee, and start again on my pedestrian tour; truly, this is the only mode of travel which makes one thoroughly acquainted with any country through which he may be passing.

"I have been to-day in company with several Englishmen. After dinner, a song was proposed, and several given. Soon, however, that never failing topic, 'The times,' was broached, and is still under discussion.

"My travelling companions are principally English. Sometimes I meet with an American; then time passes pleasantly.

"We have been favored with one clear sun-set view; it was beautiful. To-morrow we expect to visit the spot where the Rhine takes its rise.

"I must tell you of a visit I made to a German family, with whom I spent Saturday and Sabbath. It was the home of one of my classmates, and his kind invitation was gladly accepted, as I was anxious to learn something of their home-life, of which a student in college learns but little.

"Sabbath morning all the family appeared in the large sitting-room, dressed for church, to which we repaired about nine o'clock. Had a very good German sermon, and I now understand the language sufficiently to appreciate one.

"Having returned home, the old lady and her three daughters, having doffed their hats and wrappings, re-entered the sitting room, with their knitting and sewing. The men repaired to the workshops or fields, as we Americans would do on Monday morning.

"While I sat in astonishment at this, a boy approached, and handed me a bundle of small sticks, about a foot long, neatly tied together. I took them, but for what I knew not. He was followed by a little girl who offered me a knife. I asked in German what I must do with them. The old lady replied:

"'Whittle them, of course! we do not object to your doing so.' Observing that I still hesitated, she

asked, "If what they had heard of Americans was not true—that they could not talk without whittling?"

"I had never before thought of our propensity for this employment above all other nations. One of the young ladies said they had heard that if an American could not find a table, chair, or box to hack, that he would cut up his shoes. Then I thought that it was to save their furniture and my shoes they had been so kind, and determined to show them that all such articles were safe with me!

"It is painful to witness their desecration of this holy day! The afternoon and evening of the Sabbath is the time for general amusement and hilarity!

"We had a lengthy discussion on the subject; but I failed to convince them that the Divine injunction: 'Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy!' means other than respectful attendance on religious service at nine in the morning; at which time they do seem to banish all worldly thoughts as well as pursuits."

To give all the items of interest Edwin's letter contained, might prove tiresome. He urged Mattie and Lelia, as a person much older than himself might have done, to improve the golden hours then passing, and entreated Mr. and Mrs. Minor to visit his father, and send the children often to see him during his absence.

Having freely commented on this letter, they read the one from Mr. Rivers. It had been delayed some time, and only two days more would elapse ere he would be with them. Sure enough, at the appointed time, he arrived!

He was met very kindly by Mr. Minor, and affectionately by his cousin, who seemed, in the happiness of her present, to have forgotten the unpleasant past. Mr. Rivers spent several days partaking of their hospitality, congratulated them on their prosperity, and rendered himself very agreeable.

The visit was over; he had been gone some days. Mr. and Mrs. Minor sat and conversed pleasantly; mammy was urging little Ida to acknowledge she felt sleepy.

"Ida, I wish you would put this with my private papers!" handing his wife a small paper as he spoke.

"What is it, Walter?"

"Your cousin's note. I was surprised to find him so much embarrassed as he seems to be!"

Mrs. Minor and mammy exchanged glances, but neither one gave an explanation.

"How much did you loan him, Walter?"

"I loaned him three thousand dollars, and went his security for fifteen hundred. I do not think, Ida, he would have asked me for it; but he happened to mention his liabilities, and, having the money to spare, I offered it to him."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when they were startled by cries of Fire! fire! and the ringing of bells. On going to the door, they found the kitchen of a very near neighbor in flames, and her dwelling in very great danger!

Mr. Minor started, leaving a message for the negro men to follow him. On reaching the scene of distress, he urged the owner of the property, who was a widow,

to take her child to his house, pledging himself that all should be done that could be to save her house. Quite a crowd had assembled, and, finding that she could do little or nothing, the woman did as requested, and, with her infant in her arms, stood with Mrs. Minor in her door, and watched the destruction of her home and the efforts being made to save it. Men were screaming, the engines playing, the house being fast emptied of its contents! Above all the din of voices Mr. Minor's voice could be heard giving orders, and soon his form was recognized on the top of the house, having blankets and carpets spread to prevent it from burning. There came a sound terrible to hear! What was it? All efforts to still the raging elements ceased, and the interest of the entire throng had centered around a fallen object. While the ladies wondered what had happened, they beheld a group of men making their way through the crowd, bearing a human form towards them! Who can it be?

Mrs. Minor's heart told her who it was; for, before they reached the gate of Minor Place, she exclaimed, "Oh, it cannot be my husband!" yet, ere another minute had passed, in silence she walked beside those who bore him on. He had fainted from heat and exhaustion, and fallen from the roof. Whether he lived was, as yet, a matter of uncertainty.

They carried him in, and laid his apparently lifeless form on the divan. The physician had already arrived, but no sooner had his eyes rested on the death-like pallor of that face, his fingers held the flickering pulse, than he requested two others sent for.

Upon examination, his right arm was found to be broken, his right shoulder dislocated, and it was feared his back was injured; but the most serious injury was on the head.

An occasional groan was all that told he still lived. His eyes were closed, and he heeded not the entreaties of his agonized wife, begging that he would speak to her once again!

Finding he was totally unconscious, they urged her to leave the room. But this she would not do, and, promising to be calm if allowed to remain, she bathed his bleeding forehead while the broken arm was being bound up. This required some time, and, when they raised him up to examine his shoulder, one convulsive shudder passed through his manly frame, and he ceased to breathe!

That fire, the flames of which had not yet expired, had done its work; for the night was not far spent when the highly respected citizen, and much loved husband and father, who had gone forth to aid a distressed widow and orphan, lay a lifeless corpse, his wife a widow, his children fatherless, and his home without a head!

"Death loves a shining mark!" and from that family, as is often the case, he had chosen the one who could be least spared! Its hope had gone, its light had been, in a sudden and awful manner, extinguished, and what darkness remained!

This was their *first great sorrow*! and how much is conveyed in these three words! How truly did the

poet understand the feelings of a family, thus circumstanced, who wrote:

"The earliest storm that strips the trees
Still wildest seems and worst;
Whate'er hath been, again may be
But never as the first!"

The news of this good man's death struck with terror all who had known him! Men of business, when they met, with sad faces said, "We have lost a brother! Widows and orphans, whom he had assisted, mourned the loss of their best friend! The church felt that one of her first members had been taken! The City Council grieved for its wisest member! All benevolent associations felt that, in their body, a void was made!

If he was mourned thus by those to whom he was bound only by ties of common humanity, and from long associations, how was it with those of his own household? The servants, to whom he had ever been a kind and indulgent master? children—than whom none ever had a more affectionate father? the wife of his bosom?—who, for nearly fourteen years, had confided to him her every joy and sorrow, had leaned on his strong arm for support, and never suffered herself to look forward to this hour; but, through the future still to come, had caught glimpses of a time when they would descend the hill of life together, if possible more happily than they had reached the summit!

Poor crushed household! so sudden, so stunning was the blow, how could they realize it? They knew some terrible calamity had befallen them, but little

did they understand the nature of it. Little did they comprehend the density of the cloud then resting over them, and destined to shadow their future years.

The house was thronged with sympathizing friends. Yes! there were tears of real sorrow shed on that occasion; words of true sympathy were spoken. Though they may be and are remembered afterwards, how little effect do words spoken at such a time have!

It was a bright September day, and the very brightness seemed a mockery to that stricken family.

Mr. Norton was there, but he had no words at his command, for he mourned not only the loss of one of his church members, but a personal friend and one he loved as a brother. Close by the body of his late friend, groaning in spirit, sat the man of God, till the coffin had been brought, and received the lifeless form.

Then, kneeling down, he committed that bereaved family to Him who had first given, and, in his own good time, had taken away. What sympathy can equal that of a true pastor for his flock?

"They have no sorrow he does not feel;
No joy he will not share;
No wound that sympathy can heal,
But they may find it there."

All arrangements were made by Mr. John Ketchum, in all things consulting the feelings of Mrs. Minor. No funeral was ever conducted with greater propriety, and a larger procession had never moved along the streets of M——. All houses of business were closed.

The various societies, of which he had been a member, were present, and truly every one seemed to feel that a good man had been taken away.

It is not unpleasant, when we have been bereaved, to reflect that those we have loved and lost are mourned for by others. Though it may not lessen our grief, or weaken our loss, it does afford a sad comfort to feel assured that they were beloved in life and mourned for after death.

The days that followed that funeral were sacred ones, and on their sanctity we would not intrude. They were days in which but one thought engrossed the mind, and that ever found vent in the words "He is gone, and we are left alone."

But there comes a time, and come it will, though we would willingly postpone it indefinitely, when a man's worldly affairs must be inquired into. The Law, Society, and Justice all demand it, (*for law is often far from being justice*), especially, as in this instance, when a man of wealth is suddenly cut off, leaving a family, and not having made his will; and shall we say, more especially, when, as in this case, his all has been left in the hands of a surviving partner.

That time did come, and though Mrs. Minor had ever been a shrinking, dependent woman, strength was given her, and, for the sakes of those now dependent on her, she went and conversed with those who had gone according to law, to learn all she knew of her husband's business affairs.

Alonzo Rivers had been written to and had ar-

rived. When she named a lawyer, in whose hands she would prefer placing her interest, he told her that the law gave all the business connected with the store into Mr. Ketchum's hands. Then she remembered the night on which she first learned that they were partners, and mammy's words came to her mind.

"Remember Ida," said her cousin, "so long as I live you will have a brother, and while I have property it is yours and your children's, should you ever need it; but you need have no fear in regard to your business. Mr. Ketchum feels a deep interest in you all, and I believe he will settle up the firm as soon as possible, and you will be left independent.

"I would advise you to rest satisfied on that subject, and show him, by your manner, that you have confidence in him, and even if he was disposed to do you wrong, this course would have a tendency to prevent it."

On another occasion, when Mr. Ketchum had called to see her, he said:

"Mrs. Minor, you cannot know what I have lost. Your husband was at one time, madam, my *only* friend! yes, when all others had forsaken me, he held out a friendly hand! I grasped it! and, from that hour, I have risen, not only in self-respect, but in the esteem of my fellow-man; and to him I am indebted for all I do now, or ever may, possess."

He spoke with feeling, often ceasing for several moments: "Allow me to say, that I feel convinced that his business could not have fallen into the hands

of any man who would, or could, have the same interest in you and your children.

"I hope, neither you nor they will ever feel the slightest hesitancy in calling on me at any hour, or for any purpose, but always bear in mind, that my greatest pleasure will ever consist in serving you."

Others came, and in the same kind spirit offered their services. From each of these conversations, the widow derived comfort, and ere long she began to feel, that though she had sustained the greatest loss that could possibly have been hers; that though her life was shaded, still she had *friends*, and though her children were *fatherless*, they were not *friendless*. Others have felt the same comfort!

The sale which the law demanded in such a case, took place at the house, and when the time arrived, Mr. Ketchum announced that he would act for her, and for the many articles of furniture, the carriage, horses, servants, or even the homestead, was there opposition made. When it was over, he said to Mrs. Minor,

"Make yourself easy in regard to the payment; in due time I will hand you the amount necessary;" and again reiterated his professions of friendship.

All these exciting scenes, proved too much for her delicate frame, and her health soon gave signs of failure.

* * * *

Mr. Nichol had written to Mattie, on hearing of Mr. Minor's death, offering her a home, and to Mrs. Minor, he wrote a letter of condolence and friend-

ship, for which she was grateful, but she would as soon have thought of resigning one of her own children to another!

No! so long as she had a home, she said, Mattie must share it, and now she was one of her greatest comforts. When the other children were asleep, Mattie would sit and read for hours together, and force herself to converse with some degree of cheerfulness. She took a deep interest in all that concerned the mournful woman, and all idea of leaving her had been banished as soon as it was mentioned.

Who can blame Mrs. Minor, if after such conversations with her cousin and Mr. Ketchum, after listening to the many friends of her husband who visited her, and reading the numerous letters of condolence she received, especially, when after the sale was over, and the household moved on as before—who, we ask, could blame her for settling down with the conviction, that nothing more was left for her to do, but nurse her grief, and give way to her sorrow?

CHAPTER XVII.

PERHAPS eighteen months after the events named in the last chapter, two girls, clad in mourning, were seated side-by-side, near an open window. One of

them, with her head on her sister's shoulder, was weeping, as if her heart would break.

"Don't cry any more, darling! it may not always be so!"

"Oh, Lelia! I cannot, cannot stand it! how could she have spoken so harshly to dear little Ida?"

"She has no children of her own, Annie, and does not know how to feel for little girls! There! come, lie down, and try to sleep some. You will be sick if you do not."

"I can't sleep! it's hard enough to have lost our parents, and to have been cheated out of all that should have been ours, but when I think of the treatment we receive from cousin Lonnie and his wife, I almost wish myself dead. Why were we ever born to be left in this cold heartless world, with no one to love us? I would rather die than live."

"Oh no, Annie! do not talk so, only think how much more lonely little Ida and I would be without you! Come! let's go to bed, it is cold."

Annie raised herself up, and looking out on the full moon, said, "Yes! she is just like that moon, beautiful and grand, but, oh, so cold!"

The reader has, doubtless, recognized in the speakers Lelia and Annie Minor, who were at the time, living in the house of their mother's cousin. Their own beautiful home had passed into the hands of strangers.

Mammy's prophecy had proven only too true. Mr. Ketchum had, by a course of dissipation, and by neglecting business, made way with all that was left

in his hands, and, through him, Mr. Minor's handsome estate had proven insolvent.

Mrs. Minor did not live to witness the total wreck of her husband's property, and to find herself and children homeless. Nearly twelve months after the sale, she reminded Mr. Ketchum of the payments that were to be made.

When she spoke of the property being divided, as, feeling that her health was rapidly giving way, she wanted some provision made for the children, he said:

"While the debt you owe the estate, madame, remains unpaid, there can be no division of the property," and when reminded of his promise, he told of many, large, and unexpected debts having come against the estate, and mentioned among others the firm of "Freeman, Green and Co.," bringing one of several years standing.

She well remembered her husband's words in regard to that firm, and repeated them, when he replied:

"I am surprised, if that was the case, that no receipt can be found."

He said, moreover, he had found collections difficult, and, in order to carry on the business, had found it necessary to order a new stock of goods, in the name of the firm, which had not been received, but from the proceeds of which he hoped to clear the firm of debt.

Could she have had the advice of some judicious friend, who felt a *real* interest in her, and learned

then that he had no right to do this, the result might have been a different one.

Mrs. Minor had ever filled a woman's sphere, having implicit confidence in her husband's ability to manage his own affairs, and, though she had entertained fears at first in regard to Mr. Ketchum, time, together with her husband's words, had well nigh removed them. She had been advised to show the man, in whose hands her interest had fallen, that she had confidence in him, and, as many others would have done, had taken the advice.

Would it not be better if husbands oftener conversed freely with their wives in regard to their business affairs, and even taught them certain points in law? For instance, had Mrs. Minor been aware that illegal steps had already been taken, and sought at once the advice of some shrewd and *honest* lawyer, (there are *many shrewd*, and *a few honest*, ones in the world,) what suffering might not she have spared herself and her children?

Mr. Ketchum offered kindly to borrow the money, but, no! she proposed the sale of her carriage, horses, and driver, without which she could do, and with the proceeds her indebtedness to her husband's estate could be canceled.

* * * *

"I would welcome death," she said, to Mr. Norton, if it were not for my children, and I wish them to live here when I am taken away, and let mammy take care of them. Mattie has an uncommon mind, and so has Lelia; they could manage to get on very well."

Though the children heard her speak in this way, it was an idea they could not grasp, and would not believe, when told that she must die. In six weeks from this time she was carried to her long home.

Mr. Ketchum wrote again for Mr. Rivers, and to Mr. Nichol. They both came; and not till their arrival was the illusion dispelled, to which the girls clung as the only comfort left them, that they would carry out the darling wish of their mother, remain at Minor Place and keep mammy with them.

Alas! they were soon told that their home no longer belonged to them, but to the creditors of their father.

Poor heart-bruised children, they had before thought their sorrow too great to be borne, but when they found they must bid adieu to the home of their childhood, and, above all, must be separated, their young hearts were overburdened with a weight too great for utterance.

The gentlemen held a consultation, and the conclusion was, that, as a separation had to take place, it was best that it should be done soon, and it was agreed that Mr. Nichol should start with Mattie for Georgia, on the same day that Mr. Rivers did for his home with Lelia and Annie, while Minor Place would be left with Mr. Ketchum, to be disposed of, after they had gone.

According to one of the most unjust laws by which any people were ever governed, a surviving partner, in some States, is not bound by security, bond, or

otherwise, but the entire business of a firm falls into his hands unconditionally.

If he chances to be an honest, steady man, with business capacity, it is well. There are such men in the world, though rarely met with.

A man may be an honest one, and yet not capable of attending to such business, or he may be altogether capable, and his intentions honest, but unfortunately given to dissipation, and thus become unfitted for it.

In either of these cases, would it not be better for himself, as well as those whose interest may fall into his hands, that he was made responsible in some way? Heaven help the widow and orphans of any man who dies leaving his all in the hands of a surviving partner! As there are exceptions to almost every rule, there may be to this one.

We are no advocate for women's rights conventions: there is a sphere for woman, and in it she should be content to move. Yet, if the united voices of the widows and fatherless daughters throughout our land could be heard, there is one point of law they would, without one dissenting voice, have changed. Reader, do you not agree that this is true?

How strange it is that the same laws which compel a man to give a bond, secured, by other men, before he can fill any of the petty offices in the land, leave it in the power of so large a class of our citizens to deal justly by helpless women and children, or squander their all at will!

How many bitter heart-burnings might be spared

—how many passions would lie dormant—that are roused by the law's leniency on this subject?

Unaccountable, indeed, is the fact that the men who have a voice in such matters, being, as most of them are, husbands and fathers, and having partners in business, do not see this to be so, and endeavor to have it remedied!

Not only would widows and orphans be benefited by some change in the law on this point, but the creditors of firms would be more secure, and surviving partners would, by being compelled to act justly, secure their own reputations!

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE left Lelia and Annie Minor sitting near an open window at night.

Alonzo Rivers occupied an elegant mansion, handsomely furnished. It was two stories and a half. The first floor contained two parlors, a library or study, a sitting-room, dining-room, and conservatory. The second, only chambers, four in number. The half story was little more than a garret.

His wife was, as Annie had said, "beautiful and grand, but *oh, so cold!*" She was a votary at fashion's shrine, and prided herself on keeping the neatest

house in the place. It did seem there never was a time when sweeping was necessary!

It was to her a severe trial to receive these children; especially having heard her husband speak of the freedom they enjoyed in their own home.

Mr. Rivers was a money-making and money-saving man, never thinking of the inconvenience to which his wife would be subjected. The thought which presented itself to his mind was this: He would charge the children board. Of course they could not pay it; but the hire of their servants would more than do it. Such, then, were the relations with whom these tenderly-reared orphans were thrown.

It was in the small attic, in the half story, we found them. For some time mammy was allowed to remain with them, but Mrs. Rivers said she was exerting a bad influence over them, and, at her suggestion, "Old Jude," as she was called there, was sent to the plantation to nurse sick negroes.

On the evening we found them she had been to the house, and little Ida had asked for her to stay that night with them; and, while she clung to her mammy, Mrs. Rivers had spoken harshly to the child, and, in a peremptory manner, ordered the nurse back to the plantation.

Lelia took the struggling child in her arms, and, after a long time, she had fretted herself to sleep; not, however till her brow was parched by a burning fever.

It was this that had caused Annie to shed such bitter tears, and speak as she had done.

Alonzo Rivers was a coward! He had not the courage to speak to the girls himself, but would put words in the mouth of his wife, who was only too willing to consider the orphans as intruders, and ever prefaced her threats or remarks with "Your Cousin Lonnie says!"

They very seldom saw the tyrant, who was thus revenging himself on the children for faults their parents had never committed!

On one occasion, when Lelia had complained of having no money of her own, Mrs. Rivers replied:

"Your cousin says it will require the hire of all your servants for two years to pay your board and settle a debt your father's estate owes him for borrowed money!"

Ida was very restless all night, and the next morning was very sick. Lelia had not slept, but spent a part of the night, writing to Mattie, telling of her many troubles; for she was one of those confiding natures, who must make another share either their joys or sorrows. Having finished that, she wrote to Mr. Williams, her former instructor, asking for a situation in his school as primary teacher.

She felt that she could have borne ill-treatment from her relatives; but to know that her sisters had the same to endure, and to see her old mammy bowed down, and treated as a farm hand! All this was too much for her proud nature, and she made a desperate resolve that night, as she watched the sad face of one sister in sleep, and listened to the restless moanings of the other.

"No!" she soliloquized, "I will make one effort to break the yoke that binds us; I will leave this prison, and at the same time provide a home for those I love so dearly."

Then, throwing herself on the bed, she revolved, in her own mind, if that plan failed, what she would do next.

When the bell sounded, without waking either of her sisters, she descended. Finding her alone, Mr. Rivers asked where the others were.

"Annie is not at all well, and Ida was very restless all night. She has quite a high fever. Cousin Lonnie, I wish you would go up to see her after breakfast."

"Very well; I will. Perhaps she needs medicine."

"I think it was crying so, about mammy, yesterday evening, that made her sick. Could n't you let her come to her to-day?"

"There were two servants very sick, yesterday; and it is owing to how they are, whether she can be spared," was the reply.

This was too much! and Lelia's independence was manifest in her next remark:

"Our mother wished mammy to stay with her children at all times. I wonder what she would think, could she know that, even when they are sick, she is not allowed to wait on them!" and, without breaking her fast, she arose and left the table.

Though it did seem that there were times when, wrapping his conscience snugly up, Mr. Rivers bade it be quiet, it was signally evident that conscience was not always submissive, and it would sometimes speak

so as to be heard. After Lelia left the room, its voice was so loud his appetite was frightened away.

Rising from the table, he almost unconsciously followed the weeping orphan to the little attic. Lelia sat on the side of the bed, Annie still slept, and little Ida tossed from side to side.

He placed his finger on the child's pulse; the touch roused her. Looking up at him, with her mother's eyes, she said: "Mamma is coming for little Ida; please let mammy stay with Annie and sis Lelia!"

He did not reply, but, hurrying down stairs, despatched two messengers—one for a physician, the other for the faithful nurse; then telling his wife what he thought, returned to the chamber, if such it could be called.

None need have envied him his reflections, as he listened to the prattle of that child, who was destined so soon to join her parents.

The physician came, and pronounced her dangerously ill! She would seem conscious for a short time, then her mind wandered, and she gave expression to beautiful thoughts! As soon as she saw the familiar face—for mammy had instantly obeyed the summons—she exclaimed:

"Oh, please, let her take me up," looking at Mr. Rivers, and when raised in those arms which had cradled her from infancy, she grew more quiet.

Just as the sun had sunk, and the moon could be seen from the same window, the mother's spirit hovered over her dying child, and conducted her to regions of bliss.

What a world of sorrow are those saved who die in infancy or early childhood! Why should we mourn the death of children? especially if they have joined parents who have gone before them!

Mourn when a child is reunited to loving parents in a world of bright spirits! No! rather let us ever rejoice, when we hear it said, "an orphan is dead."

This was the first time death had ever entered the home of Mr. Rivers. His conscience was fully awake, and caused him to feel as only the guilty can. He resolved to do a better part by those still left to his care.

Though there was a change, they never could rid themselves of the idea, that if little Ida had been gratified in her simple request, she would not have died.

Mammy was allowed to remain in the room with them at night, and many were the hours she sat by the open window, with the girls on either side of her, talking of other and happy days.

This was when their allowance of candle was being saved, and the cold proud queen of night shone forth in her glory, or when the heavens were studded with innumerable lesser lights.

They were not happy! but there was a calm enjoyment at such times, to which they had been strangers since leaving their once happy home. On one of these occasions, the following conversation took place.

"Miss Lelia, have you ever come across in your papers, one which said how much Mars Lonnie bor-

rowed from your father, that time he went to see you all?"

"No, mammy, you must be mistaken; for cousin Charlotte said that was the reason we could not have any spending money; for besides paying our board it would take all the servants' hire to pay a debt the estate owed for money father borrowed from him."

"Miss Lelia, that is not the truth! the very night of that fire, your father handed your mother a paper; when she asked him what it was, he said it was Mars Lonnie's note. I remember he said he was surprised to find him so debarrassed."

"So what, mammy? embarrassed, you mean?"

"Well, Miss Annie, you know what I mean! he told your mother, if I don't disremember, he loaned him three thousand dollars, and went his security for twenty or twenty-five hundred."

"Sister Lelia, let's look for that paper; oh, if we could find it!"

"Yes, Annie, if we could, we might have a home of our own, and mammy and sister Mattie could live with us."

"And you need not teach school either;" for she had that night told them of the letter she had written to Mr. Williams.

"Miss Lelia, do you suppose Mars Lonnie would pay it, if you could find the paper?"

"I reckon there's a way to make people do what is right, and if we had his note in our hands, he could

not deny it: if we only had a candle we could look for it to-night."

"Lelia, how can you bear everything so patiently? It is really provoking, to think of Lelia and Annie Minor, raised as they were, not even allowed a candle long enough to go to bed by."

"Never mind, Annie, there is a better day coming. I have an education, and can teach school, and, mammy, you shall one day live in our house, as you did in our father's."

"Miss Lelia, I've got a candle; I bought it the other day when she sent me up town, and a box of matches too. It's not late; I'll open the trunks, if you and Miss Annie will look for the paper."

It was a new idea, and the novelty of it was pleasing. Under their bed were four trunks, containing such articles as they had been able to bring with them from Minor Place. While mammy drew from her hiding place the candle and matches, the girls busied themselves in securing the door and windows from emitting a ray of light to outsiders.

This done, there arose a difficulty; the trunks were so heavy they could not be moved without making a noise, which might be heard below, but mammy, who was ready for every emergency, proposed a plan.

"Children, you will take cold before morning, and you wait till I kindle a fire, and from behind the bed she brought wood and pine, for this had all been planned by her many days before. Lelia begged to assist her, when she said:

"Well, you may make the fire, while I take off the

mattress, and take up the slats, then you see we can get in the trunks without making any noise."

Who, but mammy, would ever have dreamed of such a plan? but, as we have before said, she was no ordinary person, and she had felt more keenly the changes to which her children, as she called them, had been subjected, than the treatment she had received.

She had known Alonzo Rivers from childhood, and she knew what to expect from him, and her interest in and sorrow for the girls caused her to forget personal injuries.

Many restless days and sleepless nights had she passed, during which she was separated from them, in a rude cabin, faring like other field hands, and rendered responsible as nurse for the plantation. 'Twas then she built air castles in the far future for these neglected children, and often this slip of paper rose as the foundation of them.

If it could be found, and Mars Lonnie made to pay it, what they might not be able to do was more than she could dream of, but never till after little Ida's death, and she was allowed to sleep in the room, had she suffered herself to mention it, for in her own recollection of the paper she had great confidence. All arrangements had been made before it was mentioned, and now the time for carrying it out had arrived.

The fire was kindled; the mattress placed on the floor; the slats removed; the four trunks exposed to view, and the first one opened; the search, on which so much depended, began.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOR more than a year Mattie had been an inmate of her uncle's house. She still occupied the same room her mother had done, and which had been assigned her when she visited Oak Wood.

Her uncle handed her two letters while at supper—one from Ella Duval; the other was the one Lelia had written, the night before little Ida died, in which to her older and much loved sister she had told her manifold trials, and when she alluded to her cousin's harshness to her youngest and idolized sister, the page was blotted with an orphan's tears.

Mattie wept as she read that story of suffering, and her own lot, which had seemed so hard, was a pleasant one compared to that of poor Lelia and Annie. She could not see how it was that the children of such parents could be allowed to suffer so.

There was a postscript of only a few lines, and she offered a prayer of thankfulness as she learned that dear little Ida had been borne by her angel mother to the spirit world, and was then an angel herself, far above the reach of her tyrannical cousins.

It was a cool night, and a slow fire burned on the hearth, and, through blinding tears, she gazed on the coals as if there she would read the future destiny of herself and foster sisters.

She still held Lelia's letter in her hand: the grief she had suffered at the loss of loved ones by death,

separation from the home and sisters so dear, had failed to cause her such mental anguish as she then endured.

"Oh, that I had a home of my own, how freely should they share it!" Then she reflected that there was an escape for her from the life she was leading, and now, more than ever, she seriously contemplated making the change, not so much on her own account as for the sakes of those she loved.

While she hesitated in her decision, there was a light rap at the door; she did not start, nor move, for the tap was a familiar one; she said "Come in," and the fact that Nettie was by her side made her feel better.

Observing Mattie's sadness, she glided noiselessly to her side, and, placing her arm around her, said:

"What is it, Cousin Mattie, that troubles you so? May I not share it with you?"

"Yes, Nettie! and if you will remember all, or the tenth part of what I have told you of my childhood's home, and read this letter, you may imagine what I feel."

Having perused it in silence, she took one of Mattie's hands, "Dear cousin, she said, I know what your wishes are; you regret your inability to render assistance to your sisters, in this their time of need. I have quite a sum of money for a girl like me to have; take that; write to Lelia, and, in your own name, send it, and we will talk to father about it."

"And poor mammy, too, how sorry I am for her.

If she could only stay in the room with them, what a comfort she would be."

Nettie paused a few moments, and then asked, "Cousin Mattie, why are some people so cruel in this world—and why are the good so often subjected to this cruelty?"

Then rising, as she was about to give her usual good-night kiss, she whispered, as if she could not hear herself speak the words, "Mother and sister Rosa are going to the city to-morrow; I will tell father you want to see him, and you know how he loves you?"

Mattie thought of what Nettie had said, and, retiring, hoped that the morrow might enable her, in part, to carry out her wishes, for she remembered that her uncle's generosity had once enabled her to assist her friends.

Though never, save in the presence of strangers, did she receive a kind word from Mrs. Nichol or Rosa, she knew that her uncle and Nettie loved her; Charles wrote regularly to her from college, and his letters were a comfort; and now, when she thought of Lelia and Annie, and imagined how cheerless the room they occupied must be, and of mammy's affectionate nature, and how she must suffer being separated from them, she formed a resolve, that if Nettie's plan did not succeed, she would pursue another, by which all she wished for them could be accomplished.

The following morning, before the others had risen, Nettie met her father in the library, and told him of

her interview with Mattie, and requested him not to leave home that day, and when Nettie excused her cousin from breakfast, by saying she was not well, Mrs. Nichol remarked to her husband :

"Rosa and I had intended going to the city this morning. As Mattie is sick, had you not better remain at the house?" To which proposition he consented, and remarked he would go then and see how she was.

It was evident, from her swollen eyes, that the night had been spent in mental as well as physical suffering.

"I merely came up, my child, to say, make yourself easy; it is in your power to assist those you love. I will see you again at a suitable time." At these words she wept afresh.

"Now, Mattie, your request shall be complied with, provided you will promise to dry your tears, drink a cup of coffee, and for the next two hours banish thought and court sleep—all shall be as you wish. Will you do this?"

"Yes, sir; I will try!" Kissing her, he left the room.

"How is she?" asked his wife.

"Only suffering from headache; but I think a cup of coffee and sleep will relieve it."

He ordered his horse and said he would ride over the farm. When he returned, Mrs. Nichol and Rosa had gone, and he found Mattie in the dining-room. When she had finished her breakfast he called her into the library; sitting by her side, he said:

"My dear child, so far from feeling that I am conferring a favor on either yourself or your sisters, I rejoice that it is in my power to repay, in a very small degree, my indebtedness to their parents.

"I would willingly offer them both a home, but, you know, that I cannot do. Take this, do with it as you will, and feel thankful that your uncle is able to do that which affords him one of the greatest pleasures he ever knew," and he placed a purse in her hands.

Composing herself, she thanked him, and then said, "Uncle, there is another subject on which I would like to talk to you; perhaps this is the best opportunity we will have for some time."

"Well, my child, what is it? You need never fear to speak freely to me on any and all subjects—this you know."

Mattie blushed, and, in some confusion, begun: "You said that you could not offer Lelia and Annie a home; I have an idea, with your consent, of offering them one of my own."

"How can you do that? You could not live in a house by yourself till they could come to you! and surely you have no idea of going with them to the house of some one else."

"I have no idea of living alone. Mr. Marks has made me an offer of marriage; he is wealthy, you know, and Lelia and Annie could live with us."

Mr. Nichol looked earnestly at her, as she spoke, and then asked, "My dear child, answer me candidly: do you really love Mr. Marks, or is it a desire to give

your sisters a home, that causes you to think of marrying him?"

"I don't know that I can say that I love him now, but think I can learn to do so; he certainly is very much attached to me."

"Then, my child, since you are not very sure that you do love him, and would marry expecting to learn to do so afterwards, I can only say this—I did the same. You are old enough, sufficiently wise, and have been a member of my family long enough to have learned whether my expectations have been realized.

"Mr. Marks is wealthy, and he loves you. Suppose you were to take this important step, with this expectation, and for the purpose of offering your sisters a home; then suppose that he were to oppose you in this, your darling wish, do you think that the friendship or esteem you now have for him would, under such circumstances, ripen into love? Rather, would not passions be aroused that should never exist between husband and wife?

"Again: I grant all you have said in his favor, but are you very sure that he is a man of strict moral character? I *know* he is not! and I never have liked the idea of his visiting you; besides this, Mattie, he is noted among young men for his extreme selfishness and penuriousness."

She remembered her cousin's remark concerning him, and repeated it to her uncle.

"Charles is a good judge of human nature, and that remark is characteristic of him. Now, my child, let

me give you a piece of advice. Never marry any one unless you feel sure, without the least shadow of a doubt, that you love him, and him only, and as you never can love another, unless you feel sure that he holds your happiness in his hands, as he tells you, you do his.

"Without love there can be no happiness in a married life. I do not say to you, positively, do not marry Mr. Marks, that is not my privilege; but I do say, think well before you decide; and, it is my opinion, you can do better. You are full young, and need not be in any hurry about this matter."

He ceased speaking as Nettie came in. Mattie approached her, showing the purse, then, turning to her uncle, thanked him not only for that, but for the fatherly advice he had given her. The two girls went to Mattie's room; the purse held three hundred dollars, with a note containing these words:

"The same amount is at your service whenever you wish a remittance for your sisters. Remember, it is from you to them."

Lelia's letter was answered. Nettie insisted on adding fifty dollars from her own purse. Mattie did the same; then, writing a short note to Annie, the money was divided, and an equal amount sent to each one. What pleasure can surpass that of giving to those you love and who are needy?

To generous minds the heaviest debt is that of gratitude, when it is not in their power to repay it.

There is nothing that softens the heart, and opens the fountains of love, more than the exercise of this,

which is neither felt nor expressed by any but noble souls. The true nobility of Mattie's nature shone forth in every sentiment contained in the letter she wrote that morning. As the previous night had been one of the most miserable of her whole life, so that one was the happiest she had known since her first great sorrow.

Her uncle and cousin had ever been kind to her, and she loved them very much; the tie binding her to them was strengthened, and now she felt they were not only her friends and confidants, but that they shared with her all her sorrows, and she resolved never again, if it were possible to do so, to notice the treatment of her aunt or Rosa, but, for the sakes of those who did love her, to be happy in their home.

"Oh! there is a power, to make each hour
As sweet as heaven designed it;
Nor need we roam to bring it home
Though few there be that find it."

From that time she became more cheerful, and the love she bore her uncle shone forth in every look, word, and action of her life. The conduct of Mrs. Nichol never caused her to lose her temper, and so very respectful was she at all times that they could find no fault with her.

If Mrs. Nichol was sick, Mattie was by her side gently ministering to her wants, and, so far as she could, relieving her of household cares. She ever seemed ready to assist Rosa in arranging her wardrobe, or prepare for an entertainment; while between Nettie and herself there existed the closest intimacy

and strongest affections; and she who had, years before, been the innocent cause of estrangement, bid fair to cement the hearts which had never been too closely united.

CHAPTER XX.

DR. LIPSCOMBE was Rosa's acknowledged suitor, and the union was acknowledged by each member of the family.

He and Mr. Marks often visited the house together, and, as the doctor was considered Rosa's accepted lover, so was Mr. Marks looked on as Mattie's acknowledged suitor; but none knew whether she had or would accept him.

He had ever been a favorite with Mrs. Nichol; she urged Mattie to marry him—and, at times, she even condescended to paint her future in bright colors, as Mrs. Marks, in the same spirit which she spoke of Rosa's as Mrs. Dr. Lipscombe!

It was some days after Mattie's conversation with her uncle, the two gentlemen called together, and when they proposed an evening stroll, both had an object in view: the doctor to talk of that future which already seemed so bright to him and so near at hand; for on Rosa's finger shone that pledge of eternal love she had received from him, and was wearing as emblematic of that same future.

Of Dr. Lipscombe it might truly be said, any lady who possessed his heart, was a fortunate one! He was very handsome, and, if ever a countenance expressed integrity, intelligence, nobleness and goodness, it was his! From his large, gray eyes, beamed life, vivacity, and honesty of purpose. Though young, he was a regular practitioner, beloved by all who employed him, and, above all, he was a devoted Christian! This was the man who had, for years, loved and wooed Rosa Lenier; and never, during these years, had she, in his presence, been found off her guard.

He believed himself the most fortunate of men, and, during that walk, the day for their marriage was appointed.

Never had another image, than that of his betrothed, been impressed on his true and manly heart! No earthly potentate ever reigned with more absolute sway over his subjects, than did this beautiful girl over her captive lover; and she was fully aware of her power.

* * * *

Mr. Marks had another, and far different reason, for seconding the proposed stroll. During his last visit to Oak Wood he had made a declaration of his feelings, yet, so much had he feared a refusal, he begged Mattie not to answer him then, but to reflect seriously upon the subject until the next time they met.

From her manner, that evening, in the presence of others, he had endeavored in vain to read his destiny.

Mattie Garland was not a coquette, but a *true* wo-

man! and no true woman can or will, willfully, trifle with the affections of any man.

This being the case then, why did she hesitate when asked for her decision? Was there a struggle going on in her mind? There was!

Mr. Marks was handsome, wealthy, and he loved her. If she married him she would become the mistress of a princely mansion, could offer those she loved a home, and bestow charities with a liberal hand!

Then were remembered her uncle's words, "Suppose that in this, your darling wish, he should oppose you!" and the remark of Charles: "Will Marks is afraid of the sunshine, lest his shadow should ask him for something!"

She asked herself the question, Could she live happily without him? and thought of her uncle's loveless marriage. This decided her, and, when urged to say something, looking steadily in his face, she said:

"Mr. Marks, I cannot marry you!"

"Miss Mattie, I have one question to ask you, and hope you will answer it candidly:

"Is this your own decision, or has it been made for you by another? If your own, I submit, of course; but if, as I suspect, it has been made for you, will you not allow me the privilege of still visiting you, hoping, in time, to win the regard of my enemy!"

"If you have an enemy in my uncle's house, I am not aware of it. And now let me ask you a question:

"Would you be willing to marry any lady who did not love you? whose only feeling was that of respect and esteem?"

"I would be more than willing to marry you, with no other feeling, believing, as I do, that it is in my power to win your love.

"I may have been mistaken in flattering myself that you were not averse to me; and, if you will promise that, some time in the future, you may possibly change your decision, I will patiently give you time."

"Though it pains me to speak so positively, Mr. Marks, I never can marry you!" and, with woman's tact, she proposed returning, and changed the subject of conversation.

Rosa and Dr. Lipscombe had not arrived. Inviting him into the parlor, without entering herself, she sought her uncle, who was in the library. Laying her hand on his shoulder, as she stood behind him, she said:

"Will you not either go in the parlor and entertain Mr. Marks, or ask him in here, while I go to my room?"

"First tell me, my child, what relation he now sustains to you."

"I have taken your advice, but he does not know that it was your opinion which decided me, though, at first, he seemed to suspect me of having been influenced by some one."

"I will go, and, believe me, you will never regret it!"

When she and Nettie returned to the library, near an hour afterwards, they found Rosa, Dr. Lipscombe, and Mr. Nichol. By the sound of voices reaching them from the piazza, Mattie knew that Mr. Marks was making known to her aunt the result of his suit; and

when she heard him bid adieu and saw her aunt's face, she was convinced that more courage than she had for some months needed, would be required to endure the storm which was then rising; but one look at her uncle re-assured her, for there she saw strength would be added to her own!

CHAPTER XXI.

WE left mammy and the sisters just beginning a search for that slip of paper on which depended their liberation from prison, and unless it could be found they knew not how much longer it must last.

It is not surprising that the task was eagerly commenced, of examining trunks, which were packed with articles, each one of which brought with it some memory of the happy past.

Annie was so much overcome, even before it began, that Lelia urged her to lie down on the heap of bed clothes on the floor, and there she soon wept herself to sleep.

The first trunk contained many packages of letters and papers; each one was examined, but in vain. The second and third were soon examined. Before closing them, Lelia opened a small drawer, and taking little Ida's clothes from it, placed them with those which had been worn by other dear ones.

Day was dawning, but she knew it not: all her courage had been summoned for the performance of that task, and had never for one moment suffered herself to give way, lest it could not be continued, but the start she gave as the rising bell sounded below stairs, told what effect the night's work had produced on her overtaxed nerves.

Mr. Rivers rose every morning, just as day was breaking, and rang a bell, at the sound of which all were expected to go about their daily vocations. Mammy was careful to obey strictly all the household regulations, and now, as Lelia roused her sister, mammy hurriedly put the room in order and left them.

Lelia threw herself on the bed to rest a few moments, and fell into a sound sleep, which prevented her from hearing the breakfast bell.

Mr. Rivers had never succeeded in stilling that little monitor which had spoken so loudly, and when his wife sent a peremptory order to the orphans in the attic, to come then or do without their breakfast, he modified the message, by telling the servant to go and let the girls know that breakfast was waiting.

There were no traces of the morning meal when they descended, and they were told by Mrs. Rivers, that all persons in her house were expected to answer the dining-room bell by their immediate presence; and, ordering her carriage, soon after she left the house.

How few persons there are, while blessed with kind parents, and, while parents live, with numerous friends,

can know the meaning of the word *orphanage*. To those who have learned from experience, there is no other so fraught with sorrow.

There are exceptions, we know, but in a general sense, it means a sudden turning of happy childhood to manhood or womanhood, full of care.

It implies a sense of loneliness and dependence, which *cannot* be felt while parents live.

It is a *dark* cloud, resting on a life that has hitherto been all sunshine. In a word, *orphanage* means the loss of *all* that has made this world bright and beautiful, and oh! with the loss, comes the knowledge that it is irreparable.

Children may, and often do, inherit the features, dispositions, and even the possessions of their parents, but their friendships rarely.

Could parents have the faintest idea of the sad change their removal from this earth would make in their light-hearted, happy children, they could but view them with emotions of pity; and when their little ones are snatched away, they would kiss the rod that smites them, and say, "Thy will be done."

While we admit that children rarely inherit the friendships of their parents, still they are never left *friendless*. No! He, who makes them orphans, has so ordered it, that for their every time of need, there is found a friend indeed.

This may seem strong language, but the truth of these sentiments, if acknowledged, must find lodgment, in *many* orphaned hearts. We do not say in *all*.

* * * *

"Come, Annie, we won't be hungry any longer, mammy has brought us some breakfast." As on the first night we found them in the attic, they were sitting at the window, and Annie's head rested on her sister's shoulder. The door opened, and looking around, Lelia saw mammy enter with a waiter.

She placed it on Lelia's lap, and stood by, while they partook of its contents; it held two cups of strong coffee, some bread and butter. When they had finished, she prevailed on them to lie down, promising to waken them in time for dinner.

Mrs. Rivers required no manual labor at their hands. Oh! no! all she did require, was, that they should occupy their own room, except at meals, and never intrude themselves on her, especially when she had visitors.

They were required to attend church regularly.

Mr. and Mrs. Rivers were strict church members, and their reputation as Christians would have suffered, had not the members of their family been punctual worshipers.

They owned a pew near the altar, and brother and sister Rivers were very devout Christians on the sabbath.

It was a pleasure to Lelia, and kept her quite busy to keep their slender wardrobe in repair, so that they might appear neatly dressed, as they followed their cousins up the long aisle, and sat between them in the pew.

The Monday following the search for the note,

Mr. Rivers handed Lelia two letters for herself and one for Annie.

They would not have dared open them while at the table, but as soon as possible sought their own room.

This occasioned no remark, for there was in that house no family fireside in winter; no gathering around a table in summer, to discuss the events of to-day, or make plans for to-morrow.

Sometimes, Mr. and Mrs. Rivers went to spend the evening with some neighbor, or entertained visitors in their own parlor, or she went to her own room and he to his study, while Lelia and Annie, as if afraid of their own voices below stairs, hid themselves, with none to question how their evenings passed.

So long as little Ida lived, Lelia's first task had been to disrobe her, and rock her to sleep, then she and Annie would talk or read, one to the other. Now they had mammy, and she was usually not long in joining them.

This was to be an important night. She had preceded them, and already a bright fire was burning, and a coffee pot sitting on the hearth.

It was but the work of a moment for Lelia to break the seal of the letter, she knew from the post-mark must be from Mr. Williams.

It was kind and considerate; he told her if she would take charge of the mathematical department, he would be delighted, and while she taught, Annie could be completing her education. He would give her a liberal salary, and if mammy would consent to

take charge of his nursery, as his wife's health was delicate, he would deem her services more than equivalent to their board.

This was more than they could have expected, and Lelia decided at once to accept the situation, but a difficulty presented itself, as they commented on the letter. For nearly two years no addition had been made to their wardrobe, and though their supply of mourning had been ample, it was now rusty, and their only nice dress would not answer for the school-room and church too.

"That note! oh, Lelia, it may be in that trunk, come! let's look for it!"

"Wait, I have another letter, and you have forgotten yours, both from sister Mattie, let's read them first!"

Annie opened hers, and the first thing her eyes rested on, were three bank bills; one one hundred, and two fifties.

"Who is it from, Miss Annie? and how come they to send it?"

Annie did not answer, but read the letter aloud. It was so kind, so full of tender sympathy, so much like their darling sister, and the offering was made in so gentle a manner, their hearts were almost bursting with feelings they could not define. Mattie had made no allusion to the remittance contained in Lelia's, to Annie.

When they entered their little room that night, they felt as if they were forsaken, and had feared to know the contents of Mr. Williams's letter.

It proved so much better than their fears. Hope, which was almost dormant, awoke to life, and they felt that friendship was not altogether a name! After the first flush of joy came the thought, that to accept his kind offer required more than their slender purse contained.

While regretting their poverty, the means to supply their very great need was placed in their hands.

The money was examined and talked over, and now, even if they did not find the note, they could supply themselves with necessary clothing.

After this was settled, Lelia opened her letter, and Lo! the same amount was found.

No man with his millions ever felt so rich as did the humble occupants of that little attic. "Surely if the saying that afflictions never come alone, be true," said Lelia, "it is equally so, that blessings are showered on us."

Mattie had a way of her own of bestowing favors, which made a person feel that she was the recipient rather than the donor. Lelia's letter proved this; it ran—

OAK WOOD, Oct., 18—.

My DARLING SISTER:—How is it possible for any one of us to know that the others have cause for sadness and not be sad?

Though hundreds of miles lie between us, our spirits do still commune, and we feel each other's joys and sorrows too.

Your letter carried me back to days in the long—

gone past; days that can never return; when with dear little Ida, Annie and yourself, I played under the shades of Minor Place, when your dear parents were all, and, perhaps, even more to me than my own could have been. Yes, Lelia, the nursery with its crib and trundle bed rises before me now, where for years we slept in each other's arms.

The fireside in the front chamber, around which we used to gather at twilight: The table with its meals of social cheer: The school-room with its numerous trials and triumphs: The Sabbath school with its endearing associations: The church and good Mr. Norton, are all before me to-night.

To tell of all the hallowed memories it has called up is not possible, for as I write the scenes of our childhood and youthful days crowd on memory.

But, dear Lelia, there rises one you cannot remember; yet it is one I can never forget. The night of my own father's death, when my own mother, a stranger in the place, said: '*Go, my child, and ask some one to come and help us lay your father out.*

Yes! these were her own words. We lived in a little brown house by the river. It was Christmas eve. I started; it was a cold, dreary night. The wind howled so dreadfully—I can hear it now. The moon rode majestically through the sky; on I went, not knowing, and scarcely caring, whither; no sign of life met my eye. The tall buildings threw their dark shadows on the sidewalks, making them colder.

At last a ray of light, from a lordly mansion,

greeted me. I saw moving forms within, through a half-open window, and knew that fire burned there.

Going up the steps of Minor Place, I knocked, as if fearing to disturb some one. My next recollection is that of being seated on the divan in your mother's chamber, with her beautiful eyes beaming on me, as I told my story, and mammy exchanged my tattered garments for some of your clothing.

Oh, Lelia, to tell of the gratitude which filled my childish heart—as, carried in strong arms, warm and comfortable, I returned to my mother, with light, heat, and numerous other comforts for her—would require an abler pen than mine.

My poor father was gone, and could not be comforted, but my grief for him was lessened when I thought that all *these* would keep my mother with me.

Alas! only two days more was she spared to me. Then I was left an orphan, but not a friendless one, though not, in many, many miles of me, breathed a human being I had ever seen.

You know how I was raised, for we fared alike. Your parents became mine; we were *sisters*: and now, darling sister, you will not refuse to let me acknowledge the debt I owe your parents.

Uncle gave it to me, except one hundred dollars, which Nettie and myself added. Do not, my dear sisters, feel under obligation to any of us, for you are not.

Uncle's words were, 'Mattie, rejoice that it is in my power, through you, to perform the most pleasant act of my life.'

Let us not grieve for the dear little angel who has been removed to a purer region, and is now being guarded by *our* dear parents.

Do you know, Lelia, that in my dreams of the future, I look forward to a time when we will again be the occupants of Minor Place, and our past happiness will be renewed, softened by time and sorrow?

Will not that be a glorious day? When, mammy restored to her former position, we will live together in peace and happiness?

Let us all pray for each other, that our trials may soon be over and we may meet again.

Your loving

MATTIE.

A profound silence followed the reading of that letter. The three sat and looked through their tears into the fire; each too busy with their own thoughts and feelings, to frame them into words.

Annie was the first to break the silence. "Lelia, I suppose all this is true; but I can no more realize it than I could our first reverse of fortune. Now, let us look for that note, and if we can find it, *make* him pay it. Then we can buy back Minor Place and all go there."

"Come on! You need not say *bed* to me; I am going to see the bottom of that trunk before I sleep," and, rising, she began to remove the bed-clothes.

CHAPTER XXII.

FINDING Annie so much elated, the second search began. The last trunk was opened, and found to contain books and papers, every one of which was eagerly examined. The bottom was reached and no note found.

Their countenances fell, and, for some minutes, they sat looking at each other; at last Lelia said:

"It is all right. To find that note would be too much happiness; we should be more than contented with what we have."

"What are you thinking about, mammy?"

"I was trying to remember what kind of a dress your mother had on that night."

"I can tell you," said Lelia; "it was a brown merino; I saw it in the second trunk."

"Well, Miss Lelia, let's look in the pocket of it?"

The second trunk was reopened, and Lelia took from it the brown merino dress, and, hastily putting her hand in the pocket, drew from it a handkerchief and slip of paper.

Oh! how their hearts throbbed; this was the last hope, and would it end in despair? For a moment Lelia held it, as if fearing to open it; then, with a desperate resolve she unfolded it and read aloud:

"Twelve months after date, I promise to pay Wal-

ter Minor three thousand dollars, for value received.
ALONZO RIVERS."

It bore the date of one of the days they all knew he was at Minor Place.

"I knew it, Miss Lelia! I knew your father did not owe him a cent."

To describe their feelings would not be possible! only orphans, who have suffered similar injustice, can appreciate them.

"Thank God, children! yes, I say, let us thank God for His mercies!"

It was agreed that they would not mention the contents of their letters till Lelia had presented the note to her cousin, which, she said, must be in the presence of his wife, the next morning.

It was growing late, and, with lighter hearts than had been theirs for more than two years, they repacked and locked the trunks. Then mammy begged them to take a cup of coffee. While they did so she re-arranged the room. Then, kneeling down, their hearts were lifted in thankfulness to the Father of the fatherless for all the blessings he had showered upon them!

Long before breakfast the next morning the sisters might have been seen promenading the garden walks, while their faces glowed with a happiness to which they had been so long strangers!

With a cheerful "good morning" to their cousins, they took their places at the table.

Mr. Rivers had finished his meal, and was about

leaving the room, when Lelia said, "Cousin Lonnie, I would like to have a conversation with you, this morning, in your study!"

"Your cousin has ordered his horse, and is going away on business, Lelia! Can't you say what you have to say to me?"

"I have nothing to say to Cousin Lonnie that I am unwilling for you to hear, Cousin Charlotte. It was my intention to ask you to witness the interview!"

Was this Lelia Minor? the timid, shrinking girl, of three years before, who thus, in a business-like manner, requested an interview with her cousins, before whom she scarcely ever volunteered a remark?

Yes! as has often been the case with those who have been thrown on the cold charities of the world, and made to feel their dependence, and almost crushed with the weight—no sooner had Lelia felt that, by a sudden turn of fortune, the waves, which had well nigh overwhelmed her, were parted, and that she was emerging from their watery depths, than her independence asserted its right, and she had courage to go forward and claim that which was justly her own!

She had never before made such a request, and they knew not what to make of the calm dignity with which she spoke.

"Well, Lelia, you can see us both, now, in the study, if you wish it," said Mr. Rivers. Then turning to Annie, he asked—

"And do you want to see us, too?"

"It is my desire that this interview shall be witnessed by Annie as well as Cousin Charlotte."

To the study they all repaired. When they were seated, Lelia turned her large, black eyes on her cousin, and said:

"Cousin Lonnie, I have been a member of your family for nearly two years; during which my time has been spent very unprofitably to myself or others; and such a life is not calculated to render my future useful or happy!

"Annie, too, has lost the time when her studies could have been prosecuted with greater benefit than any other! I have concluded to teach school, and thus enable her to pursue her course."

"You may stop just there, Lelia. In the first place, I will make no effort to procure you a situation as teacher; in the next, it shall never be said that my sister's child (for your mother was like one to me) had to leave my house and make a support for herself! And if this is what you had to say, you might have saved yourself the trouble, and me the time!" He rose to leave.

"Wait, Cousin Lonnie! hear me through! I will not ask such another favor of you. One of the letters you brought me last night, was from Mr. Williams—my old teacher and my father's friend, in reply to one I had written him on the subject—in which he offers me a liberal salary, as teacher of mathematics; and for mammy's services, in his nursery, he offers Annie and myself board. He will not only take Annie as a regular scholar, but will give me lessons in any study I may feel disposed to pursue."

She stopped to get breath. Her uncle, taking ad-

vantage of this, began: "This is a pretty state of affairs!"

"If you will listen, Cousin Lonnie, I think I can convince you that it is to our interest that I should do this. At present it requires the hire of six servants to pay our board. I will see the gentleman who has them hired, and say that I am going to M—, and that Mr. Williams will hereafter have the management of the servants. Mammy will go with us, and we will be happy in the thought that we are being employed usefully!"

"While I live, Lelia, and have a home for you both, I tell you again, you shall never become a common school teacher! As to the hire of your servants, that does not more than pay your board. You are not of age, and I will not allow any such proceedings on your part. Again, only think of the expense it would be to me, to carry you and these servants to M—! No! you must abandon all such foolish fancies, and be contented to remain where you are."

"It is true I am not of age, and equally so that there never was a guardian duly appointed for our father's children!

"We came here because we knew not what else to do; because we had no nearer relations when we were left homeless, having been defrauded out of that which should have been ours!"

Mr. Rivers rocked the sacred monitor, and bade it Be still! as the eyes now fixed on him reminded him of his cousin when she was young, and he replied:

"What do you mean by being defrauded of that

which should have been yours? I knew, before your mother married, and told her so, that the time would come when your father would be a broken merchant; and, if these servants had not been secured to her, he would have spent them, too!"

This was more than Annie could bear, and, rising, she would have left the room, but Lelia's mission was not fulfilled. Taking Annie's hand she led her to the sofa, and sat down with her arm around her—then said:

"I thank my grandfather for having been so considerate as to secure these servants to her, in such a way that they could not be taken from her children. I am fully aware of the fact that, since our father's death, the law has been tested on the subject!"

Then fixing on him a gaze which spoke volumes, she asked, "Was this your opinion when, fourteen years after my father's marriage, and a few months before his death, you visited Minor Place?"

There was no mistaking her meaning; any bystander would have known that she felt the platform on which she stood to be firm. Nothing daunted, Mr. Rivers replied:

"It had ever been my opinion, and that visit only strengthened it."

"What occurred, during your stay there, to confirm such an opinion?"

With another lullaby to conscience he answered: "The fact of your parents living in a style they could not afford; and, if you need further proof, I can give it in a few words. During that same visit your father

borrowed from me three thousand dollars, and I went his security for more than two thousand! These are facts I never should have mentioned, however, but for your impertinence to me this morning."

"Lelia," said Mrs. Rivers, "you asked me only to be a witness to this interview, but this *impudence*—if you will allow the word, surpasses anything I ever heard."

"Oh, sister, let's go to our own room," said Annie.

Placing her hand on Annie's head, she said: "Be quiet, Annie, don't interrupt me," and turning to Mrs. Rivers:

"You are right, Cousin Charlotte, in supposing you were asked to be a silent witness! I expected and wished only to converse with Cousin Lonnie."

Then, to him, she continued in a tone she had not yet spoken:

"I believe proof is called the strongest point in law. Can you prove that my father borrowed this amount from you? It would require a note in his own hand to convince me of it."

"Well really, little lawyer, since you require such strong proof, I only regret that when your father's estate proved insolvent, as I knew it would, I destroyed it."

"Cousin Lonnie, you cannot regret this more than I do having heard you *say* it. There is a day coming when I believe I shall be able to pay every just debt of my father's, and if you were one of his creditors I should endeavor to settle yours first. Can you re-

member the date of the note which passed between you?

Dear reader, have you never heard that "a worm, when trodden on, will coil and turn?" Why, then, should not poor, down-trodden orphans triumph, when they find those who have wronged them in their power?

As the anaconda wraps itself around the body of its victim, so as to render escape impossible, before striking the fatal blow, so did Lelia Minor, (feeling sure of proving to her cousin that she understood the game he had been playing for two years,) in the presence of his wife, who had been his accomplice, and of Annie, who, with herself, had been a sufferer, intend to teach him a lesson he could not forget.

Never dreaming that the real note was in existence, or, if it was, that she could know of its whereabouts, with another shake of conscience's crib, he replied:

"Yes! I remember both the note and the date; but, as it has been destroyed, I will never trouble you to pay it, since, if I did, you have nothing now to do it with."

For a few moments no sound was heard, save Annie's sobs, whose head lay on her sister's arm. Lelia sat smoothing Annie's hair, with her eyes fixed steadily on her cousin's face, who met her gaze without wincing. The moment had arrived, his words of cold sarcasm had aided her, and, raising Annie's head, she said, as her bosom heaved with emotion:

"There must be a great mistake somewhere, as you will perceive, if you will allow me to read a note I found in the pocket of the dress our mother wore on the night of our father's death, and two nights after you left Minor Place."

She had taken the note from her own pocket. Mr. Rivers moved uneasily, for too well did he know what he was destined to hear, before she read, in a calm, clear voice:

Twelve months after date I promise to pay Walter Minor the sum of three thousand dollars, for value received.

ALONZO RIVERS.

Rising, he walked the room, exclaiming, "It is false! it is false! every word of it!" and approaching her, demanded the paper. Looking at it, he continued: "It is a forgery! I did not believe your father would have——"

"Stop!" cried Lelia. "My father was as honest a man as ever breathed, and neither you nor any other man shall say, in my presence, he was not."

Annie gave one scream, and, throwing her arms around her sister, said: "Oh, Lelia, let's go from this place! we can go! I cannot stay any longer!"

Folding the note up carefully, and placing it in his pocketbook, Mr. Rivers said: "Proof, I believe you said, was a strong point in law; what proof have you that I ever owed your father anything?"

Most effectually had conscience first dozed, then

slept—shall we say, a sleep that knows no waking—and, while it slumbered, he continued :

“Even had this been a true note, its being in my possession would prove that the debt had been cancelled. I suppose, Lelia, you thought by presenting this note to wheedle me out of three thousand dollars; then both of you could become travelled ladies.”

For a moment Lelia bent over her sister to quiet her, then, standing erect, she looked at her cousin. Not a tear dimmed the lustre of her brilliant eyes; not a sob choked the free utterance of her words; but, as an innocent man who is called on to answer to the query “Guilty, or not guilty?” with one hand slightly elevated, and the other turned to her weeping sister, she said :

“God, who rules in heaven, knows it is an honest debt, and one due my mother’s orphan children from one she loved as a brother, and whom her parents loved and treated as a son.” For a moment she ceased, then said :

“I thank the God of my parents that there are honest hearts still beating in this world; and there are those who cherish a heartfelt remembrance of favors bestowed on them by those who have been translated to a happier sphere.

“Two of the letters you brought last night were from our *foster* sister, Mattie Garland; each one contained two hundred dollars; so that we can leave here without putting you either to expense or trouble.

“We have friends left, and there is a day coming when we will no longer be bound down as we have been. That day dawned for dear little Ida, when she was taken to our parents. It dawned for Annie and myself when Mr. Williams offered me a place in his school. It grew brighter when we received, through sister Mattie, the means to leave this prison.

“You have seen fit to deny a just debt, and cast a stain on our father’s untarnished name. There may come a day when you would give worlds to retract what you have done and said this morning.”

Then, in a subdued voice, she continued : “In all earnestness, Cousin Lonnie, I say, heaven grant that day may not come too late.”

Then raising her weeping sister, she said, “Come, Annie, let’s go to our room.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THAT night, when securely shut up in the little attic, they related to mammy the scene of the morning. Lelia wrote to Mr. Williams, accepting his offer, and asking whether he could send some one for them. She said they would defray their own expenses; all they wished was an escort. She also asked whether he would take charge of their servants another year, if

he would, and could send for them, to do so by Christmas, as they were hired out till that time.

That same night she wrote a note to the gentleman to whom they were hired. The next morning she went shopping, and the few weeks which followed were spent in making preparations for the journey. Neither of their cousins alluded to the conversation, or questioned them as to their plans.

Thus had a timid, shrinking girl, manifested a capability for business which surprised herself as much as others; and, having begun, she never faltered in her purpose.

There was a change in the manner of their relatives; but their unusual kindness was not observed. She felt a new spirit within her. The independence had asserted its right, and she felt herself to be no longer a child but a dignified woman. Thus does Providence often cause our heaviest afflictions and sorest trials to prove our greatest blessings.

Christmas eve, while they sat at supper, the door-bell sounded, and the servant announced a gentleman who wished to see Miss Lelia.

Excusing herself she went to the parlor, and met her much-loved teacher! He approached, and, without speaking, she fell into his arms and wept as a child. He led her to a chair, and, sitting beside her, held her hand in silence.

When Lelia had sufficiently recovered to collect her thoughts, she remembered that he was a traveller, and must be hungry. Excusing herself she returned

to the dining-room, sent Annie in to see him, and said to her cousin:

"Mr. Williams has come for Annie and myself. I would like for you to invite him to take tea;" then, leaving the room, returned to the parlor. In a few moments Mr. and Mrs. Rivers entered together. Lelia introduced him as their "teacher and friend." At Mrs. Rivers' invitation, they retired to the dining-room.

While sitting at the table, Mr. Williams asked Lelia if they were ready to accompany him.

She replied they were in perfect readiness.

Then addressing Mr. Rivers, he said: "You do not know, sir, how glad I am to have the girls with me once more; and I think that Lelia's talent for mathematics should not be hid. She can aid me so much in that branch, and Annie certainly should not have lost so much time!"

"You cannot know, sir," replied Mr. Rivers, "what a source of mortification this resolution of Lelia's is to me, and has been ever since I found it out! I agree with you fully in regard to Annie; she should be at school; but there is no necessity for Lelia confining herself to the school-room."

"I assure you, sir, I never was more rejoiced in my life than when I received her letter, for her education is by no means complete; and her time will not be fully occupied—she can study several hours each day. Then, too, they will be together. And Mrs. Williams is so much rejoiced at the idea of mammy having charge of our children!"

The meal being over, they retired to the parlor, when Mr. Williams pursued the same subject: "Doubtless, Mrs. Rivers, you have found out what a treasure mammy is. I assure you, Mrs. Minor was ever viewed enviously by the mothers and housekeepers in M——. By-the-by, Lelia, where is the old soul? I thought she would have been in to see me!"

Could he have seen the glances the sisters had exchanged during the commendations he bestowed on her, he might have learned a great deal! Lelia said she was busy, but very much delighted to know that he had come. Mr. Rivers had gone to the door, and sent her word that Mr. Williams wanted her.

Oh, how she was changed! he would scarcely have recognized her but for the smile which lighted up her face as he approached her, holding out his hand. Then he repeated his wife's happiness at having her. "Really, mammy, I accused her of being more delighted at your return than that of the girls; and all your old friends will welcome you, I assure you!"

The poor creature was overcome by this kindness; and, when Annie proposed that she should help her with some packing, she was glad to leave the room.

"Stop a moment, Annie! you know we have but a week to go and settle down in before school commences: what say you to leaving in the morning?"

"There is no objection to it," said Lelia; "we can be all ready, provided Cousin Lonnie can send the servants word to-night! Can you do this?" she asked, turning to him.

"Well, mammy, you go on; I will be there directly!" and Annie waited to hear her cousin's answer.

"To-morrow was the time I understood they would be here; but, if you insist on it, of course I can send them word now."

"When have you heard from Mattie?"

"Annie and myself each had a letter from her a few days ago. She was well when she wrote."

"And oh, Mr. Williams! I think a generous act should be proclaimed when it is done, don't you?"

"I certainly do! But if it was performed by Mattie, it certainly will not surprise me."

Mr. Rivers said he would go, and send for the servants, and advised the girls to begin their packing.

"Yes, sir! First let me tell Mr. Williams, Sister Mattie sent Lelia and myself, each, two hundred dollars! That accounts for our being able to defray our own expenses! Was it not kind?"

Mrs. Rivers said she must order an early breakfast, and see about a lunch for them, and soon left the room.

The last night spent by the girls in their cousin's home was not, by any means, the most miserable one they had passed there! and very few of its moments were given to sleep. Long before the sun made his appearance they had bidden adieu to their cousins, and the time which passed as they were borne back to their native place, was spent in delightful converse!

Leaving the travellers on their way—Mr. Williams with the girls and mammy in a carriage, the other

servants with the baggage in a wagon, all light and happy hearted. Hoping they may reach their journey's end in safety, we will retrace our steps to Oak Wood.

CHAPTER XXIV.

From the time that Mrs. Nichol learned that Mr. Marks had been rejected, Mattie's time was rendered more unpleasant than for months before, and she could but feel that her aunt's kind treatment and anxiety for the marriage had been owing to the fond hope entertained, that it would relieve her of her presence, but as Mattie's trials increased, her courage to bear them did also.

"The rose that's bent with summer rain, or filled with early dew,
Sheds richer perfume o'er again, and glows with lovelier hue.
So hearts bowed down by bitter care, or crushed by bitter grief—
Show clearer what their virtues are, while waiting for relief."

Winter was fast passing away, and among the first days of early spring had been appointed as Rosa's bridal day.

Neither labor nor expense were being spared in the preparations being made. Though Mattie was daily, even hourly, rendering assistance, Mrs. Nichol never let an opportunity pass, without reminding her of

the one mistake of her life, and surely if meaning words, or contemptuous smiles could have caused a young lady to regret having deprived herself of a home of her own, Mattie would have regretted having discarded Mr. Marks.

But she had every confidence in her uncle's affection for and interest in her, and after the trial of rejecting him was past, the cessation of his visits did not grieve her. Rosa was so much taken up with her own bright prospects, that she forgot to slight her cousin, who was sewing night and day for her, but treated her politely as she would have done any mantua-maker, in whose taste she had every confidence, and whom she dreaded to provoke, for fear of the loss such a circumstance might prove to herself.

Among the first weeks in January, Mattie had, at Rosa's request, accompanied her uncle to the city, for the purpose of purchasing many articles that were requisite. It was noon when they arrived, and the afternoon was spent in that most tiresome of undertakings, going from store to store, in search of thread, buttons, trimmings, &c., to match a variety of goods.

Though the bridal suit had been ordered from New York, and was daily expected, there was some doubt as to its arrival, and it had been deemed wise to provide against such an event, and beside purchasing many articles, Mattie was delegated to learn whether it could be supplied without sending elsewhere.

Weary and worn with her afternoon's work, as the sun was about setting, she went to the hotel, as it had

been arranged between her uncle and herself they would spend the night there.

While waiting for the door to be opened, her attention was arrested by hearing her uncle's name called; on turning, she observed two gentlemen standing at the farther end of the long piazza; one of them she recognized as the proprietor, but the other was a stranger, and he it was she had heard ask the question.

He was tall, erect, and had something of a foreign air; she wondered who he was, and whether she had not mistaken his words, when Mr. Holmes replied:

"Yes, sir, he lives about fourteen miles from the city, but I think it very probable you can see him by remaining here. I saw him on the street, not an hour ago, and he generally puts up here, when he remains so late."

"Have you seen the stranger, uncle?" asked Mattie, when Mr. Nichol appeared at the door, to accompany her to supper.

"What stranger, child? I have neither seen nor heard of one."

"As to who he is I do not know, but I heard him asking Mr. Holmes where you lived, and he told him you would be here to-night."

The dining-saloon was a long narrow room, separated from the three front rooms, by a still narrower passage; they had scarcely taken their places at the table, when Mattie said, "Don't look just now, but the gentleman I spoke of is on the opposite side, and at the other end of the room, and is looking this way."

After some time had elapsed, on turning, Mr. Nichol observed a handsome young man gazing intently at him, but the face was a strange one, and his curiosity equalled Mattie's as to who he could be, for he evidently did, or seemed to, recognize him.

Mattie had scarcely left the table when she was surrounded by several gentlemen, who insisted on her spending the evening in the parlor, to which she readily consented, and the stranger was soon forgotten by her.

Mr. Nichol followed him, however, into the gentlemen's parlor, to give him an opportunity of making himself known; he had not waited many minutes, before the young man approached, and extending his hand, said:

"You are Mr. William Nichol! are you not?"

"I am, sir! but you have the advantage of me." Still the offered hand was not refused.

"I am not surprised that you do not recognize in me the Edwin Terryl you met several years ago at Mr. Minor's in Alabama!"

"Is it possible!!" Then grasping the hand he still held in both his, he expressed his joy at meeting him.

Walking towards the fire, they sat down, and Mr. Nichol asked, "How long he had been on this continent? Whether he had visited his father, and how he happened to be in Georgia?"

To all of these questions, Edwin replied: "I reached New York near a month ago, went directly home, found my father just recovering from a severe illness. I remained at home several days, learned through him

of the sad changes in the family of our mutual friend Mr. Minor. I also learned that Mattie was with you in Georgia, and a desire to see her is my reason for being here."

"Have you seen Mr. Minor's daughters? Poor girls! sad indeed, have their reverses been."

"Yes sir! Lelia is a fine looking young lady, very much like her mother. She is the mathematical instructress in Mr. Williams' academy."

"Most persons would call Annie the prettier of the two, but there is so much character in Lelia's face every one is compelled to admire her."

"I went to see them the next day after my return, and, as soon as I could leave my father, started for your home. The proprietor advised me to remain here to-night, as you were in the city."

"I am glad you did so! Mattie is here with me," observed Mr. Nichol.

"It is not possible that the young lady who sat near you, at supper, is the little Mattie I left in Alabama!"

"Yes! she is the same. Will you go now to see her—she is in the parlor?"

"No! I would prefer not meeting her in such a crowd; for, very naturally, seeing me, would call up sad memories! Yes! I know that voice."

Just then Mattie had begun to sing. "Let's stand where we can see her!"

She was seated at the piano, surrounded by enraptured listeners, singing as she alone could.

Mr. Nichol and Edwin stood in the door. Mattie's

face was turned from them, and it was not till she had risen from the instrument that she observed them. She had scarcely a glimpse of the stranger ere he moved out of sight, and she asked one of the gentlemen near her who he was.

"Just one more song, Miss Mattie, and I, for one, will excuse you," urged one of her friends.

"Well, what shall it be?"

"Make your own selection! I will be content, let it be what it may!"

"Very well, then! I have just learned one that may prove applicable to every one at some time during life; not that I know it to be so now to any of you! Tell me what you think of it when I have finished."

Having received the promise of their opinion, she sang these words:

"It cannot be that all we meet are faithless,
That fondest words act but the falsest part.
Love may be found, yes! firm, strong and deathless—
And pure enough to fill a seraph's heart.

"Ah, well I know that faith will often languish;
When those we love, with Janus-looks we see,
None have mourned this in deeper anguish,
Than she who whispers now '*trust on*' to thee

"Believe, be true, be glad, be gay as ever;
Leave all dark fancies, and their gloom forget.
Fear not! those live, who could betray us never!
Kind hearts, fond hearts, true hearts are left us yet!"

All agreed in admiring the song, save Dr. Lipscombe, who had entered just as she began.

"And what objection have you to it?" asked Mattie.

"Oh, I think the sentiment a consoling one, and the air beautiful; but sad, indeed, must that person feel to whom the words are applicable."

When it had been commented on by them all, Mattie positively refused to sing, as she said, the *twentieth* song, that evening; the young men took their leave.

When they had bidden good evening, just as Mattie was about leaving the room, Mr. Nichol and Edwin entered.

"Mattie allow me to introduce you to Mr. Edwin: Miss Garland."

As the introduction was being acknowledged, he continued: "This gentleman can give you tidings of your friends in Alabama, as he left them a few days ago."

"Welcome, indeed, then you are! I suppose my uncle has told you who my friends are, and how much I am attached to them? Two of them are my sisters, though we bear different names. Say! can you tell me of Lelia and Annie Minor? and I have another, Miss Ella Duval, whom I love dearly."

"I saw your sisters the day before I left; both of them are looking very well. They sent many messages to you, and you may be surprised to learn what their last one was."

"Well, tell me, and let me be the judge."

"It was that I would not fail to carry you back with me."

As he said this, a puzzled expression flitted over

her face, as she asked, "How long have you known Lelia and Annie?"

"I don't think I can answer your question better than by saying, about the same length of time that you have."

Again she fixed an earnest look on him, and as their eyes met, so did their souls—they were no longer strangers.

"I see it all!" she exclaimed, "you are our *own* Mr. Edwin when *we were* children. Oh, I am so glad to see you!"

He took her offered hand, and then it seemed as if the whole of their happy childhood now passed before her, so changed was the expression of her face. How vivid are the memories that come unbidden at such a moment.

Mattie was sitting on the sofa by her uncle, who, placing an arm around her, drew her to him. Edwin took her hand, and, with her head resting on her uncle's shoulder, for several minutes she was convulsed with emotion.

"Yes!" said Edwin; "sad indeed are the changes that have been yours, Mattie;" then, checking himself, "Miss Mattie, I should have said."

"No! call me Mattie as you used to do—it sounds so natural;" then, recovering herself, she questioned him about Lelia, Annie, and his father.

When nearly two hours had passed, Mr. Nichol proposed that they should separate for the night.

Edwin handed Mattie a letter from Lelia, and they bade good-night, each going their own way—the one

to think over the past; the other, to plan for the future.

When they met the next morning, Edwin had changed his travelling garb for a suit of finest cloth. He was refreshed by sleep, and a finer specimen of the travelled gentleman is rarely met with.

The same benevolent brow of youth, though somewhat browned by travel, and his large eyes beamed with admiration on the idol of his youth.

Mr. Nichol proposed that he and Mattie should see something of the city, before she resumed her shopping, and then they would all go together to Oak Wood.

The ride was taken, but so many subjects for thought and conversation presented themselves, that very little knowledge was conveyed, or gained, of the city.

Mr. Nichol took Edwin with him; while Mattie, with an elastic step, went from store to store in search of a variety of articles, which would be too tedious to name. After dinner they started for the country.

CHAPTER XXV.

"WHERE there is Love in the heart, there are rainbows in the eyes! which cover every black cloud with gorgeous hues."

Not stranger than true is the fact, that real affection is blind to the faults of the object beloved.

While this is true there is another equally so. That which has seemed an affection, deep rooted for years in the heart, vanishes as it were, in the presence of a superior being to the object on whom, apparently, this wealth of affection has been lavished.

Mrs. Nichol was an artful woman! She looked upon Rosa as already settled in life, and even her ambition was satisfied with Doctor Lipscombe as the future husband of her *darling* daughter.

In her opinion, Mattie was unworthy the love of another, having turned a deaf ear to that of Mr. Marks, and it was not unusual for her to speak to her daughters of her, as their *maiden* cousin.

Though Rosa was her favorite child, she was fully conscious of Nettie's superiority over her sister, and now that Rosa's future was a certain one, she formed a plan for Nettie's; and Edwin Terryl had been an inmate of Oak Wood a very short time before she went so far as to say, he was the first gentleman she had ever deemed worthy of her youngest daughter, nor was this opinion to be at all wondered at.

He was in every respect a perfect gentleman, nor had his sojourn in foreign lands caused him to forget his mother-tongue, or lessened his love for American society.

He rendered himself very agreeable to each member of the family, never forcing on them the knowledge he had acquired, or wonders he had seen, nor

ever refusing to speak freely of the same when desired to do so.

He appreciated his true position; that he was in his native land, partaking of the hospitality of a Southerner, whose views and his own on many subjects agreed; and, more than all, he was enjoying the society of one of his youthful friends, though to her he was not more attentive than to her aunt and cousins.

His mornings were usually spent in riding over the farm with Mr. Nichol, and, on returning, in conversing with Mrs. Nichol and her *daughter*, who were usually found in the library, engaged in some handiwork, and often ere he was aware of it he found himself drawn into giving glowing descriptions of the lands he had visited, and when Mattie and Nettie would enter with their work baskets, after a few words with them his narrative would be resumed, always addressing himself to those with whom the conversation had begun.

Mattie usually occupied a chair near a window, and when the eyes of her aunt and Rosa sought those of the speaker, hers were either bent on her sewing, or something in the yard attracted her, yet all the while she was silently listening to that voice which carried her back to the days of happy childhood, and which possessed for her a fascination beyond all others she had ever heard.

Mrs. Nichol was a splendid housekeeper, as well as an ambitious mother, and over the dinners of which Edwin daily partook, during his stay of two weeks,

any lady might have presided with pride. They were such as can only be served at a Southern country seat, where everything is raised in abundance.

Even a more suspicious man than our hero, might have deemed this a happy family, and Mattie a fortunate girl in being a member of it, for by neither word nor look was it manifest that it was otherwise.

Often, when they had repaired to the parlor where the evenings were usually spent, Edwin would ask for music, and Mrs. Nichol as often proposed some duet. Rosa and Nettie had learned under Mattie's tuition, but save from Nettie, he never heard to whom they were indebted.

He ever listened with respectful attention, often complimenting the performers, and when they had finished, would ask Mattie for a song.

No sooner would she begin than he was called on to hear a description of the scenes Mrs. Nichol remembered having witnessed across the water, or places visited by Rosa and herself during their summer tours, but above the din of voices, he ever heard the same melodious tones which so charmed him in boyhood, and sometimes leaving the group of talkers he would approach the piano.

One afternoon, when Dr. Lipscombe called, it was proposed that they should stroll along the river bank, that Mr. Terry might enjoy the scenery. Edwin asked Mattie if he might have the pleasure of walking with her.

"No! Mattie you can't go; don't you remember that

Miss Paul is coming to fit your lilac silk?" then turning to Edwin,

"Nettie will go this evening, and Mattie some other time."

"You will find Nettie a charming companion," observed Mattie to him, as she left the room to call her.

As they started, Mattie sought her own room, there in solitude to reflect on the untruth her aunt had told, for her self-respect would not suffer her to say that it was Rosa's silk that was to be finished, and that without the aid of a dress-maker.

The pedestrians had taken different paths to the river, and each party conversed without interruption; we will listen for a while to Edwin and Nettie to learn whether the daughter was cognizant of the mother's plans, and if so, whether she entered into them.

"How long, Miss Nettie, has your cousin Mattie been with you?"

"I do not remember exactly, but nearly three years. She made us a visit before the death of her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Minor. I learned to love her very much then, and though I was not for a moment so wicked as to rejoice at her severe afflictions, and do regret her losses, I was delighted when I learned that she was really going to live with us."

"You would not be so selfish as to wish her to stay, if her going could in any way prove an advantage to her, would you? and if, by going, she would render others very happy?"

"I am afraid I should, though perhaps it would be

wrong; but why did you ask me that? She has no idea of going away, that I know of, has she?"

"No! so far as I know, she has not; but I do think it is such a pity for her to be separated from Lelia and Annie Minor!"

"Yes, I have often thought so; and much as I would dislike to give her up, if I knew she would be with them, I could not say a word, for I do know how she loves them!"

Then looking up in his face, as if to witness the effect of her words:

"You cannot know how gentle and amiable she is, unless you lived with her. Do you know I wonder how you can help falling in love with her? If I were a gentleman I could not!"

A blush mantled his cheek, as this home-thrust was made, and, stooping to pluck a sprig, he replied:

"But you know it would be very unfortunate if I should lose my heart, and learn, when it was too late, that her's had already been given to another; and I don't know but that this is so."

"I don't think it has, or she would not have discarded Mr. Marks. He is wealthy and handsome, and loved her very much. Do you know Mr. Marks? Mother was very anxious for Cousin Mattie to marry him."

Edwin was too much of a gentleman to ask a single question on this subject; but he listened eagerly to all Nettie said, fearing, the while, that he would learn from her that the heart he had resolved to win, had been given to another. He replied:

"I have not had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Marks!"

"If you had come a few months sooner, you would. He used to come to see Cousin Mattie as often as Dr. Lipscombe does to see Sister Rosa, till she rejected him!"

They had reached the river, and the scene before them was indeed a beautiful one! The trees all around them were covered with dun-colored moss, which, like a net-work was woven among their branches, thus uniting one with another. An occasional ever-green reminded them that, amid the darkest days of life, there are moments of sunshine!

Rugged cliffs towered several feet above the opposite shore, while between, the dark, clear river, rolled along, bearing on its surface many pieces of timber, which had broken loose from the shore above.

Seating themselves on the roots of an old tree, they quietly watched the drift-wood for awhile, then Edwin gave her a history of Mattie's home and friends in Alabama when he left the country; also of his childhood's home, his gray-haired father, and of the cemetery near by.

Their tete-a-tete was interrupted by the approach of the lovers. Rosa was more joyous and gay than Edwin had ever seen her, while the Doctor was grave and quiet.

An approaching storm caused them to turn their faces homeward. When they were about starting, Rosa said:

"Dr. Lipscombe has something to tell you, Nettie!

I will show Mr. Terryl the way home!" and, without urging an objection, the Doctor consented to return the way that Nettie and Edwin had come.

Edwin rhapsodized the scenery, and the views from every little mound were commented on, by this lover of Nature. As they walked on by the river's edge, he said:

"How true, Miss Rosa, is that comparison of Pope's: 'The wants of human life are like a river—constantly passing away, and yet constantly coming on!'"

"Oh, Mr. Terryl, don't moralize this evening; I am not in the mood for it. Tell me of the ocean, the vessels you have travelled in, the ports at which you touched.

"I want to hear something new—something that will make me forget myself; and your descriptions are so graphic they always have that effect! Oh, if I could only take such a tour as you did, my greatest desire would be gratified! Have you any idea of making such another?"

So rapidly had she talked he had not had time to reply; and the question had scarcely been asked when a vivid flash of lightning, followed by deafening thunder, told that the storm was already upon them, and they were nearly a mile from the house!

Their companions were not in sight; and, supposing they had taken some other path, they hurried on. But the storm was nearer than they expected, and now the rain descended in torrents. They sought shelter under a barn on the road-side, and it was evi-

dent some time must elapse before they could venture to leave it.

At Rosa's request Edwin described a storm at sea, and so terrific was the picture he drew of the rocking vessel, the bounding, dashing waves—stern commands of the captain, solemnity of the seamen, and shrieks of women and children, that the storm then passing seemed so slight in comparison, her object was gained, as she listened to something new, and forgot herself.

When the rain had ceased Edwin proposed going for the carriage. But, no! she would walk to the house; and, clinging to his arm for support, they wended their way thither.

Nettie and her companion had reached there before them; and Edwin's anxiety in regard to her health was construed, by the deluded girl, into more than ordinary interest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

EDWIN had sought his own chamber, and Rosa hers, for a change of apparel. Dr. Lipscombe having left hurriedly, excited no surprise, as his visits were frequent and irregular in their length, owing to his professional duties.

Mattie had lighted her candle, and sat busily sewing on the lilac silk. Nettie entered, and, seating

herself at her side, looked up in her face and exclaimed, "Oh, Cousin Mattie, would you—could you have believed it?"

"Believe what, Nettie? that Mr. Edwin has proposed? I would not be surprised, and my advice would be——"

"Oh, no! not that! but sister Rosa has broken her engagement!"

"Oh, Nettie, surely you must be mistaken! Did she tell you so?"

"No! but he did! and you would have felt so sorry for him!"

Rising, and putting her work away, Mattie said, "Come, tell me all about it; how did it happen?"

"Well, you know the two paths to the river; he and sister Rosa took one, Mr. Edwin and I the other. We were sitting on the root of the old beech-tree, talking, when they came up; it looked like rain, and we all started back. She said Dr. Lipscombe had something to tell me, and she would show Mr. Terryl the way home.

I walked on with him, some time, and saw he was not disposed to talk; indeed, he looked strange, I thought. Suddenly he stopped, and looked at me so, I was frightened. Then he walked on so fast, I had to ask him to wait for me.

"When he turned, I never saw such a face in my life. I asked him what was the matter. He did not speak for some time; then, taking from his pocket the engagement-ring, he said:

"Miss Nettie, my dream is over! How I have

loved her, God only knows. How she has deceived me, he alone can tell!' and then he seemed to forget I was there, and said, 'Love was to my impassioned soul, not as with other men, a part of my existence, but the whole. Yes! the very life-breath of my heart.'

"Oh, Cousin Mattie! he trembled so he could hardly walk! I can't tell you how sorry it made me feel."

"What does Rosa mean, Nettie? Why did you not ask him? He would have told you."

"I did! He scarcely knew himself. He said he began talking of their future, and she stopped him, and said she had changed her mind; that she had been mistaken in thinking she loved him; and then he said:

"Miss Nettie, without seeming to think that she was inflicting a death wound—yes, without any feeling on the subject, she took off the ring, and said she would wear it no longer; and she hoped I might find some one who would prize it more than she did.'

"I could not say a word; the storm was coming so fast we had to hurry on."

"Where is he now? I will go and see him."

"He asked me to order his horse, and stood in the door till John brought him, and went off in the rain. I was coming to you, but he asked me not to let any of you know he was here, but after he was gone to tell you; he said you would feel for him."

"Oh, Cousin Mattie, how could sister Rosa trifle so

with such a heart? But, I believe, I can solve the mystery."

"How, Nettie? for it is the most unaccountable conduct I ever heard of."

"I believe she has resolved to captivate Mr. Edwin. You know, mother said I must try to catch him; but he is too intelligent a man for such a girl as I; and, more than all, he is in love with you."

"Nonsense, Nettie! Let's talk about Rosa and Dr. Lipscombe. How could Rosa have done it?"

When the summons to tea was heard they descended together. Edwin and Rosa came from the parlor; Mattie's eye rested on her hand, and sure enough the pledge of Henry Lipscombe's love was no longer there.

Leaving Edwin Terryl with his newly formed acquaintances—who look upon him no longer as a stranger—we will follow the discarded lover to his room, on leaving Oak Wood.

It was well for him that the spirited animal he rode knew where to go, for had his hand guided the rein it is difficult to determine where he might have stopped! Having alighted in front of his office-door, he entered the sleeping apartment, and, throwing himself on a lounge, began to reflect on the events of the afternoon, and soon he found himself taking a retrospective view of the past few years.

There was a time when he had secretly loved that beautiful creature, and for years he treasured the secret in his heart of hearts, as something too sacred to be told even to his mother, who was his confidant,

and who had learned to read his thoughts. When she questioned him as to why he was so thoughtful and silent, he told her all. She advised him to be careful as to whom he gave his heart.

For months after this he watched, with jealous eye, all who, with more courage than he possessed, enjoyed her society. Then he passed through one mild September evening, when he tremblingly told the story of his love, and learned that his fears had been groundless ones.

The happiness of that moment! how it contrasted with the present! He could not forget the hour in which he had, with pride, placed upon her finger the ring he now held as worthless; nor the look which had accompanied the words, "I hope you may find one who will prize it more than I do."

With a stern resolution he paced the narrow room a few times, then, regardless of the pelting rain, drew on his overcoat. As he opened the front door, Mr. Marks stood on the threshold.

"Why, Doctor, are you going to see a sick lady? if so, of course I'll not say a word; but I am sorry you are going out at all!"

"No! I was going home; but come in out of the rain; I am not in a hurry!"

They entered the little bedroom, and, offering his visitor a chair, he took another.

"Well, Harry, my boy! I just came in to ask you when you had seen my divinity! For, though Miss Mattie Garland has rejected me, I tell you, I can't drive

her image from my mind. Do tell me, when did you see her? and how was she?"

"I saw her this afternoon; she was looking very well; and I cannot blame you for loving her! She certainly is a lovely character!"

"Yes, and if she had married me, or even promised to do it, she might have saved me. As it is, I care for nothing. Would you believe it? I have actually lost five thousand dollars this evening!"

"Here, Tom! go to the hotel; bring your master's supper and mine. I don't feel like going out in the rain again."

"Yes, sir! soon as I put up Mars Harry's horse and bring in some more coal."

"Harry Lipscombe! what is the matter with you? Are you sick? or has Rosa given you the mitten? You could not look more doleful if she had!"

"I don't feel very well. I have a violent headache, and, besides, have a very sick patient!"

"Mars Harry, will you want your horse again to-night?"

"No; you may put him up."

"Then, Tom, you go by Strong's, and order two strong juleps to be ready, and bring them on the waiter."

"You need not bring but one, Tom, as I do not want any."

"Yes, mind what I say! Bring two!" exclaimed Mr. Marks, as the servant went out. Then to Dr. Lipscombe remarked: "I'll save you the trouble of drinking yours by drowning Mattie Garland's image

in it! You are a fortunate man, Harry, on my word! Just to think, in April you will be married! There might just as well have been two weddings then as one!"

Poor Harry Lipscombe! there he sat; every word spoken by his visitor only opened afresh the wound he had received; but no one escaped him by which the truth could be known. Unable to endure it longer, he said:

"I will lie down and wait for the coffee. There is this evening's paper, if you have not seen it."

Oh, for solitude what would he not have given! but perceiving that Mr. Marks had no intention of leaving, for at least an hour, he resigned himself.

They had remained quiet a very short time, when the boy returned with the waiter, on which were the two juleps as well as supper for two.

The Doctor took a cup of coffee, but could eat nothing. Having drained both glasses and made a hearty meal, Mr. Marks declared his intention of going, remarking, as he rose—"Well, I did not intend making such a short visit, but will come again when you feel more like seeing company!"

A half hour later might have been seen a solitary man, slowly wending his way, unmindful of the rain, to a cottage in the suburbs of the city.

The door was opened by an elderly servant, who held a candle in her hands. "Mars Harry! is it you?"

"Yes, Aunt Hagar! Is mother asleep?"

"No, Harry! I am not. Come in here, my son. It

rained so hard I thought you would remain at the office, to-night. Are you not very wet?"

"No, mother, not very. How are you, to-night?" He took a seat near the fire. His mother knew something troubled him. Telling Hagar she might go to her own room, she asked:

"What is it, Harry? are you sick? or what has brought you home this time of night, in the rain?"

"Yes, mother, I am sick—not in body—but sick, sick at heart!"

"Well, my son, you know there is no sympathy like a mother's! Tell me all, and relieve your mind!"

"Mother, it can be told in a few words. Rosa Lenier has broken her engagement; and you know how I have loved that girl! Yes, mother, better even than I loved you! But it is past. Oh, mother! I am a ruined man. Could you believe that the woman I have idolized could spurn my love? but she has."

Mrs. Lipscombe sat by quietly till he had finished speaking. She did not reproach him. No! she knew the priceless treasure—the heart of her only boy—had been Rosa's, long before the girl herself had known it; and well she knew how severe this blow must prove! It was some moments before she spoke:

"It is a hard blow, Harry, I well know; and I cannot believe you are to blame. Tell me how it was brought about."

"All I know is this, mother"—then he told of the walk, and related the conversation between Rosa and himself, more minutely than he had done to Nettie.

"What reason is there, in your own mind, for the change, my son? Can you not assign any?"

"None, save this: Mr. Terryl's fascinations have proved greater than mine! He is a travelled gentleman, an intelligent man, and very pleasant!"

"Then, Harry, you have more cause to feel thankful than sorrowful. And if for a mere stranger she has spurned your fond and faithful love, she is unworthy. You have acted wisely in coming to your mother. This is a trial which will prove a blessing in disguise!

"You never can know how I prize, and have ever done, your confidence. Now take my advice: mention it to none of your companions; never let any one know that you have mentioned it even to me."

After soothing and comforting him as only a mother could, she opened the Bible, read a portion of Scripture, then, kneeling down with him, offered a *mother's* prayer for an unhappy child!

Thus had Harry been raised by his widowed mother; and at times when other young men would have confided in companions of their own age, he went to her; having more faith in her prayers than in the sympathy of others!

When he left that night, and went out in the world, it was with a calm heart, and strong faith in Him who alone can give comfort to a troubled spirit! and, as he stood by the bedside of his patients the next day, though he was more quiet than usual, none supposed he had received a wound that time alone could heal!

CHAPTER XXVII.

THREE days after the events narrated in the last chapter, invitations were issued to a large party at Mr. Nichol's, given in honor of Mr. Terryl. To this Doctor Lipscombe was invited. Again he sought his mother.

"If you think, my son, that you can meet Rosa unmoved, I would advise you to go. If what you suspect is true, you will have an opportunity of judging for yourself, and this will cause you to forget her more effectually than remaining absent from her would do."

"Mother, that does seem strange advice to me, but as it is yours I will take it. As to what effect seeing her will have on me, I cannot tell, but I will be compelled to meet her some day, and perhaps the sooner the better."

It was natural that he should be seen there; indeed his absence would have caused remark. He spoke to Rosa, and devoted himself more exclusively to Mattie than any other; this too was what might have been expected, but how they were mistaken who thought they knew the cause.

While conversing with Mattie he had the opportunity he desired, and observation taught him that his suspicions were correct, that Edwin Terryl had come between himself and the heartless girl he no longer idolized.

"Suffering well borne, is better than suffering removed." The disappointment this young man had met with, instead of bowing him down and saddening him, thanks to his mother's wise counsel, opened his eyes, and before he left the house that night, he secretly wondered how he could have been so blind to the arts which had been employed to entrap him, as he saw the same used to captivate Edwin Terryl.

As he was about to leave, Mr. Nichol said: "Well, Doctor, the young people are going to have a riding party to-morrow, of course we will see you then."

"I have heard nothing of it, sir! If I had, my engagements would not suffer me to attend."

He looked at his host to learn whether he knew the truth, and was convinced from his free and easy manner, that he did not; taking his hand he added:

"Your daughter, sir, can assign another reason for my non-attendance."

"Surely, Doctor, you and Rosa have had no disagreement, but if not, what is the meaning of your remark?"

"As I have said, Miss Rosa can tell you the meaning of *all*, better than I can. Good-night, sir!"

Mr. Nichol stood in astonishment where he had left him, until Mattie came to the door. Her uncle called her.

"Mattie! my dear child, what does all this mean?"

"All what, uncle?"

"What is this Harry Lipscombe has hinted at? Can it be that Rosa and he have had a difficulty?"

"As to what it means, uncle, I cannot tell, but Rosa has certainly broken the engagement."

"Does her mother know it? surely she does not."

"I think not! Rosa has not mentioned it to me. I first heard it from Nettie. The Doctor told her, and to-night he has told me all he knows about it. Her conduct seems as great a mystery to him as to us."

When the family were left alone, Rosa asked Mr. Terryl if he was fond of riding on horseback. He replied, that he was, and proposed accompanying her the next morning, to which she agreed.

The excitement of the past few days had kept her from reflection; little did she know how she would feel on meeting with the man who had loved her so long, and so well; and she was wholly unprepared for his cool, "Good evening, Miss Rosa," and seeming indifference to the attentions she received from another; for no one could have manifested less emotion than he had done, as he sat quietly conversing with Mattie.

He had watched her, without seeming to do so, and he saw that she was striving to prove to him that she regretted not the step she had taken.

Days had passed since that walk was taken, and though Edwin was an attentive listener, whenever she spoke, and at all times kind, affable, and courteous, still no word of love had he spoken, and to Nettie and her mother, he was as attentive as to her.

When Rosa retired that night, it was not to sleep, but to reflect and reproach herself for what she had done. Still, in some respects, she considered Mr.

Terryl superior to her lover, but never had Harry Lipscombe appeared so worthy as then.

She was conscious of having dashed from her a strong, pure, noble heart, whose every pulsation for years had been for her, and for what? a mere fancy. And then she could only compare her own action to a ring once prized for the diamond of great value it held, and from which the jewel had fallen, without a hope of being able to replace it.

Contending with these emotions, she could only console herself with a resolution to make captive the heart of one who had never given one serious thought to her.

With this resolution she fell asleep, to waken a few hours after, with her head aching and throbbing so violently, she was unable to rise.

Edwin, agreeable to his engagement, was in the parlor at an early hour, ready for the ride, when Nettie entered with her sister's excuse.

"I regret very much your sister's indisposition, and hope she will be able to go to-morrow morning. As she cannot go, will you not take her place?"

Nettie consented, and soon returned equipped for the ride; it was to them both a pleasant one. Edwin had learned to love the simplicity of Nettie's nature, and he had found out that she loved to dwell on her cousin's many charms.

When they returned, Rosa had not left her room. Mattie was in the library, and Nettie, with the shrewdness natural to woman, left them alone. It was the first time Edwin had found himself thus with Mattie,

since the ride in the city, but they were destined not to remain long, before the breakfast bell called them to the dining-room, and rising, Mattie led the way.

While they sat there, Mrs. Nichol was sent for to see a sick neighbor. Mr. Nichol had business in the city, and as Rosa kept her room, Nettie went to sit with her. To Mattie was left the task of entertaining him.

It is natural to suppose he would have embraced this opportunity of making known his feelings, but as many others had done before them, they conversed on all subjects, save the one nearest their hearts.

Mattie conversed freely, and more than ever did her companion notice the improvement that time and sorrow had wrought in her mind. The happy past, of which she could not grow weary, was talked over. The very great desire she had to see her sisters was expressed.

Edwin told her, that in two days more he would leave for Alabama, and she knew it would afford him pleasure to carry letters, or anything she wished to send, and continued: "Now I am going to ask a favor at your hands, which, I trust, you will not deny me, as it will afford me happiness, and I know that to make your friends happy affords you pleasure."

"Let me hear what it is, and, if it is in my power, I will very probably grant it."

"Allow me the privilege of writing to you when I go home, with a promise that you will reply to my letters."

"It would afford me pleasure to correspond with

one of my earliest and best friends—as such I have ever regarded you.”

Thanking her for the promise, the subject was changed and not resumed.

The riding party met according to agreement, and started from Oak Wood about four o'clock in the afternoon. Edwin was Rosa's escort, and none of them seemed to enjoy the evening more than she did.

The next morning, when they were alone, Mrs. Nichol said, “Rosa, my daughter, where was the Doctor, yesterday evening? I was sorry he could not have been with you.”

“I don't suppose he knew anything of the ride. I did not mention it the night of the party.”

“Now, my dear, if Nettie will only act her part as well as you have done, my mind will soon be easy in regard to you both; and if Mattie had not rejected Mr. Marks, it might have been said that the graces of Oak Wood had all made splendid matches. I shall feel proud of my daughters, as Mrs. Lipscombe and Mrs. Terryl; but since Mattie has acted so absurdly, I never intend to trouble myself again to get her a husband.

“Have you ever told Mr. Terryl that you are going to be married? I intend inviting him to return to your wedding.”

“If he never returns here till he comes as a spectator to my marriage, he will not come soon.”

“Surely you are not going to postpone your marriage? You are jesting, my daughter—are you not?”

“No, mother! Doctor Lipscombe and myself are no longer engaged; nor do I wish Mr. Terryl to know that we ever were.”

“Rosa, *what do you mean?* You surely are not in earnest about this matter?”

“I never was more in earnest in my life!” Mr. Nichol entered the room just then; he had feared a storm, and had avoided mentioning the subject, but so exasperated was his wife that she appealed to him.

“Mr. Nichol, can you believe that what Rosa has just said is true? I surely cannot.”

“What has she said, Mary?”

“That her engagement with Harry Lipscombe is broken, and tells it, as if it is something of which she has a right to feel proud.”

“Rosa, if this is true, there must have been some reason for it. Would it be asking too much for you to give your mother and myself that reason?”

“No, sir; to you and my mother I will tell the cause,” and, as she spoke, the untruth was framed. “I will never marry any man who endeavors to control my actions, and curtail my pleasure before marriage! Doctor Lipscombe had no right to call me a coquette, and there was no cause for his jealousy.”

“Why did you not tell me this at first, my daughter? You are right. It is hard enough to be controlled by a husband, and any girl is doing herself an injustice to submit to it from a lover. But, really, I am surprised to hear this. It only proves, however,

that to know a person you must live with him. But, Rosa, I admire your spirit."

Very different were Mr. Nichol's views on the subject; from what Mattie had told him, and, from Harry's own words, he was inclined to doubt the truth of Rosa's.

When they all met in the library, they conversed as usual, and, while there, Mrs. Nichol's plans underwent a change.

Mr. Terryl seemed then to her scheming mind too old and much experienced for Nettie, and she observed that he seemed to like Rosa better. If she could captivate him, they need not regret the loss of her lover.

As Mr. Terryl was to leave the next day, more than usually elegant was the dinner over which Rosa presided; her mother excusing herself in order that her daughter's accomplishments might be noticed.

The closest observer could not have found any trace of the emotions that were contending for the mastery in her heart. Very agreeable did she render herself, not only to Edwin but to each member of the family; to Mattie she was especially pleasant.

Mattie went to her room at an early hour that evening, to finish letters she wished to send her sisters; Nettie to prepare a present for Annie Minor; leaving the double-minded mother and daughter with their guest.

"We all hope, Mr. Terryl, this may not prove your last visit to Oak Wood."

"I should be sorry, indeed, madam, to know that such would be the case. The few days spent here

have been to me pleasant ones indeed. A home visit like this, to one who has been so long from his native land, is like an oasis in the desert to a weary traveller."

"It is pleasant, I assure you, to know that your impressions have been pleasant ones."

"I only hope I may never, in a future visit, regret the impressions received, or resolutions formed, during the first."

"I hope that you will look upon Oak Wood as one of your homes, feeling sure of ever being welcomed by its inmates."

"Thank you for your kind invitations. I will endeavor to revisit you all in the course of two or three months, at furthest, hoping then to find a response to the sentiments with which my first visit has inspired me."

* * * *

"Yes, mother, I believe it is so, too; and, as my wardrobe will be so very elegant, it will never do for Nettie and Mattie to appear so very plain. You had better get them two entire suits—one to be worn on the wedding-night; the other, on the day of my reception."

"That is well thought of, my daughter! and they can act as your attendants."

"But, mother, you know he did not actually propose—and suppose he should not?"

"How can you suppose such a thing? Did he not act as any prudent man would have done? You would not expect him to propose the first visit he

made; but nothing ever was more evident than his intention to do so. Remember, he only mentioned the subject to you in my presence, which was as it should have been, and proves, moreover, that he preferred no one else should know it."

"You think, then, that there is no doubt on the subject."

"You need have no fear! Go on! Complete your wardrobe, and, at the very time Harry Lipscombe might have been so fortunate, I will invite him to see you married to his superior, and we will see whether he can take that as coolly as he did your rejection of him."

"Then you will get the dresses for the girls?"

"Yes; the next time I go to the city. What style do you prefer, or think of, as most suitable?"

"A plain white silk apiece for the wedding, and for the reception a rose-colored for Nettie, and blue for Mattie; don't you think so?"

"Yes, I think you have good taste; and, if Mattie did reject Mr. Marks, there is no reason why she should not appear well when you are married; and then, too, it will please your father."

"But, mother, what excuse will you give them for buying such dresses now? They both know of the difficulty between the Doctor and myself, and it would never do to tell the real reason."

"Oh, nothing is easier! I will say that I intend taking you North with me again, this summer; and that is why I am having sewing done so hurriedly; and I intend giving one or more brilliant entertain-

ments before we do go, and I am anxious that they shall appear unusually well on those occasions. Then, when the time comes, instead of going North with you, I will resign you to Mr. Terryl, who will take you South!"

"Oh, mother! what a capital hand you are to plan. Will they not all be surprised?"

Surprised, indeed, the girls were, a few days after this conversation, at receiving, from their aunt and mother, just such dresses as Rosa had described, with trimmings suitable. Mrs. Nichol had never before made Mattie a present of any kind!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOME weeks had elapsed after Edwin's departure, when Mr. Nichol, on his return from the city, handed Mattie two letters. It was late, and the evening meal had been partaken of before his arrival.

It was nothing unusual for her to receive letters, for she had corresponded regularly with her sisters and Ella Duval, since her return from Alabama, and occasionally with Rev. Mr. Norton and Charles.

She had never been able to read, unmoved, those from Lelia and Annie; for this reason she always sought solitude before opening them. After convers-

ing awhile with her uncle, she bade good night, and went to her room.

The first one was from Lelia, in reply to the one Mr. Terryl had carried her. After giving family and local news, she spoke of him :

"Oh, my dear sister, as near perfection as I once thought you, surely you must have improved since then! Mr. Edwin says you are so beautiful, so graceful! in a word, so everything, that is perfect! He spent last evening with us, and really seemed to have but one thought, and that one was your own dear self; or rather you were the centre around which all his thoughts seemed to revolve!

"I am charmed—from his description of her—with your cousin Nettie. She must be a sweet girl! Many thanks to her for her present to Annie; but she will receive more direct thanks from her ere long.

"Now, Sister Mattie, act like a sensible girl: marry Mr. Edwin, come here to live, be mistress of Terryl Place, and we will spend so many happy hours together! But I forget that he has not told you as much as I seem to know. Never mind; he told me that he would write to you soon, and then you will doubtless learn more than I can tell you.

"Annie and mammy echo all that I have written, and we all wait to welcome you home again! Always give much love from us to your uncle and cousin Nettie. Good bye, my own much loved sister!"

Mattie sat for some moments, lost in amazement, at the contents of Lelia's letter! Could all she had

written be true? Was Mr. Edwin more than a friend to her? He had spoken no word of love.

It was true he had asked her to correspond with him; but it was natural that he should have done so. Was it possible that the void in her aching heart was to be filled by such love as his.

The other letter was directed in a manly hand, and bore the same postmark as Lelia's. Her own heart told her whom it was from. Would it confirm what her sister had said? If so, there might be true happiness in store for herself and sisters yet, and the one dream of her womanhood might be realized! She broke the seal, and we will allow our readers to peruse the words which greeted her eyes :

TERRYL PLACE, Feb. 25th, 18—.

Shall I address you, the little Mattie, whose acquaintance I formed eleven years ago, as Miss Garland? No! even Miss Mattie seems too formal. I would fain call you Mattie, as I did when, on wrapping my cloak around you and lifting you in my arms, my boyish heart went forth to you, innocent one, with a love which has steadily increased with passing years.

You seemed to my youthful mind the ideal of my boyhood's dream! Then a change came over me, which I felt and realized. I became a man in thought and determination, and yours, Mattie was the angel hand which guided me to a higher and nobler calling, than would ever have been mine, without your influence!

I watched over you, with a jealous eye, as you grew to girlhood, giving promise of that perfect womanhood you have reached! I left home, carrying your image with me, and, though often long, weary months elapsed, during which no tidings of you reached me, still I toiled diligently; for there was ever a spirit present beckoning me onward and upward, and you were never forgotten. Hope said, We would meet again!

From one clime to another, I roamed, in search of learning and of pleasure. Many were the faces of beauty I gazed upon, ladies of many lands I met, and with many of them passed pleasant hours; but there was ever a void which I felt could be filled by but *one*! Need I say that it was the face and society of little Mattie alone that could have satisfied my weary, unsatisfied heart?

At length the time arrived for my return! How my heart bounded with hopes and fears at the thought of re-visiting my boyhood's home!

My gray-haired, aged father, from whom—owing to the loss of two vessels, and my having been so much a bird of passage—I had not heard for some months, fearing he had been called away, and I left alone! Then came thoughts of your foster-parents, and of you; and I knew that, if living, you were no longer the little Mattie of my youth: and how bitter, you can never know, was the idea, that, perhaps, another had sought and won the treasure I had fondly hoped to call my own.

I will pass over my journey, and the transport I felt

when of a truth I could say, "This is my own, my native land!" You know all that transpired when I reached home: my delight at finding my father alive, my grief at the loss of our mutual friends, then my journey to Georgia.

The evening of my arrival, when I first saw you, the child I had fondled, and learned as a boy to love, the image which had for years been engraven on my heart, had to give place to the perfect woman, of which the child had been so faint a likeness. When I beheld you, the centre of an admiring crowd, smiling on all, then came the terrible thought—she has not remained insensible to the homage which is paid her; and perhaps her heart is, even now, the priceless treasure of some other!

We met! How my heart thrilled when you asked me to call you Mattie, as in other days! On going with you to Oak Wood, I carefully avoided making a manifestation of my feelings, endeavoring to learn the while that your heart was still free.

Once we were in the parlor alone; I tried, but in vain, to speak! How vividly rises before me every scene that transpired during my visit! I left you without speaking of the love with which my heart was overflowing; but now that I have left your society, I can endure the suspense no longer. I only feel that life to me, with you, will prove an Eden indeed! without you, it must be a barren waste!

You know me, dear Mattie! and if you can accept the offering I now lay at your feet, the object of my life will be to render yours a happy one.

May mine be the pleasant task of bearing all your burdens! Will you become a daughter to my aged and infirm father, by granting me the privilege of becoming your husband?

With anxiety I shall await your reply! I leave my destiny in your hands, and, believe me, I am now, as I have been from the first hour I saw you,

Your true and loving EDWIN.

The letter was re-perused, and then a few moments were given to reflection; and we will pardon her if, to consult her uncle, was a second resolution! the first having been to accept the offering thus nobly made; and, while she sat with the open letter still in her hand, vistas of the future rose before her, and not the least beautiful one was the reunion with her beloved sisters! Nor was there the slightest fear that Edwin would object to their home being the same, for she knew his interest in them to be almost as great as her own.

As usual, Nettie passed through Mattie's room before going to her own. Finding her cousin's tears rapidly falling on an open letter, as was her habit when she found her sad, she took one of her hands, and placing the other arm around her, said, in a voice of tender sympathy:

"You will not refuse to let me know what it is, Cousin Mattie? Tell me! and let me share your sorrow with you."

"No, Nettie! you have ever shared my sorrows, and, by your sympathy, lightened them. Read this

letter, and learn for yourself whether I have cause for sorrow or joy!"

Nettie had not finished the first paragraph when she exclaimed: "I told you so! Now say I am not a wise young lady! But let me read on and then talk."

"Oh, Cousin Mattie! I am so glad for you, and so sorry for myself. What will I do if you marry Mr. Edwin and go away? Then you will have Lelia and Annie with you, and I will go and see you all together, won't I?"

"You speak as if it was a settled thing, and seem to forget that I must consult your father, and ask his advice!"

"Oh, as to that, I know what father will say! You know how much he likes Mr. Edwin; and though, like myself, he will dislike very much to give you up, he is too unselfish not to say, 'By all means, marry him!'"

"Yes, Nettie, I do believe that will be his advice; but you know I must not say I am going to, till I have talked to him!"

"I won't ask you, Cousin Mattie, to tell me whether his affection is returned; but I will tell you what I have thought!"

"Well, since you are so very wise, what have you thought?"

"I have thought that I knew, from the time Mr. Edwin came here, that my Cousin Mattie loved him!"

"Well, Nettie, you are wise! I will tell you the truth. Many times before his return I have thought of his kindness to me when a child, and wondered

whether I was forgotten! When I met him in the city, I thought he did feel an interest in me, but his attentions to Rosa dispelled that thought; and when he went away without having mentioned the subject, I felt sure that she possessed attractions for him that I did not.

"When I read Lelia's letter, I could not believe what she said about him, and feared to open his; but now, Nettie, I am happy; and should your father consent and we do marry, I will have Lelia and Annie with me; and, remember, in my home as in my heart, there will ever be room for you, my other sister!"

"Cousin Mattie, I believe you, and thank you, too but I do feel so sorry for you when mother and sister Rosa find it out! for that she should captivate him has been a darling wish, ever since I proved too young and simple for such a great man!"

"There, now, I ought not to have said that! but I only said it to you, and you know as much as I do."

"Well, we will not talk about that now; it is growing late. I will mention it to your father, and keep you advised as to my plans."

To Mattie Garland, who had endured so much, and whom endurance had rendered strong, that night was a sleepless one.

The clouds which had hung over her were broken; the day-star of her future had risen; and the brightest thought of all was that it would not only be spent with Edwin, but with him and her sisters!

The next morning Mr. Nichol said he had not been

to see Aunt Nelly for some time, and he must go and inquire how the poor old creature was getting on.

From the time of Uncle Ned's death, Mattie had been in the habit of going, every few days, and reading to her. She was growing very feeble, and bid fair, soon, to follow her companion, of near half a century, to that world beyond the grave.

After talking to the old soul for some time, Mattie told the servant, who attended her, that they would watch Aunt Nelly while she went to her breakfast.

As soon as they were alone, she handed her uncle Edwin's letter, and requested him to read it.

"Come here, my child," were his first words, and, drawing her close to him, he said, "Heaven be praised! It is as I would have it be! Such a future as this offers, I could have wished for you. Now, tell me, do you regret having taken my advice in regard to Mr. Marks?"

"No, sir! but I do thank you for having given it."

"I believed there would come a day when you would thank me; and from the time of your friend's return, I hoped it was for this he had come to Georgia."

"You know how it will grieve me to give you up. Yes! the brightest gem in my firmament will be extinguished; still I say to you accept the offer; go with him to his home; be a daughter to his father, a guide and protectress to Lelia and Annie, and remember, it matters not what you may have to contend with in this matter, that I am your friend."

Drawing her down to him he kissed her again and again. The servant returning, who had charge of

Aunt Nelly, Mattie and her uncle walked back to the house.

That night, when Nettie went in to say good-night, Mattie told her all, and handed her another letter; it was her reply to Edwin, which was not sent till her uncle had perused it too.

CHAPTER XXIX.

To neither Mrs. Nichol nor Rosa was anything said as to what had taken place, for each one dreaded the storm they knew would burst forth in its fury.

At Mr. Nichol's request, Mattie went with her uncle to the city, where he purchased many articles which he knew would be useful to her, and if he had been liberal to Rosa, he was more so to her.

With unwearied fingers she worked first for Rosa and then herself, making, in their presence, the dresses her aunt had given her, and, when in her room, at night, Nettie assisted her.

When her letter had been gone about two weeks she began to expect a reply. How anxiously each return from the city was awaited, those know who, as she had done, have learned that in their own hands they no longer hold their own happiness, but have resigned it to another's keeping, and from whom distance separates them.

Once, twice, and even thrice, the mail had been sent for, and still no letter; the second week had given place to the third, and that to another.

Mrs. Nichol and Rosa were going to the city. Poor Mattie! she felt that a longer time could not elapse without her hearing from Edwin, and what might she not dread, if the expected missive was brought by them?

Nettie, too, thought of this, and deeply sympathized with her cousin. They were not to return till the next day; the night was one of suspense; but morning came, and Mattie felt that she would prefer waiting even another long week, than to receive that letter through them.

While seated at dinner, the sound of horses' hoofs coming up the avenue was heard, and, in a few moments, Edwin's voice, as the servant opened the door. Mr. Nichol met him in the hall, and conducted him, without ceremony, to the dining-room.

Two hours afterwards Mattie told her uncle Mr. Edwin wished to see him in the parlor.

"Well, my child, I will go," and, taking her by the hand, led her back, walking up to where Edwin stood, and, grasping his hand, he said:

"Permit me to anticipate you; and thus relieve your embarrassment! I know what you would ask, even so great a boon as this treasure! You have my consent, even before it is asked! To no one else would I so willingly resign her. You never can know all she has been to me, nor how I shall miss her when you take her away, but that is a matter of after con-

sideration ; of course it will not be for some months yet." He ceased a few moments.

"In the meantime I will guard your treasure as faithfully as you must do in future."

Then placing both their hands between his own, he continued :

"Heaven grant, my children, that this may prove a union of hearts as well as hands, and may your future be a long bright day of sunshine ! When clouds do come, as come they must to all, may your affection for each other have strengthened so that sorrows, as well as joys, may be borne as they should ; and that the close of your married life may prove the happiest portion of it, and that your last days may be your best, is my most sincere prayer. And, remember, should misfortune ever befall you, you both have a father, whose greatest delight would consist in welcoming his children home."

Tears rapidly coursed each other down Mattie's cheek. Edwin's heart was too full for utterance, and for some time they stood in silence, which was broken by Mr. Nichol, saying : "Now I will leave you to your own happiness," and releasing both their hands, turned to leave the room, when Edwin said :

"To express my gratitude for the manner in which you have received me, and resigned 'your treasure' to my keeping, Mr. Nichol, would be impossible. I thank you for the confidence you repose in me, and my future shall be spent in proving to you that the confidence has not been misplaced." Then taking Mattie's hand in his, he continued :

"But I fear, sir, the proposition I am now going to make, will not meet with your approbation. It is, that I may be permitted to carry Mattie home with me, when I leave to-morrow morning."

"What? Have I not granted enough already? having bestowed ninety-and-nine favors, would you ask the one hundredth? No! I intend giving my child a large wedding, and until preparations for that can be made, you must be content."

"But, Mr. Nichol, hear my reasons! and I believe, so far from opposing my wish, you will persuade her to comply with it.

"My father is very feeble. But for his urging me to come and take Mattie, that he might see her once more, I should have written and postponed my visit, for some weeks at least. He has ever been my confidant, and when I returned to Alabama, after my visit here, I told him of my feelings. He has ever loved Mattie, and approved my choice. He knew when I wrote to her, and daily, almost hourly, as I watched by his bedside, asked whether I had received an answer.

"At last, I could of a truth tell him I had, and with pride he listened as I read it, and from that time he urged me to come for her: to tell you that he had sent me, and to ask you to let her go, that he might bless her as his child."

Edwin stopped. Mr. Nichol's eyes sought the floor. Finally, looking up, he said : "Yes! she must go! It is her duty to do so, and it may all be for the best. I'll go and see Nettie about it."

They were alone: placing his arm around Mattie, Edwin drew her to him, and in a low soft voice, said:

"You will not deny my father this request. You have consented to become his daughter, and why postpone our marriage, and thus, perhaps, deprive yourself of a father's blessing!"

"It shall be as you wish," was her reply; then placing on her finger a ring which held a cluster of diamonds, he said:

"I will leave you now, and return to the city; be ready at nine in the morning: I will be here."

He had risen, and was leaving the room, when Mrs. Nichol and Rosa entered. Both faces were wreathed with smiles, as they expressed their joy at seeing him.

Taking Mattie's hand, he approached them, saying:

"I hope, Mrs. Nichol, that Miss Rosa and yourself will rejoice with me! My second visit to Oak Wood has proven even happier than my first."

He heard a scream, and Rosa would have fallen, but for her mother, who, placing her in a chair, said:

"Oh, my daughter, another of those terrible paroxysms. I had so much hoped you would never have another; come, go to your room!"

At the same moment, they had seen the ring on Mattie's finger, and knew only too well, why Edwin looked so happy.

What a blight to their fond hopes! Rosa sat with one hand pressed to her heart, as if she would still its throbbings, while on the other rested her head.

She had a mother ready for any emergency; tak-

ing off her daughter's bonnet and placing her hand on Rosa's head, she asked:

"Is it better my darling? Oh! why did Dr. Carter deceive me so, as to say you were cured of that terrible disease?"

Rosa had not spoken, but taking hold of her mother's arm, said:

"Go with me to my room," and the two baffled schemers left the parlor. When the lovers were alone, Edwin asked,

"What terrible disease is this your aunt speaks of? Miss Rosa is the last person I should have suspected of being in delicate health."

The entrance of Mr. Nichol spared Mattie the pain of either telling a falsehood, or acknowledging that it was the first paroxysm she had ever known her to have.

When Edwin had gone, she sought her own room, which she did not leave that night. Mr. Nichol had sought Nettie, and told her what was to take place the next morning, and requested her to have a wedding breakfast and luncheon for their journey, and he could but deem the whole arrangement a fortunate one; he had promised to be her friend and he would.

Mattie acted wisely in keeping her own room, for she was thus spared the contempt of her aunt, who, sympathizing with her daughter as she did, had no desire to see her. When Edwin arrived, she sent as an excuse for not seeing him, Rosa's illness, and her unwillingness to leave her.

It was not till Nettie told Mattie that they waited

for her, that she descended the stairs, and was met in the hall by her lover, his face beaming with that happiness which can be felt but once in the lifetime of any man. For but once can he lead to the altar that being who has *undivided* possession of his heart.

Taking his arm, they entered the parlor where Mr. Nichol and the Minister were, followed by Nettie.

"She wore the same white silk that was to have been worn on Rosa's bridal night, and never had she looked so beautiful; and few, indeed, have been the faces, that were so radiant with happiness.

The vows were taken as solemnly, though only witnessed by two, as if a number had been present.

They received the heartfelt congratulations of their uncle and cousin, and a few words of advice from the Minister; then Mattie accompanied by Nettie went to change her bridal dress for a travelling one; when ready to start, she entered Rosa's room, who was lying with her eyes closed, nor did she open them, when Nettie asked, if it was possible she would refuse to tell her cousin good-bye.

Mrs. Nichol was standing near the bed, and when Mattie extended her hand, taking a few steps backward, she said, with a slight inclination of her head, "Mrs. Terryl, I presume!"

It was well for her that her husband did not witness that scene. But it did not render Mattie unhappy. Oh, no! she was on the eve of leaving that home for one where affection would greet her on every side.

When her trunks had been carried down, and Mat-

tie was about to start, she heard her name called. On turning, she saw several servants gazing on her with wistful eyes. Shaking hands with them all, she had a pleasant word for each one; thanked them all for their kindness to her, and promised to remember them in future. Then, taking an affectionate leave of her uncle and cousin, she started for her new home, amid the scenes of her childhood.

It was growing late when they rode through the familiar streets of M——, and, as they passed the academy, Mattie strained her eyes, so as, if possible, to catch a glimpse of Lelia, Annie, or mammy.

Edwin read her thoughts, and said, "I know you would like to stop for our sisters, but let's wait till we know how father is, then I will come and take them to you. Yes, Mattie! your home and theirs shall be one, though you have not asked it; if they will consent, you need never be separated again."

Together they ascended the steps of Terryl Place, and, on opening the door of the sitting-room, to Edwin's surprise, his father occupied an arm-chair, in one corner of the fireplace. A cheerful fire glowed on the hearth, two candles on the mantle, and two more on a table in the centre of the room.

"I am so glad to find you able to be up, father," and, holding Mattie's hand, continued, "I did succeed in bringing her to you."

Rising, with difficulty, holding to one arm of the chair, and offering her the other hand, he faltered:

"Welcome, my daughter, to your *father's heart and home*;" and as he drew her towards him, she threw

an arm around his neck, and said simply, "*My father!*"

A servant approached to remove her bonnet and cloak, then, sitting by his side, she expressed her delight at finding him so well.

"Father, do you think you can take care of Mattie, while I go for Lelia and Annie?"

"Not yet, my boy! not yet! Let me see you both together before you go.

"Now, Mattie, if you are going to be a real daughter, you must learn to wait on your father! Go in that room yonder, and bring me a cane you will find in the corner near the window."

"Oh, father! let me go; why didn't you send me for it?"

"No, my boy! sit down; she can bring it."

A shriek from Mattie caused Edwin to start; the old man, laying a hand on his arm, said "Let me go with you!" a moment more and they stood transfixed in the door, as they gazed on the scene before them—Mattie, Lelia and Annie clasped in each other's arms. It was a scene on which angels might have smiled.

Edwin moved; the old man whispered "*Let them alone*; let's go back. I knew what you wanted, my boy. I sent for Mr. Williams and told him all. This morning he sent the dear children and mammy out here, and we have waited all day for you to come."

"Miss Mattie, is it so?" Mattie turned, and, as her hand was clasped in that of her faithful nurse, she wept aloud for joy.

Again Edwin and his father gazed upon them. Approaching them, Mattie clasped the old man in her arms, and said 'Father, I do thank you! yes, more than I can tell.'

"Mattie, my daughter, where is my cane? I sent you for it, and then had to come myself. I am afraid you are not willing to be very obedient!"

"Forgive me, father! I did forget it; but you do not blame me," and she began to look for it.

"Never mind the cane! sit on that sofa, and let them sit on either side of you."

The request was complied with. Annie's head sought Mattie's shoulder, while she held a hand of each. What joy can surpass that of fond hearts being reunited after a long and painful separation?

"Now, my boy, you sit here, and let's look at that picture!" Edwin complied, and mammy stood behind them.

"You see," began the old man, "I want to tell you all about it. I knew my dear boy would want it so! I thought my daughter would! I am old, you know, and must soon pass away. My boy has made this your home. Now, Mattie, that he had a right to do, and I wanted him to do so, but he had no right to say, what I am going to say—I will make it Lelia's and Annie's home, too. Yes! now let the old man have his way.

"For many years, my daughter, their home was yours, and their parents were my children. Often when my dear boy was away from me, they would come and talk about him, and they were my friends;

and, more than this, I remember many a night has mammy watched over me, and talked me to sleep; and, now, my home is yours, your home is theirs, and their home is mammy's.

"Oh, don't, my children! What are we all crying for? Come, Lelia, come Annie; say you will live with your sister!" and, holding out his hands, they approached him. Edwin sought the sofa, and clasped Mattie's hand in his own.

"I told Mr. Williams how it was, children; he knows it all; say you will come and live with your father's and mother's friends!"

"Yes, girls, say it, don't grieve him now! What, Mattie, have you nothing to say?"

"Oh, Edwin, what can I say? how can I speak?" then she approached the old man, and knelt before him; her example was followed by the others.

"God Almighty bless us all! Now, get up, I want my kisses." Then, in a cheerful voice, he said:

"Lelia, I thought we were to have a bridal supper to-night! What has become of it?"

Lelia left the room, and soon returned with an invitation to the dining-room. Edwin offered his arm to his father, and they led the way. Seated around that board were hearts too full for utterance, and some moments elapsed after the places had been taken, as assigned them by their father, before Edwin could sufficiently compose himself to ask the first blessing at his own table. They felt no need of creature comfort, and, but for the sake of him, who had thus

doubly endeared himself to them all, the meal would have been untasted.

"From that hour forth in peace
And joyous bliss they lived
Together long without debate."

Lelia went every day to the academy and gave lessons, until her successor arrived.

The first visit Mattie made was to her friends, Mrs. Duval and Ella; and in the same cottage, where, as a girl, she had spent so many happy hours, she now entertained her friends with scenes through which she had passed, and, in turn, listened to changes which had been theirs.

For many weeks Mattie's time was taken up in receiving and returning bridal calls, but ere long, she settled down, a happy married woman; a true sister to Lelia and Annie, an affectionate daughter to Edwin's father, and to him all he could have desired.

How could she be otherwise than happy? Had she not returned to a blissful nook, with a few congenial ones to love, and by whom she was beloved in return, by each of whom her many virtues were appreciated and acknowledged; in a word occupying that position, for which above all others, she was best fitted.

And once again mammy was respected as she deserved. There was one thing, however, wanting, to render *her* happiness complete. She knew that, though she was living as in other days, it was different with her children and grand-children.

Many were the confidential conversations which were carried on, and enjoyed, in "the girls' room," when Mattie would go in to see whether they were comfortable for the night.

Never till then were complete disclosures made as to how they, as orphans, had fared, in the homes of their respective relatives.

The clouds, which had been so dark, had passed away; and they were once more safely housed in a *happy* home.

Home has been called the *sweetest* word in our language; but it does not always imply *happiness*; for—

"Home's not merely four square walls,
With bright pictures hung, and gilded;
Home is where affection calls,
Filled with shrines the heart has builded.

"Home's not merely roof and room,
It needs something to endear it;
Home is where the heart can bloom,
Where there are fond ones to cheer it."

CHAPTER XXX.

WINTER, with its snows and biting frosts, had gone. Spring, with its buds and flowers, was fast giving place to summer.

The same smiling faces and happy hearts sur-

rounded the centre table in the sitting-room at Teryl Place.

Their sad days were not forgotten, but remembered only as a sad dream, from which the waking had been so pleasant by contrast, they wondered how a dream could have troubled them so.

Edwin had brought with him the mail, consisting of several papers, one or two magazines, and a letter from Oak Wood. The seal was quickly broken.

The old man could still, with the aid of glasses, read for himself. Annie had taken up one magazine. Lelia was busy cutting the leaves of another; each one was silently engaged in their own occupation, when Edwin looked up from his paper, and as his eyes rested on his wife's face, he asked.

"What is it, Mattie? your letter must contain pleasant tidings."

"Oh, Edwin! Cousin Charlie has returned from college, and he and Nettie are going to make us a visit! they will be here the first of next week."

"Well, really, that is news, too good, I fear, to be true! Now Mattie, you will give that party, I have been so anxious to give, ever since we were married."

"Yes, and it shall be the very night they get here, as a pleasant surprise! How I do wish uncle could come with them!"

"Oh, Sister Mattie, I am so glad!"

"Glad for what, Annie? that they are coming, or, that she will give the party?"

"Oh, Lelia, I am so glad for both! first one and then the other; are you not?"

"Well, Lelia, you must go in the morning for Ella, and if you all are willing to assist me, we will give a grand party; that is, if father approves of the plan. What say you, father?"

"My daughter, I agree to anything that will add to the happiness of my children!"

"Providence has blessed me, in my old age, with you all. I remember that I was once young myself; and sometimes now I forget that I am no longer so!"

"When you all first came to live with me, I thought that, before now, I should have passed away; but I have grown so much younger, I feel that I may remain with you some years yet!"

"Go on, enjoy yourselves! and never fear that you can, by doing so, interfere with me!"

Nothing delighted the younger members of that family more than to hear him speak in this way; and all their plans were discussed freely before him, and his advice asked. They felt, when he entered into them so cheerfully, that their reunion had promoted his happiness as well as their own.

When Mr. and Mrs. Terryl had retired to their own apartment, looking in her husband's face, which beamed with joy, she said:

"Oh, Edwin, I do so much wish that uncle could come and see for himself how carefully you have guarded the treasure he gave you, and how happy we all are!"

"Nothing, I assure you, could afford me half so much pleasure as for him to learn what a model hus-

band I have made, and what a happy, perfect wife I have!"

They had been married seventeen months, and truly they had been months of unalloyed happiness! No cloud had ever rested on the young wife's brow, save when thoughts of her unhappy uncle crossed her mind; and she knew his own happiness would be increased by witnessing hers.

The following week was one of bustle and confusion, such as must attend the necessary preparations for a large entertainment.

Very much attention had been shown them by the citizens of M——, and many of Mr. and Mrs. Minor's former friends had been, during these months, lavish in their kindness to Lelia and Annie.

Mr. Terryl was anxious that none should be slighted, and his wife was not restricted in her preparations; for they both were anxious, that being their *first*, it should prove *the* entertainment of the season!

"My daughter, allow me to change one of your plans for the party."

"Certainly, father! What is there you do not like, or would prefer having changed?"

"Only the time. Now, you see, you are not very sure they will be here exactly on the day they named; and even if they should, they will be very tired, and need some rest. Suppose you wait till they are here, and then send your invitations."

"Thank you for the suggestion! I agree with you. Then, too, I will have more time."

Monday evening Lelia had walked with Mrs. Terryl

to meet her husband, leaving Annie talking to their father.

Before closing the gate they saw a coach drawing near, and, ere it had stopped, Mrs. Terryl recognized Nettie.

"Miss Lelia," asked Charles, "how many shingles will it take to cover a house, twice the size of the one you covered at the examination?"

"You will have to give the dimensions more explicitly, Mr. Lenier, before I can answer."

"Not while you call me Mr. Lenier. Are you not Cousin Mattie's sister? and is she not my cousin? Then why may not you and I be cousins?"

"Well, if you will have it so, and promise not to catechise me any more. You forget my school-days are over, Cousin Charlie!"

While this was going on, Nettie having returned from her own room, was replying to Mattie's numerous questions, in regard to those at home.

Long did they linger around the table, after all traces of the meal had disappeared, until their father said the children must be tired.

As they rose from the table, mammy entered. Charles met her kindly, and inquired for the interest he had left in her hands; and, with due ceremony, presented her to Nettie, who declared she was no stranger, and expressed her delight at seeing her!

The next morning Charles and Lelia went for Ella, to assist in the task young persons delight so much in performing—that of arranging tables for a party! while Annie went to issue invitations.

Very unlike the delicate creature Charles had bid adieu to four years before, was the blooming Ella he then met! His friends were really glad to see him; nor did they hesitate to express their pleasure; though painful memories arose, there were pleasant ones, too!

The party was such an one as our readers may well imagine it would have been, superintended by Mrs. Terryl, with everything at her command that wealth could provide.

The house was large, and, though the furniture might have been deemed by some rather ancient, it all bore marks of former grandeur; and very soon mirth and gayety reigned throughout.

"There's a gentleman at the door wants to see you or Miss Mattie," said a servant to Mr. Terryl, just before supper was announced.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed he, on meeting the individual. "Mattie, come here!"

"How do you do, Doctor! I am really happy to see you, and you come at a fortunate time: come in!"

"I was passing through your town; asked where you lived, and heard that you gave a party to-night; so, you see, I come without ceremony."

"We would have felt hurt, indeed, had you acted differently; and they returned to the parlor, accompanied by Dr. Lipscombe.

Charles Lenier and Ella were standing near the door; on perceiving who the stranger was, after greeting him, Charles introduced him to Miss Duval as *his*

friend, and, resigning her to him, soon joined the group of which Lelia Minor was the centre.

Charles was aware of the relations which had existed between his sister and Doctor Lipscombe. He had learned, from Nettie, while on their way to Alabama, how they had been dissolved, and his sympathies were with his friend, as he had called him.

The evening passed delightfully, and was pronounced by all who had partaken of the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Terryl, a "decided success."

Ella spent that night and the next day with Nettie; nor would Mr. and Mrs. Terryl permit the Doctor to return to the hotel during his stay in the city.

"None but those who know cousin Mattie well, can know how richly she deserves the home and happiness she enjoys," remarked Nettie to Mr. Terryl; "I do so much wish that father could have been here last night, he would have enjoyed it so much."

"You speak truly, Cousin Nettie," replied the happy husband; "none but those that know her well can know what she is. Apart from the happiness that has been mine since we were married, her affection for my father, and the patience with which she bears his infirmities, fill me with *gratitude*."

"That she loves him as a daughter should an own father, is evident; though I have been here so short a time, I have learned that is so."

"How little did I suppose, the evening we all took that walk to the river, when I was at Oak Wood, that such happiness was in store for me! You remember the time—do you not?"

Nettie's face crimsoned; she said simply, "Yes, I remember," and commenced talking of something else.

Mr. Terryl did not forget the circumstance, and afterwards in relating it to his wife, asked "What it could mean?"

"I can think of nothing that transpired that evening to impress Nettie unpleasantly."

"Was Dr. Lipscombe in the room at the time?"

"Yes; he and Lelia were engaged in a game of chess near by—but what of that?"

"It was on that same evening that Rosa dissolved a long existing engagement with him!"

"Why, I never knew they had been engaged. Did you know it then—and never told it till now?"

"Yes! it was Rosa's secret and not mine; and, but for fear that you may make a similar allusion, I would not have told it at all. I am afraid he will never get over it. He was devoted to her; and, from what Nettie tells me, I am sure Rosa has never regretted it but once, and that has been ever since."

"Well, I don't know how it is with her; but I am no judge of Love's symptoms, if a new flame has not already kindled in his breast."

Doctor Lipscombe was prevailed on to remain a few days longer than he had intended, owing to an invitation from Mrs. Duval to them all to dine with her; and he did not leave till the evening of that day spent there.

Surely if the wound given him by a heartless girl had caused him pain, so smoothly was it healed over,

no scar was to be seen ; for happily, indeed, seemed to fly the hours spent with the congenial one with whom, by accident, he had been thrown.

He had been to South Alabama on a visit to his uncle, whose health was failing rapidly. Having heard of Harry's fame as a physician, he wrote, begging him to visit him ; thinking, perchance, he might prescribe something that would ward off that monster, so much dreaded by all.

As the season in Doctor Lipscombe's neighborhood was unusually healthy, he had complied ; and, after spending three weeks with his uncle, was returning to Georgia, when he determined to make a short visit to his friends, and learn for himself whether the picture which had been painted of their domestic bliss had not been overdrawn.

He could not have chosen a more appropriate time for forming new and pleasant acquaintances, nor for witnessing the elegance of Mrs. Terryl's present life ; and, as will be seen, it was one of those visits, which, though seemingly accidental, prove to be an era in a life.

"The power of Love, in earth and air,
And seas, and heaven above,
Rules unrestricted with an awful rod,
By daily miracles declared a god.
It blinds the wise, gives eyesight to the blind,
And moulds and stamps anew the lover's mind."

Though we have ever believed that there is a *one Love* which none other can equal, or to it be even compared, still, when this *one Love* has been spurned

and trampled on by the object of it, till the flame is extinguished, and even the coals have burned out, leaving only dead ashes, in after time these very ashes may prove an altar upon which a steady though less brilliant fire may burn.

When Doctor Lipscombe bade adieu to the joyous ones with whom he had tarried a few days, his heart, which he had believed could never re-awaken to the charms of woman, had begun to respond to the music of another voice, and he was again conscious of feeling the alternate emotions of hope and fear. He could but wonder whether the bright eyed girl could ever be to him the angel he had once believed Rosa Lenier to be.

He would think of his resolution, never again to suffer himself to come under the power of woman's smile, but Hope would whisper, there was a bright future in store for him, when the love he could give a true woman would be returned, and with a lighter heart than he had known for many long months, he reached home.

His mother had many questions to ask, and he to answer, in regard to her brother and his family ; having satisfied her on this subject, he told her of his visit to M——, the happiness of his friends, and to her confided the secret of his second Love.

How beautiful and touching a sight is beheld, when we see a son on whom a widowed mother leans for support in declining years, proving himself worthy the trust which has been committed to him ! What sympathy can equal that of a loving mother's heart ?

No wonder she reflected long and well, before commenting on what she heard. She advised him to take that rest he so much needed; adding, that they would converse on that some other time.

She had seen her darling's happiness well nigh wrecked by one who had possessed his true and manly heart, and whom she had consented to receive as a daughter; and remembering the wound her deception had inflicted, and the struggle it had cost him, now that her sympathy and prayers, together with time and his own efforts, had enabled him to overcome the gloom it had caused, no wonder she hesitated to encourage him, when he admitted that the charms of another had affected him.

With that simple, childlike faith and judgment, which was his chief characteristic, and the one which rendered him so dear to her, he waited patiently till she saw fit to resume the subject.

Would that this confidence oftener existed between parents and children, how much suffering both might be spared.

Could children know half the anxiety their parents feel, before they arrive at the age of accountability; the bright future that ever during their infancy hope has painted for them by their mother, as she held them, innocent babes, to her bosom; and, if a Christian, the prayers, that daily, yes! hourly, ascended in their behalf, that He who had given her treasures might aid her in raising them aright; they would oftener, with confidence, pour into her ear their

sorrows as well as joys, knowing that no where else could such sympathy be found.

Or, could they know how that mother's heart bleeds at every pore, when she sees them departing from the way in which she would have them go; could they hear her earnest supplications in their behalf, as she sees them go farther and still farther from the path of rectitude; could they know the feeling of heart-sickness and desolation she endures, when they turn a deaf ear to her solicitations, how differently would many of them feel and act.

Children have it in their power to cause the lives of their mothers to glide smoothly and happily, or to bring them with sorrow to the grave.

Nor is a mother the only one whose happiness or misery depends on children.

How cheering to a father's heart, who has toiled hard and contended with the outer world, to know that there is a sweet spot, a retired and shady nook, where little eyes grow brighter, and little feet patter more cheerily at his coming.

Why does he toil unceasingly, from dawning morn till dewy eve, struggling all the while? It is that these same little ones, who are such a comfort to him, may, in a day yet to come, enjoy the fruit of his labor.

Could they know one half the pride a father feels, when his children prove by their love for him, and obedience to his wishes, their greatest delight would consist in fostering that pride; could they witness the storm of emotion, which shakes his strong frame when no eye sees him, or hear his groans of anguish,

when no mortal ear is nigh, as he sees by the conduct of his children, that his toil of a life-time is being ruthlessly squandered, their greatest care would be to save him all such agony.

In a word, could children realize the responsibility resting on them, they would endeavor so to live, that when they see their father or mother buried from their sight, they could, of a truth say, I never caused my mother to shed one tear, or my father to heave a sigh.

What a bright world this would be, if there were a greater number of Harry Lipscombes in it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"THERE are some persons on whom their faults sit well; and others, who are rendered ungraceful by their good qualities."

To the first of these classes surely belonged Rosa Lenier, if we may judge by her appearance in society, after returning from a visit North, since we last saw her.

After the marriage, which produced so unaccountable an effect upon her, the plan Mrs. Nichol intended making known as the reason for the completion of preparations already begun, was carried out. They remained away some months longer than was expect-

ed; nor did they return till some weeks after Charles and Nettie had returned from their visit South.

Ample time had been allowed the brother and sister to picture to their father the happiness and elegance of their cousin's home. To all he listened with eagerness, and rejoiced that it was so!

Though Rosa Lenier was older, she was more beautiful than ever before, and was pronounced, by all of her acquaintances, more fascinating. She met them *all as friends*, with whom she delighted to hold social converse.

Oak Wood again presented a continual scene of festivity, fashionable dinings, large parties, and social gatherings of every kind.

'Tis true some wondered why Doctor Lipscombe and Rosa had not married; and his absence, on these occasions, caused at first some remarks to be made; but not even his most intimate friends had dared question him on the subject, since it was one on which he maintained a dignified silence.

Rosa had taken her mother's advice, which had been given on this wise:

"Now, my daughter, Mr. Terryl is married, to waste your thoughts on him would be more than folly.

"Harry Lipscombe has loved you devotedly, and, if you can succeed in convincing him that you were not interested in the man of whom he was jealous, not many months will elapse before you will find him a suppliant for lost favor!

"This can only be done by your manifesting an invariable cheerfulness and amiability to all your friends,

which he is sure to hear of ; though at first he may avoid, rather than seek your society, you will see in the end."

Rosa believed all her mother said, and though, when alone, her disarranged toilet and contracted brow told of a mind ill at ease, in society this advice was never forgotten !

Time passed, weeks rolled by, and he made not his appearance. She would lie for hours with her eyes closed, and one hand pressed to her heart, as if to still its throbbings ; or, when unable to lie still, her regular steps were heard as, from night till weary morn, she walked the floor of her chamber : still, to none, save the members of her own family, did she seem to regret the past or dread the future.

Who could recognize the youthful-looking, gay, smiling creature, who at times moved from one group to another in her father's home, dispensing smiles and sunshine wherever she went—and the restless, miserable being she was, at others, as one and the same ?

As during that winter, it was often the case, that she was seen at the house of some friend in the city, the centre of attraction, her sparkling eyes, and wealth of auburn hair becomingly arranged—her rounded neck and arms adding beauty to the ornaments with which they were adorned !

Who could know that, on all such occasions, the brilliancy of her azure eyes was increased, that her voice rang clearer, and her words flowed more freely, as she saw a form she seemed not to perceive, or heard a voice to which her own did not respond ?

She had schooled herself, under the tuition of her scheming mother, so that she never, in an unmaidenly manner, sought to attract the notice of him whose presence thus affected her.

No wonder when beheld thus her friends wondered why she remained single, or that the question was asked, which none could answer, "What has estranged them so ?"

Dr. Lipscombe had never, after the first one, accepted an invitation to the house of Mr. Nichol ; still, he did not appear entirely to avoid Rosa, when they met elsewhere. If by accident they were thrown together, he would join in the same conversation, or even converse with her for several minutes together ; but the past was never alluded to. He was willing to forgive, and, so far as was possible, to cover, with a mantle of charity, that conduct, on her part, which had well nigh caused him to lose confidence in woman !

Rosa Lenier was a woman, and all her woman's pride was summoned, at such moments, to enable her to converse cheerfully, on indifferent subjects, with the man she would have given worlds to hear speak, for one brief moment, as in other days she had heard him for hours together !

Even his heart would have moved in pity could he have followed her home, and observed the change that came over her ! The expression of utter despair that settled on her features, as she would sit by an open window and gaze upon the darkness without, wondering whether it would always be so, till, overcome by

exhaustion, she would seek her couch, hoping to find forgetfulness in sleep!

Oftener than otherwise, when morning succeeded such a night, that room contained two inmates; and, while the daughter lay in the deep and tiresome sleep produced by overtaxed energies, the mother would sit by the bed, with her work or book lying idly on her lap, and, as she gazed on the troubled face of her unhappy child, plan some other amusement or pleasure in which her sorrows might be drowned.

No sooner would Rosa awake than the plan would be proposed; and, as she would breakfast in bed, her mother would picture the impression she was soon to make in a certain style of dress on some occasion, which, as yet, only existed in her imagination, so that the sense of despair, caused by one scene of gayety, gave place to hopes excited by the prospect of another.

Rosa Lenier had ever been her mother's favorite child, and between them existed that confidence which should ever exist between a mother and her daughter; but, unfortunately, Mrs. Nichol was one of the few mothers who are not capable of guiding their children aright.

She was not a Christian; and, instead of dedicating her children, when young, to that Being who had given them to her, she had watched eagerly for the time when they might shine as ladies of society. Rosa, having inherited her mother's disposition, was early taught to kneel a votary at Fashion's shrine.

Nettie had manifested a distaste for the path her

mother had chosen, and along which her sister was being led; and, if *peace* was with her an object, it was only to be gained by submitting to, and seeming to enter into, her mother's plans for her sister's happiness.

She had early been taught this lesson, and to acquiesce had become natural to her; but hard, indeed, was it for Mr. Nichol, to be kept ground into the dust beneath the tiny feet of these heartless women.

Charles was studying law in the city. He made a visit to Oak Wood every fortnight, unless a dinner or party was to be given; then, he would go oftener.

Neither Mr. Nichol nor Nettie ever mentioned to him the life they led with his mother and sister. Very pleasant were the hours he spent with them during these visits, in the library, or riding over the farm.

He had always met his sisters at places of amusements in the city, and to Nettie he had confided his secrets, from the time of their visit to Alabama, and with their father they had ever conversed without reserve.

Though this household might have been called a divided one, still it could not be denied that one portion of it stood on a firm foundation.

This round of fashionable life was kept up for two years, during which time Charles had made two visits to Alabama, and now we find him in the library, at Oak Wood, making known to his father and Nettie his intentions of going again in a short time, and insisting on their accompanying him to witness the per-

formance of that rite which would unite him to the object of his affections.

"Where will you live after you are married, my son?" asked Mr. Nichol.

"Really, sir, I hardly know myself as yet!"

"Well, well, I have a plan, which I hope you will not object to my carrying out. You have ever been to me a dutiful child, and I am anxious to do a father's part by you.

"Now, if you can postpone your marriage two months, it will allow me ample time to make arrangements, by which her happiness as well as yours can be increased."

"Well, father! the day for our marriage is not positively fixed, though I had hoped it would take place sooner; but if your plan is so good a one, tell me what it is, and it may be as you wish; is not this reasonable, Nettie?"

"No, no! my son, you must be content, and promise not to question me till the time comes when I can tell you all about it. I will go, and Nettie can make Mattie another visit, and who knows but that Rosa and your mother may go to your wedding, too—it is possible they will."

Charles had every confidence in his father's judgment, and though he had refused to reveal his plan, he was content to wait.

This was near the middle of October; he wrote urging her not to disappoint him, but be in readiness by the middle of December.

He told his mother and sister of his intention to

be married then, and insisted on their going with him, but Mrs. Nichol knew, with true motherly instinct, that for Rosa to witness Mattie's happiness as Edwin Terryl's wife, would be too much for her, and, declaring her inability to leave home, added that Rosa's health would neither admit of her going South, nor being left at home alone. For these years of constant dissipation and mental excitement had left their traces on this mother's darling child.

She conversed pleasantly with her son, of his future, and insisted on his bride being brought to Oak Wood, on a visit at least, if he would not make it his home. This, she knew, would afford another opportunity of gratifying her propensity for giving entertainments, and her wishes might yet be accomplished.

Rosa, too, conversed with him on the subject, and said, though she had ever been ambitious that he should form a brilliant alliance, still she admitted that he was acting wisely in marrying the girl he loved, even though she was not wealthy.

Charles never mentioned Doctor Lipscombe's name to his sister; he knew she had done wrong, and believed she had suffered bitterly for that wrong, and wisely refrained from telling her that he was to be one of his attendants, when he found she would not accompany him to Alabama.

Has the reader chosen Ella Duval as Charles Lennier's future bride? Surely, from the circumstances of years ago, it would seem to be no other. We will enter, once again, the happy family at Terryl Place,

and learn, from a conversation carried on there, whether this is true.

The hour was twilight; Mrs. Terryl was engaged in the task young mothers so much delight in—that of disrobing her little innocent for the night.

This was usually mammy's employment, but she had gone to assist Ella Duval in nursing her sick mother.

The child is one of extreme loveliness; she has her mother's delicate features and clear complexion, while the glossy hair, which curled all over her head, the open countenance, and large eyes, that turn from mother to father, as she lisps their names, are those of her father.

She was robed for the night, and as her mother moved back and forth, rocking her to sleep, her parents became absorbed in serious thought and conversation.

"If Mrs. Duval should die, how desolate poor Ella would be left."

"Truly, she would! but did not the Doctor say she was better this morning?"

"He said that some of her symptoms were better, but I do not like her remaining in such a stupor, nor do I think he does. Though, of course, he speaks as hopefully before Ella as he can, he is evidently very uneasy."

"If Miss Ella had married Charles, how much better it would be for her now!"

"Yes, it does seem so! but they both acted wisely

about it. It was a boyish fancy of his, and Ella to me seriously she had never loved him.

"It was really amusing to hear her account of the affair! She said they had corresponded so long, and from his letters, as well as his conduct when she first became acquainted with him, she was led to suppose that he loved her, but she was convinced, even before he made her an offer of marriage, that he had learned his mistake; but he was honorable, and felt that he had gone too far to retract.

"Ella said that she listened with as much gravity as possible, and refused him very gracefully, knowing that in his heart he thanked her. She then advised him what course to pursue, and begged that he would consider her as a true friend, and make her his confidant, which he very soon afterwards did."

"Well! strange things do happen in this world. I thought Doctor Lipscombe lost his heart while here, but it seems that you were right about that too, and I suppose he never will love another."

"I do not believe it possible for him ever to love again as he loved Rosa, for I never knew more perfect devotion in my life; but fortunate, indeed, would that girl be who could become his wife. I know him well, and there are few Doctor Lipscombes."

"Oh, sister Mattie!" exclaimed Lelia, as she rushed into the room.

"What is the matter, Lelia?"

"Mrs. Duval is dying; mammy has sent for you and brother Edwin to come without waiting a moment!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

A LIGHT rap was made at Mrs. Terryl's door, accompanied by the words, "Are you alone, Mattie?"

The words were spoken in a low voice, by one who, from her dress of deep mourning and her pale, sad face, could be no other than her friend Ella.

This was, perhaps, six weeks after her mother's death, from which sad event she had been an inmate of Terryl Place.

"Yes, Ella! unless you call Ida somebody; you see she is with me. Why, my dear! do you want anything?"

The tone of voice in which these words were spoken, invited confidence.

Ella closed the door after her, and without ceremony took the child from its mother; handing her a letter, she said, "*Read this.*"

Mrs. Terryl soon found that it was from Doctor Lipscombe; it was the second one Ella had received from him. He had learned through Charles Lenier of her bereavement; and some time before, she had received a letter of condolence, to which she had not replied, for even then she felt unequal to the task of writing.

Mrs. Terryl soon found why this one had been submitted to her for perusal, and having read it in silence, said:

"Come, sit down by me, Ella, and I will comply with his request; but before I begin the story, let me congratulate you on the conquest you have made."

Ella turned from the window, and resigning the child to her mother, sat down to hear the revelation.

"Yes! Ella, as he says, he has loved before, nor did he love lightly. You will be surprised when I tell you that it was my cousin, Rosa Lenier, who was thus beloved, and by whom he was grossly deceived."

She then gave her the circumstances which have been already related, and when she had finished, Ella remarked:

"I am glad to find that I was mistaken. When he referred me to you for a history of his sad experience, I believed it was you that he said had deceived him; and I knew if you had broken an engagement of that kind, it had not been done without some good cause!"

She then listened to a description of his home and his mother, and was told that in her she would find a counterpart to her own loved and lost, and was advised to reply immediately to the letter.

Ella said no, she could not write, but promised to think about it, and be prepared to give him her decision when he accompanied Charles to his wedding.

Mrs. Terryl had received several letters from her uncle, from the time that he learned that Charles would become her brother, and thus be doubly dear to her, but strange to say these letters, though answered, were not commented on, as his had ever been before.

Mr. and Mrs. Terryl had determined to give them a large wedding, for which preparations were being made.

Roland Hughes, a young man whose acquaintance Mr. Terryl had formed while in Germany, who had proven his friend when a stranger in a foreign land, had returned to America, and written, stating his intention of visiting M—— on his way to Florida; and, as he would be there about the time of the marriage, Mrs. Terryl wrote, begging Nettie to come prepared to act as an attendant, though, up to that time, they had thought of having only two.

When Roland arrived, he was found to be very homely, but so very fascinating that his red hair and freckled face were soon lost sight of.

Just one week before the wedding, Mrs. Terryl heard her husband talking in the hall, and the voice which responded was that of her uncle.

In a few minutes the family had assembled in the sitting-room, and he received an introduction to his future daughter-in-law.

The scene of quiet domestic bliss presented to Mr. Nichol that evening, taught him more of the life his niece was living, than he could possibly have learned from the evening of the first party given there, when all had so much regretted his absence.

True, there was one whose sombre habiliments and sad face gave indications of sorrow; but the thought would arise, on looking at Ella Duval, "Blessed, indeed, is she above orphans!" for, if there was happiness for her, it was to be found in that family who had received her as one of them; and, as Mr. Nichol looked around, he felt assured that contentment was the presiding genius of this household.

The looks of admiration Mrs. Terryl received, not only from her husband, but every one in the room, and the caresses lavished upon little Ida, as she moved without restraint from one to another seemed beautiful to him; but the most beautiful sight was the respect and veneration shown the aged grandfather; when he spoke, all was still as if they would hear every word he uttered.

Even little Ida would move the skirt of any dress that might accidentally touch him, exclaiming, in her childish accents, "*Danpa, foots does hurt!*" and would stand for minutes together rubbing his knees.

When a meal was announced, Mr. Terryl offered him his arm, and, with measured step, slowly led the way. On reaching the table, all stood till he was comfortably seated!

This, and much more, was observed by Mr. Nichol, and he was more rejoiced than ever that he had provided a home of their own for the young hearts that would soon be united.

Only five days more would elapse before the wedding; and, except when Mr. Nichol would accompany Mrs. Terryl in a short ride, or go with Mr. Terryl into the city for a walk, he and little Ida were the aged man's companions, so that the united efforts of others might accelerate the festive preparations.

Charles, Nettie, and Doctor Lipscombe arrived late Monday evening. Tuesday, Annie, Nettie, and Roland Hughes spent a merry day, stopping at almost every house in the place, leaving cards of invitation.

Thursday night came—and surely all nature sym-

pathized with the inmates of Terryl Place! It was Christmas eve: cool and clear was the atmosphere, and as lamps and candles burned in every part of the house, and glowing fires on every hearth, the queen of night rose majestically above the clouds, as if it were a fitting occasion for her greatest effort to be made.

The guests, on their arrival, assembled in the large sitting-room. As the hour drew near for the ceremony, Mr. Terryl left the company.

At a given signal Mrs. Terryl, escorted by her uncle, preceded the waiting ones to the parlor.

What a scene met their gaze! it beggars description. In one corner stood the bridal pair and their attendants. Never had Charles Lenier looked so handsome as at that moment! while Lelia, arrayed in simple elegance, stood by his side. Her dress was of white silk, wreaths of orange blossoms around neck and arms—a corresponding one encircled her head, from which hung a gossamer veil, which covered her whole person. By her side stood Annie and Nettie, arrayed as became attendants of such a bride; while to the right of Charles stood Doctor Lipscombe and Roland Hughes.

In front of them stood Rev. Mr. Norton, the same minister who had passed hours with them in other days and under far different circumstances.

Mrs. Terryl and her uncle were followed by Mr. Williams and Ella Duval, and then the guests entered until the room was filled.

As soon as stillness reigned, the minister proceeded

with that ceremony which has been so often used, and soon those happy hearts were united in the closest and most holy bonds that can bind loving souls.

They were scarcely pronounced man and wife when Mr. Terryl moved nearer, and the first congratulations they received were from his father, then a kiss from little Ida, who was raised in her father's arms, who, instead of doing as she had been told, said: "O, papa! aunty's so beautiful."

Next came Mr. Nichol and Mrs. Terryl, Mr. Williams and Ella, who, to gratify the superstitious notion of "grandpa," had laid aside her mourning dress for one of simple muslin.

Congratulations were over—mirth and gayety once more reigned throughout the house, if we except one room remote from the glare of lights, the sound of merry voices, and sight of happy faces. Sole occupant of her chamber sat Ella Duval, who, having found it impossible to control her emotions, had sought solitude, there to reflect on the promise she had that day made.

As the evening wore away enjoyment increased, happiness unclouded marked every face. Hark! what sound is that? Music! Yes! it is a song, and, though the voice had been often heard, never had the same words been listened to:

"Oh, take her, but be faithful still,
And may the bridal vow
Be sacred held in after years,
And warmly breathed as now.

"Remember, 'tis no common tie
That binds her youthful heart ;
'Tis one that only truth should nerve,
And only death should part.

"The purest hopes her bosom knew,
When her young heart was free,
All these, and more, she now resigns
To brave the world with thee.

"Then take her—and may fleeting time
Mark only joy's increase ;
And may your days glide sweetly on
In happiness and peace."

The song was finished ; silence reigned ; all eyes were turned to Charles, and none, who saw the look of perfect love Lelia received, doubted that the advice given would be taken, or that the prayer breathed in that song would be answered.

The table, arranged in the form of an X, groaned beneath the weight of silver, glass and china, to say nothing of the fruits, flowers and edibles of every kind, that affection, with time, talent, patience, and ingenuity could invent, or unsurpassed taste could arrange ; but they were soon hid from view by the forms that surrounded them.

The evening is over ; guests have departed ; silence reigns ; when, lo ! a sound was heard ; it was music. Listen ! perchance we may hear the words of that serenade :

"The cynosure of midnight skies
Appears but one to seamen's eyes ;
Yet twain they are,
And each a star, perhaps a sun.

"May you, our friends, reverse the view,
And while on earth you look like two,
From heaven be seen as one ;
May yours, like that polar symbol, be
A double star of constancy."

So quietly they came—so quietly do they go—that, while you still listen, they have gone.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON the night of Lelia's marriage it had been made known that Saturday would be their reception-day. Christmas morning, when the young persons had assembled in the parlor, Mr. Terryl entered, in some haste, and, approaching Mrs. Lenier, said :

"Sister, an invitation has come for us all to dine at Minor Place to-day. Do you feel disposed to accept it?"

"Of course I will refuse no invitation given me as a bride ; and, though I would prefer dining at any other house in the place, you may return my thanks to Mr. Wayland, and say that we will accept it."

In due time, Mr. Nichol, grandpa and little Ida preceded the others, who followed in a short time.

On reaching the house, as Lelia ascended the steps of her former home, the hour when she had left it was so vivid before her mind, that even the hap-

piness then being enjoyed could not prevent a falling tear.

She started as mammy responded to the bell, and invited them into the parlor, as, leaning on her husband's arm, she walked in; Mr. Nichol met them, and said:

"Welcome, my children!" and consider yourselves no longer guests, but the owners of Minor Place; and we are your visitors, whom you must entertain."

Lelia was bewildered; and we will pardon the bride of a day for the impulse which prompted her to release the hold of her husband's arm, and throw herself into the open arms of his father.

Having recovered herself sufficiently to look around her, she beheld Mr. Williams and Rev. Mr. Norton, and once more received the congratulations of those who loved her.

Yes; this was the plan for the accomplishment of which Mr. Nichol had urged the postponement of their marriage.

He had written to Mr. Wayland a confidential letter, making known to him all the circumstances, and his desire to make Lelia a bridal gift of her childhood's home.

At the same time he wrote to Mrs. Terryl, and, when her husband called on Mr. Wayland, he found him willing to dispose of the property.

Agreeable to request he had told no one who had purchased it, and in this way the secret was kept.

All that was necessary for Mrs. Terryl to see was, that the same furniture, which had been sold with it,

was re-arranged as in other days, and have preparations made for them to dine there instead of at Terryl Place on Christmas Day.

This was to her, as may be well imagined, one of the most pleasant tasks of her whole life, for who could know, so well as herself, the happiness this surprise would afford.

The surprise over, from room to room they moved. Every article on which they gazed called up the happy past.

As they returned to the parlor, Mrs. Terryl approached the piano. That alone was not familiar, but the old fashioned one on which they learned to play had been replaced by one of modern structure.

"Well, Lelia, I will sing for you and Annie. Though the voice is mine, remember the song is yours."

"What now!" all wondered, for she had ever possessed the faculty of expressing in song what she could not otherwise.

All assembled around the instrument, and after a short prelude she sang a ballad which none of them had ever heard before.

"Yes, this is home! the home we loved before,
The dear retreat, we hope to leave no more.
Since first we mourned thy calm enjoyment fled,
Long weary years with silent steps have tread.
And oh, in those years, what scenes have past!
Death has been with us since we saw thee last,
And blighted our fairest flower, with his chilling blast,
But she, an angel, now looks down from above,
And says, the life before us is one of Love."

Every word was echoed by those who listened, for all felt the truth of the last sentiment, that the life before that happy pair would be one of love.

Rising from the instrument, she told Annie that it was a present to her from her brother Edwin.

Mammy waited at the door to present her petition, that they would go with her to the back hall; and thither they followed, to behold her surrounded by her loved ones, restored to home and happiness. Joyous indeed, were the greetings between servants and owners.

When they re-entered the parlor, Mr. Terryl remarked, that of them all, none had a better right to hail that evening with gladness than himself, for it was the anniversary of the evening on which he first beheld his *little Mattie*.

"Yes," replied his wife, "that was the saddest and most fortunate of my whole life! Surely we have been guided and watched over by a kind Providence, all through our lives!"

"I am an old man, children!" faltered grand-father, "and I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread; and I do think the wisest dispensation of divine Providence is that the future is hidden from our eyes; but I find dinner is waiting, we will moralize hereafter," and, calling little Ida, leading her by one hand, as he leaned heavily on his son's arm, they were followed to the dining-room, where Mr. and Mrs. Lenier presided as host and hostess of Minor Place.

The afternoon was fraught with strange mixtures

of sad memories and bright vistas of time to come. When the time for departure arrived, Mrs. Lenier was informed that her friends would call at her own home the next day—for all had been apprised the night before, of the surprise in store for her.

Mrs. Lenier would not consent for Mr. Nichol to return to Minor Place, and Annie said Nettie must stay with her.

At eleven o'clock the next day, the bridal party awaited the arrival of visitors.

Mrs. Terryl stood just inside the parlor door, and no stranger, from her youthful face would have supposed she was a matron; but from the cordial manner with which she received one group after another, and the smile which lighted up her face, as she heard the congratulations Mrs. Lenier received at being restored to her home, they would have felt sure that hers was the pride felt by a mother or older sister.

From the parlor the guests were conducted to the dining-room by Annie, who stood near the door, and Doctor Lipscombe by her side. There they were met by Mr. Terryl, who acted host on the occasion. Near the fireplace stood Ella Duval, who took delight in presenting one group after another to Mr. Nichol, who stood near her, while in one corner sat the feeble grand-sire, by whose knee stood little Ida, who seemed to realize the importance of her position, as she guarded his limbs from all harm, and both of them received their share of deference.

The next day was the Sabbath. The bridal party

met at Minor Place, and together went to hear Mr. Norton preach.

Services over, he, together with the entire party, proceeded to Terryl Place, where all, save the Minister, spent the night which preceded the separation.

Breakfast was over: they had all assembled for a few last words, before parting. Mr. Williams and Rev. Mr. Norton were there, when Doctor Lipscombe entered, with Ella leaning on his arm. All arose, and in a few more minutes the same rite had been performed as on Thursday night, and another pair was launched on the sea of married life.

Again were heartfelt congratulations given and received. Ella retired to her room and exchanged her bridal dress for a travelling one of mourning, and this happy, though quiet, bride and groom started for their home in Georgia, accompanied by Nettie, Mr. Nichol, Mr. and Mrs. Lenier.

Annie Minor said it was really too bad to leave sister Mattie alone, after having so much company; and she urged, too, that grandpa would have no one to take care of him. But she was accused by those who knew her best, of having another reason which she did not give. Mr. Hughes had avowed his intention of remaining a week longer at Terryl Place.

Mrs. Lipscombe received her daughter as Harry knew she would, and Ella very soon began to feel that the void made in her heart by the loss she had sustained, was being filled by the love of her husband, and the kindness of his mother.

Mr. Nichol had written to his wife that the bridal

pair would return with them, and they were met by her with cordiality.

Rosa was not present when Nettie told of the second marriage, and that Doctor Lipscombe had brought his bride home!

Having shown her son and his wife their apartment, she entered her daughter's, who, having just completed her toilet, was about to descend to welcome her brother and his bride.

Mrs. Nichol intended giving an entertainment worthy of Oak Wood, and she had said that Harry Lipscombe, as one of Charlie's attendants, could not fail to accept the invitation.

None need envy that doating mother the task she had to perform: that of blasting, in one moment, hopes which she had been fostering and keeping alive for years, as Rosa turned her face, wreathed with smiles, and said:

"Well, mother, I am resolved if this fails, it will be my last effort; I will settle down never hoping to marry!"

"My daughter!" exclaimed Mrs. Nichol, in a tone of tender sympathy, as she put one arm around Rosa's waist, "tell me that, for my sake, you will bear what I have to tell you!"

"Is he dead, mother?" gasped the trembling girl.

"No, not dead in reality; but he is dead to you! He is married, and has brought home his bride!"

Rosa's forced strength had given way, and, without a shriek, she had fallen in her mother's arms. The

last spark of hope had gone out! her hand was pressed to her heart.

Mrs. Nichol placed her on a couch near by, and, for some moments, feared she would never again move; but, opening her eyes, and with a fixed gaze in her mother's face, she said:

"It is not your fault; I alone am to blame! though my heart is chilled, he shall never know it. Go down stairs! leave me alone! I will come soon!"

She obeyed, and, excusing her, said she was suffering with headache, but would welcome them soon—adding that, not knowing exactly at what time they would arrive, she had allowed her to sleep until their arrival.

Perhaps two hours had elapsed when Rosa met her brother and his wife very pleasantly, and, to the surprise of all, save Lelia, began talking cheerfully of the double marriage, and said they would have two bridal couples at their reception instead of one!

The next day she wrote an invitation to the Lipscombe family to spend the following day and night at Oak Wood. She told her mother if it was written by any other member of the family she feared Harry would not accept it; and she *could*—yes, and *would*—prove to him that his marriage had not grieved her!

When Doctor Lipscombe carried the note home, his wife spoke of her mourning dress as a reason for not going; but she was over-persuaded by him and his mother, and they all went.

Little did they suppose that they were watched, by Rosa, from an upper window! She had sought retire-

ment to still the throbbing of her heart, and to obtain a secret look at her who occupied the place that might have been her own, before meeting her in a crowd.

Carriages still rolled up the avenue; merry voices were heard below stairs, for near an hour, before that heart obeyed the mandate of its mistress!

None of the family intruded upon her. They pitied her, though each one felt that the part she had imposed upon herself would be acted perfectly!

Before the dinner hour arrived, with eyes brighter, a voice clearer than usual, and with color heightened by excitement, Rosa descended to the parlor! Perhaps for months past she had not paid so much attention to her toilet, and her pains were amply rewarded.

She entered the room with dignity, and gracefully received an introduction to Mrs. Lipscombe, and welcomed her to Oak Wood; then turning to Harry, she congratulated him on having won such a bride!

If Doctor Lipscombe or his wife had dreaded this interview, Rosa's ease of manner soon convinced them both that their marriage had not disturbed her in the least, and all felt themselves more welcome after seeing her.

What cannot woman's pride enable her to endure! None but Rosa's mother knew how she suffered, and the sacrifice she knew her child was making only rendered her dearer than ever before; and when she heard her conversing freely with Mrs. Lipscombe of her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Terryl, she felt proud of the pride she knew was sustaining her.

Many friends had been invited to meet the bridal

couples, and none, save Mrs. Nichol, missed Rosa from the crowd for a short time, or suspected that she had sought her own chamber, to shut out, for a while, the sight of happy faces, and sound of merry voices, which were to her as only spectres of the happy past, causing her to bitterly sigh—"Oh! it might have been."

Rosa knew that she was watched, and, during the visit of her brother and his wife, Oak Wood was one continued scene of mirth; and when in company her cheerful face and pleasing manner were observed and commented upon, and all concluded that, let the cause of estrangement be what it might, one thing was certain: that she regretted it not!—and Doctor Lipscombe, from that time, was convinced that the true reason had been assigned for her conduct, when she said that she did not love him!

When Mr. and Mrs. Lenier returned to Alabama, Annie gave her sister a letter, which, she said, Mr. Williams had brought while she was gone. It was from the town in which their cousin lived, and ran thus:

DEAR MISS MINOR:

This morning I was sent for by your cousin, Mr. Rivers, for the purpose of writing his will. I had scarcely reached his bedside when he had a drawer brought to him. Taking from it a note, he requested me to read it.

To my surprise, it was one he had, several years ago, given your father for three thousand dollars! He

said, though he held it in his hands, it had never been paid; but asked me not to question him.

Then he added that, beside this, he owed your sister and yourself twenty-five hundred dollars! both of which debts, with interest, he wished to settle, by having the money, without delay, forwarded to you; and asked if I would attend to it for him. Enclosed, therefore, please find a check for the entire amount.

He requested me, furthermore, to say that he earnestly desires to see you once more. He may live until you can reach him.

His physician thinks that your presence would do more for him than his skill can. If you cannot come, do not fail to write to him on the receipt of this.

Your obedient servant,

J. W. PALMER.

Accompanying this letter was a note to Mr. Williams, containing an urgent request that he would either bring or send the girls to see their cousin, as he said he could not die in peace without seeing them, and obtaining their forgiveness.

This letter was received the day before their return. When Mrs. Lenier had read it she handed it to her husband. He expressed his more than willingness to accompany them, and they started early the next morning.

They found Mr. Rivers alive, and the kindness of Mrs. Lenier and Annie to him was such as assured him, even before pardon was asked, that they were

willing to forget the past. Two days after their arrival, he died at peace with God and man.

They learned from Mr. Palmer that his estate would prove almost, if not entirely, insolvent.

Charles insisted on his widow receiving that portion of the money due his wife, to which she finally consented; but refused to accept any portion of Annie's; for she said that though Lelia was provided for, Annie was not.

They returned to M——, carrying with them the remains of dear little Ida. The amount Annie received from her uncle, being added to by Charles, in a short time monuments were erected to the memory of loved ones, and a handsome railing enclosed the sacred spot.

A FEW words to the reader, and we have finished. Many of the scenes in this book have been taken from real life. True, things are somewhat embellished, and, in some instances, the relations sustained to each other by the characters are changed.

Should the actors in them ever chance to read it, they may recognize themselves.

Should you, whose eye rests on this page, chance to be the surviving partner of a man who has died—leaving the interest of those who were dearer to him than life itself in your hands—*deal justly!* If you have hitherto done otherwise, without delay make restitution, while you may; so that, when called to render

up your last account, it may be done with a conscience void of offence, and the children of your former partner and friend will bless you while living, and revere your memory when you are gone.

If you are a parent, *deal justly* with orphans, whenever thrown with them; and, above all, with those who may have been providentially placed under your care, ever overlooking their faults rather than exposing them.

Reflect that had their parents lived, they might have been as faultless as you believe your own children to be; and as you can have no lease of your own lives, *orphanage*, in all its bitterness, may yet be felt by those you now love so dearly, and are raising so tenderly.

Words of comfort and of cheer spoken, and acts of kindness shown by you, to such children now, may be rewarded, when you are gone, by the same gentleness and kindness being shown to those you leave behind you.

Once more, gentle reader! if you are a child blessed with kind and loving parents, never pass an orphan coldly by, for this world, which has been so bright and beautiful to you, is to them a *cold and cheerless* one.

THE END.